



The President, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, looking at an exhibit at the VIII Triennale which he inaugurated in New Delhi on Wednesday. — TOI photo by T. Narayan.

Japanese protest casts a shadow over Triennale

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ART separates the exceptional from the average, and presents rare moments of life in a distilled form. And that is what Triennale offers us too, said Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, declaring open the major composite art event of the country here this evening.

Citing instances from Gandhara art to the Karla caves near Bombay and Islamic architecture, the President of India said that Indian art, "whether of the rock paintings or those with tribal moorings, whether nurtured in a religious environment or in the royal courts," has had an intangible connection with counterparts in foreign shores. These have included countries such as Greece and Egypt, the Islamic nations far and near, and China and Japan in the east.

The same connection continues in our times too, through international art events, because "art needs no language to spread feelings of cooperation," Dr Sharma said before lighting the traditional lamp.

'WRONG DECISION': However, striking a discordant note at the inauguration, the Japanese delegate to the Triennale strongly protested against the fact that "decision on the best entry had already been taken at a time when one third of the total entries were not on display." Regretting that the Japanese artists were not considered for the award, Mr Toshiaki Minemura, the commissioner for Japan said, "Such an unrealistic (prize) selection system does not leave a good impression."

Mr Satish Gujral, the Indian member of the three-member jury, was present at the inauguration, along with Mr Ram Niwas Mirdha, chairman, and Mr B.P. Kambhoj, secretary of Lalit Kala Akademi.

The Japan Foundation, which was coordinating on behalf of the

country, had sent the work well in time, "before the deadline of December 31," informed its director, Mr Hayato Ogo. "We also wrote several letters to the Akademi asking them where the works should be installed. But they did not answer until 10 days ago." Since an installation has to be mounted by the artist himself, "it was unrealistic to expect the artist to come here and hang around for two months," he added. The Japanese entry by Kishio Suga has, incidentally, bagged a prize at the Venice biennale last year.

PRIORITY QUESTIONED: Japan has participated in art events round the world, including Bangladesh, Sao Paulo and Paris. But "nowhere in the world does the jury decide on the prizes before the show opens. What is the hurry in deciding on the prizes when the award will be given only at the end?" Mr Ogo asked. Dismissing the explanation that the time had to be fixed to suit the convenience of the jury members, a participant asked, "Who should get the priority at an art triennale - the artist whose work is being exhibited, or the jury?"

The Japanese participants explained that "since both of us are in Asia, cultural exchange between our countries is very important to understand each other. That is why every time we participate with our best artists. But if this kind of treatment is meted out, we will also have to reconsider our decision to participate in Triennale India, the way Germany has."

THE DISGRUNTLED: Following the problems they faced in the past, Germany is not participating in the current Triennale, while France has refused to be judged, one learns from reliable sources.

Meanwhile Ukraine, which had earlier participated as part of USSR and was hoping to contest as an independent state this year, has "no official information as to our status in Triennale India 1994," informed its ambassador