

Delhiites witness solar eclipse

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NEW DELHI: For celestial enthusiasts it was virtually a feast for the eyes in the Capital on Friday as they were able to witness the partial solar eclipse through telescopes attached with filters and various projection set-ups.

Forecast

Despite heavy rain a day earlier and shower or thundershower forecast for Friday, Delhiites were able to view the partial solar eclipse that began at 4-03 p.m.

The end of the eclipse at 5-56 p.m. could not be seen in Delhi due to a cloud cover.

According to Nehru Planetarium Director N. Rathnasree, the event was successfully watched from the Teen Murti Lane premises of the Planetarium where a number of state-of-the-art telescopes fitted with filters were installed.

"This time round Delhiites were able to see a large fraction of the eclipse because at the time of maximum eclipse the sky was cloud-free. However, we couldn't view the whole partial solar eclipse at Jantar Mantar. We had temporarily made pinholes on both the bowls of Jai Prakas and students were able to measure a few readings."

Pointing out that a solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes exactly between the sun and the earth, the Planetarium Director said 15 days after or before a solar eclipse there is usually a lunar eclipse.



FEAST FOR THE EYES: A girl watching the partial solar eclipse at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Friday. - PHOTO: MAHAVIR SINGH BISHT

"This year the lunar eclipse falls on August 16."

A large number of children accompanied by their parents gathered at the historic India Gate where a non-government organisation, Science Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators, was providing telescopes to anyone who was curious about the event.

"The children themselves dispelled myths and superstitions surrounding the event by coming out in a large number. They also persuaded their parents to come along. There were no cases of chil-

dren watching the event through naked eyes as they were aware that the event had to be seen only through a filtered telescope," said Head of SPACE Instrumentation and Observations, Ajay Talwar, adding that the NGO's team had also performed various experiments like eclipse photography, visual observation and recording in Russia as part of 'Heliodysey-2008'.

"Although the partial solar eclipse started at 4-03 p.m., the first glimpse of the event could be seen only after one minute. At 5-03 p.m. an eerie

light that was neither cloudy nor evening light could be seen," added Mr. Talwar.

Observation

A public sky-watch was organised at CTI Parade Ground in Raja Garden. "A large number of students visited Raja Garden. Pinhole cameras, pinhole observation activities and solar goggles were given to visitors to view the event."

There was also a question-answer desk where astronomers tried to satisfy the curiosity of children as well as adults.