

## RINGED URANUS CONFIRMED

BANGALORE, April 27. — The four-year-old discovery of rings around Uranus was confirmed during the planet's occultation shadow a rare astronomical event—that swept over India last night.

The presence of epsilon rings was confirmed at the Kavalur observatory where an Indian team led by Dr. M. K. V. Bappu, Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics and a team from the US, jointly conducted the experiment. Similar experiments were also held at Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Nainital.

Dr. Bappu, who was also involved in the historic discovery in 1977, in a message from Kavalur said that the occultation was observed "successfully" through two different telescopes and "our earlier findings of epsilon rings have been confirmed."

One Indian team consisting of Dr.

Bappu and Dr. J. C. Bhattacharya, Deputy Director of the Astrophysics Institute here, and two US teams announced the discovery of rings around the Uranus after the occultation on March 10, 1977.

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One of the US teams was headed by Dr. Elliot, leading astronomer, which observed from NASA airborne observatory flying over the southern Indian Ocean. The other team belonged to the Lowell Observatory that had the distinction of discovering the planet Pluto over 50 years ago.

It was earlier believed that no other planet excepting Saturn had rings around it.

The discovery by the Indian group last time was also made at Kavalur near Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu. A 40 inch telescope was used at that time.

Uranus, seventh planet in order of distance from the sun and the first beyond the naked eye visibility limit, was discovered by Mr. William Herschel in 1781 with the help of a telescope.

One of the outer planets, Uranus is large in size with a diameter about four times that of the earth and believed to be similar in composition and structure to Jupiter and Saturn. The distance of the planet from the sun is about 19 astronomical units.

Like all planets, Uranus spins round its axis while going round the sun. Its orbital period is 84 years. Its rotation period is not accurately known—some place it is around 10 hours, while according to others it is close to 25 hours. One feature of its rotation is peculiar—the axis of rotation almost lies in the plane of the ecliptic.—PTI.

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