

Halley's Comet sighted at Kavalur

BANGALORE, Sept. 14. — Indian astronomers have recorded their first sighting of Halley's Comet, according to Prof. K. R. Sivaraman, Chairman of the Indian Halley Observation Programme (IHOP).

The comet was photographed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) astronomers at the Kavalur observatory, using a one-metre telescope on September 3 around 3 a.m., Prof. Sivaraman told PTI here on Friday.

The comet was photographed as a tiny spot, similar in appearance to that of a faint star, by Mr. M. J. Ruzario, against the background of stars in the constellations of Gemini and Taurus.

Prof. Sivaraman said the sighting of the comet on September 3 confirmed its earlier visibility in a photograph taken on August 29 by Dr. K. K. Scaria of IIA using the same telescope at Kavalur. However, the comet was first sighted in Japan this year.

He said the comet was being tracked continuously and was

photographed again this morning. It was, at present, at a distance of 430 million km from the earth. It was between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars.

Prof. Sivaraman said further scientific observations of the comet would be made once it developed its tail.

LESS SPECTACULAR: However, he said, its appearance during 1985-86 was going to be less spectacular than the last one in 1910 due to the unfavourable positions of the earth, the sun and the comet.

Under the IHOP, the comet was being observed at the Uttar Pradesh State observatory at Nainital and Rangapur observatory of the Osmania University at Hyderabad, besides the Kavalur observatory of IIA.

Prof. Sivaraman said the IHOP at its review meeting held here recently expressed satisfaction over the preparations made for making scientific observations of the comet and collecting data on its various aspects.