

'Halley's Comet cannot affect living beings'

CALCUTTA, May 4. (PTI) — The Director of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore, Dr. J. C. Bhattacharyya, on Saturday ruled out the possibility of any biological "disturbances" in living beings and any natural catastrophe because of the appearance of Halley's Comet.

The comet was a very small object and located far off compared to the moon. "We sometime find tidal bore under the influence of the moon but how can the comet disturb us? This is nothing but an inverted logic," he told PTI.

Replying to a question, he said the celestial object seen very near Halley's Comet was not a meteor but "Messier object" which are always very much in the sky. Astronomers had been observing such objects since early times. "This is nothing new," he said.

Detailed observatory reports on Halley's Comet would be made known within five months after a complete study of photographs and other research work, he said.

He said that the manufacture of the 230-metre telescope at the Bangalore Institute showed that the country had made "remarkable progress" in astrophysics. Though "we are lagging much behind" the Soviet Union and the USA, where 600 metre telescopes were already in use, the advancement in astrophysics in the country was com-

mendable, he said.

Dr. Bhattacharyya said the number of observatories in the country had gone up to 12 and the position would further be improved with the installation of infrared telescopes at the Gurushikar centre near Mount Abu and another at Leh in Ladakh in the next 10 years.

He urged young scientists to take advantage of the facilities available in the field of astrophysics.