The penumbral lunar eclipse as observed in New Delhi on Monday — Alwin Singh | Pioneer

Dull moon due to penumbral eclipse

Staff Reporter ■ New Delhi

Skygazers looked for vantage positions on Monday night to watch this year's first penumbral lunar eclipse, visible from almost the whole of Asia and some other continents. The moon crossed the penumbra of the earth from 6.08 p.m. to 10.08 p.m. (IST), though the sight was not as spectacular as it is in the case of a total or partial lunar eclipse, Nehru Planetarium Director N Rathnasree informed.

"The penumbra of the earth is a region of space which is partly illuminated by the sun. So when the moon crosses through that particular illuminated region, it does not become dark, but there is a faint decrease in its brightness," she explained. This particular penumbral lunar eclipse is of a high magnitude and at the point of greatest eclipse at 8.08 p.m. (IST); about 90 per cent of the moon will be inside penumbra of the earth. "There is a faint darkness at the northern edge of the moon," the Planetarium director said.

"This eclipse being penumbral people can notice shading only when 2/3 of Moon's disk is immersed in the lighter shadow of earth," she added. In order to make the understanding of the moon's disk prominent, the planetarium that worked in collaboration with an NGO named 'Space' for the day, used telescopes to show the images of the eclipse. Specialised digital cameras were also used to take the images of the eclipse and analyse the disk movement. "We are analysing the images, preparing graphs and taking measurements to show people distinctly the eclipse occurring," said Rathnasree.

This is, however, the first and the deepest of the four penumbra lunar eclipse of the year. This eclipse was visible from India. Further people Eastern Europe, Asia, Australia, Pacific, Western parts of North America also witnessed the eclipse. The maximum covering of moon while passing through penumbra (ie lighter shadow of earth) occurred at 8.08 pm when 90 per cent of Moon came under the lighter shadow (penumbra) of Earth.

There will be two more penumbral lunar eclipses this year — one on July 7 and another on August 6.

Children watching the lunar eclipse (left) through a telescope at Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium in New Delhi on Monday. – PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

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