

Unity pledges mark Indira day

From Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, Nov. 19

Nostalgia marked the 69th birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi today with the nation celebrating it as National Integration Day. Peace marches and blood donation camps, held in different parts of the capital, set the tone for the celebrations which began with the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and other dignitaries paying homage to her at Shakti Sthal today.

Mr. Gandhi launched a "Harit Vahini" (green army) of children at Shakti Sthal by handing over a sapling to a child and released a poster of "Harit Vahini".

Then Mr. Gandhi and his wife drove to the memorial of Indira Gandhi at Safdarjang Road and placed flowers at the spot where she was assassinated on October 31, 1984.

The results of an international design competition, organised for the building complex of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), were also announced with Mr. Ralph Lerner, an American architect, winning the first prize of Rs. 20 lakhs. The results, decided by an international jury, were announced by Mr. Gandhi. The second prize of Rs. 5 lakhs went to Mr. Gautam Bhatia of New Delhi and the third prize of Rs. 1 lakh each was shared by three architects — Francoise Helene, Jeremy Dickson and Alexandros Tombasiz.

'Myopic vision': Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Gandhi criticised the critics of the competition for their "myopic vision". "Artistic boundaries should cross national boundaries to help

take culture to greater heights.

Earlier, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, Union Minister for Human Resources Development, explained the concept behind the institution, saying it was visualised as a centre for inter-action between different art forms.

The function was attended by several intellectuals and artistes some of whom gifted their works to the centre. These included rare books, manuscripts, paintings and photographs.

Pledge for integration: For Delhi administration, the occasion marked the beginning of the National Integration Week. Mr. H. L. Kapur, Lt. Governor of Delhi, administered a pledge of national integration to the employees. Those present included the Chief Executive Councillor, Mr. Jag Pravesh Chandra, the Executive Councillor (Health), Mr. Bansilal Chauhan, the Executive Councillor (Development), Mr. Prem Singh and the Executive Councillor (Education), Mr. Kulananda Bharatiya.

The following is the text of the pledge: "I solemnly pledge to work with dedication to preserve and strengthen the freedom and integration of the nation. I further affirm that I shall never resort to violence and that all differences and disputes relating to religion, language, region or other political or economic grievances should be settled by peaceful and constitutional means."

PTI reports:

President's call: The President, Mr. Zail Singh, today called on the nation to follow the ideals personified by Indira Gandhi as the most appropriate way to pay homage to her memory.

In a message the President, on a visit to Allahabad, said in her lifetime Indira Gandhi strove tirelessly for world peace and the welfare and unity of the country. "We should be inspired by our memory of this great individual".

Mr. Zail Singh visited the room at Swaraj Bhawan where the late Prime Minister was born, and after garlanding her portrait, spent a few minutes in silent prayer.

Environment Law comes into force

NEW DELHI, Nov. 19

The Central Government today announced in Parliament its decision to enforce with immediate effect the law providing for comprehensive coverage of environmental protection as a tribute to the memory of Indira Gandhi on her birthday.

The decision on the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 was announced in the two Houses of Parliament by Mr. Bhajan Lal, Minister for Environment and Forests in his maiden speech after he became a Union Minister.

Providing clarifications to members in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Bhajan Lal promised to clear in the next three months all pending national development projects including the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in Gujarat. The project, meant to supply water especially to Saurashtra, has been held up by his Ministry for environmental clearance. —PTI