'Indian Claim on Uranus' Rings Proved Right'

BANGALORE, Sept. 7.

The Indian scientists clearly established their "sensational" discovery that the ring structure around Uranus is similar to that of Saturn's rings, at the recently held seventh General Assembly of the 60-year-old International Astronomical Union at Montreal, demolishing the claim of thin ribbon like structure of Uranus rings by an American group.

Dr. Bhattacharyya of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, who attended the Assembly along with a team of Indian scientists, disclosing this to PTI on his return here said Chinese observers had also noticed a similar feature to the one discovered by the Indians.

The records obtained at Kavalur and Nainital observatories on March 10, 1977, by three research teams, had shown that the ring structure around Uranus was very similar to that of Saturn's rings. The American group, had, however, disputed the Indian discovery, which was claimed to be the most sensational one in the solar system after the 1930 discovery of the outermost planet Pluto.

According to Dr. Bhattacharyya it was pointed out in the assembly that both the Kavalur and Nainital records were obtained with almost identical equipment. The telescopes used were the largest light collectors.

Hailing the election of Dr. M. K. V. Bappu, Director of the Astrophysics Institute and leader of the Indian delegation as President of the International Astronomical Union, Dr. Bhattacharyya said it was a great honour done to Indian astronomers. Dr. Bappu, well known for his work on Wilson Bappi effect and associated with a comet — Comet Bappu Bok-Newkirk — which he and his collaborators discovered in 1949, was the first astronomer to be elected from the third world for the prestigious post.

One of the major problems the new president would face, according to Dr. Bhattacharyya was to "complete" the work taken by his predecessor, Dr. Adrian Blaauw of the Netherlands to persuade both China and Taiwan to work together in the field of astronomy. Both China and Taiwan attended the assembly this year, though the former protested initially over the presence of the latter.

Dr. Bhattacharyya said India will play a major role in the construction and operation of a giant equatorial radio telescope to be established by the International Astronomical Union in Africa near the equator to make "extra-galactic" studies. The General Assembly of the union had recommended to India to secure UNESCO support for the setting up of the telescope.

Dr. Bhattacharyya said the scientific experiments during the ten-day meeting of the union, which was founded to provide an international forum for co-operation in astronomy, clearly showed that major break-throughs in astronomy were expected from the new instruments in space. The major part of the time was spent on the results from x-ray and ultra violet tellites. The orbiting x-ray observatory was named as "Einstein". The union had more than four thousand astronomers as members from 47 countries.

Dr. Bhattacharyya said many astronomers from different countries had also expressed their willingness to come to India to witness the total solar eclipse that will be visible in the country in February next.

THE HINDU, SEPTEMBER 8, 1979