

Science cuts across political barriers: PM

NEW DELHI, Nov. 20. — Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on Tuesday said political barriers would not prevent India from having ties at the scientific level.

Inaugurating the 19th general assembly of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), Mr. Gandhi said the world's biggest problem today "is political barriers but there are many areas, one of them science, that cut across nations irrespective of what the barriers are." Science preached brotherhood and oneness, he added.

Talking about Indian science in the present days, the Prime Minister said: "If India is to progress, scientific temper must be built into our culture," and it should not be confined to a few pockets at the higher level.

Pointing out that the pyramid of science must be built on a local base from bottom up, he said, "This is the direction we would like to take."

Since the days of Jawaharlal Nehru India had been committed to using science and technology for the development of the human being.

Scientists must strike a balance between the 20th century science and technology, on the one hand, and values, spirituality and inner strength "inherited from our ancient civilisation" on the other. India suc-

ceeded in areas where the latest technology was applied. "But no success was achieved in those areas where we failed to apply the latest technology."

LONG TRADITION: Mr. Gandhi, paying rich tributed to the late astronomer, Dr. M.K. Vainu Bappu, former IAU President, said India had a long tradition of astronomy. Some of the early masonry observatories such as the Jantar Mantar here "are still serving a useful purpose." Indian astronomers had been in touch with their counterparts abroad for a long time and this "helped in the development of our sciences."

The Prime Minister also released a commemorative stamp depicting the Halley's comet.

The IAU President, Mr. Hanbury Brown, underlined the importance of international co-operation, particularly in astronomy.

A total of 1400 astronomers from all over the country including 300 from India are taking part in the 10-day conference, being held for the first time in the country. There will be 42 commission meetings to discuss specific topics on the sun, the planets, comets and related disciplines. In addition, there will be 250 individual meetings. — UNI & PTI.