

A Double Celebration For Raza

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WHEN A veteran artist, that too one who is Indian to the core despite living in France for a greater part of his life, is felicitated, it's reason to rejoice for the entire artistic community. And if the occasion coincides with the artist's 80th birthday, it is a double celebration. So it was at the ITC Maurya Sheraton on Thursday when a special evening was organised for **Sayed Haider Raza**, who turned 80 on February 22. The evening also saw the launch of *Raza*, a book comprising an in-depth interview with the artist by **Ashok Vajpeyi**, as also the conferring of the award of *Officier des Arts et des Lettres* (Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters), presented by French Am-



French Ambassador Bernard de Montferrand (right) releases the book as Sayed Haider Raza looks on

PHOTOS: RAJ K. RAJ



Jatin Das and daughter Nandita share a light moment; Left: Bhabesh Sanyal made a rare public appearance



Chef Sultan (left) shares the secret of his delicious kebabs with Laurent De Gaulle



Poet Ashok Vajpeyi (right) strikes a pose with Greek art aficionado Eyvah Dafaranos

bassador **Bernard de Montferrand**.

The evening, organised by Seher, had Vajpeyi, who considers Raza among the "saptarishis of Indian arts", talking about his trips to Paris to get an insight into the psyche of the artist for whom he has also written a poem on the occasion. Raza himself was "overwhelmed by the affection I've got from friends." He announced that the Raza Foundation will award promising artists, bo-

th visual and performing. He presented a cheque of Rs 1 lakh each to **Seema Ghur-aiyya**, "whose works I've followed for the last five years and who shows a lot of promise", and **Akhilesh**, both from Bhopal.

Raza got a standing ovation from a veritable who's who of the art world: **B.C. Sanyal**, **Satish and Kiran Gujral**, **Jatin Das** with daughter **Nandita**, **Arpana Caur** and her litterateur mother **Ajeet Caur**, **Manjit**

Bawa, **Ina Puri**, **Manu and Madhvi Parekh**, **Paramjit and Arpita Singh**, **Rajeev Lochan**, **Naresh Kapuria**, **Kumar Shahani**, the **Vasudev Sisters Uma and Aruna**, **Aman Nath**, **Rekha Purie** of Art Today, **Arun Vadehra** of Vadehra Art Gallery (where a show of Raza's works is on till March 5), **Sanjeev Bhargava** and others. Then, the crowd dispersed to enjoy the kebabs dished out by **Chef Sultan**, along with cocktails. ■