

Solar treat for Netizens across the globe

WATCHING Friday's total solar eclipse is only a click away. Those who can't travel to far off locations to see the magnificent celestial event can simply log on to the Internet and watch its live webcast.

People across the globe can watch the eclipse on the NASA TV available on its website www.nasa.gov.

A total solar eclipse takes place when the earth, the moon and the sun are aligned and the shadow of the moon touches the surface of the earth.

The path of the August 1 eclipse begins in northeastern Canada, where it would be visible at sunrise. Then it will cross northern Greenland, the Arctic, Barents Sea, Russia and Mongolia before ending in China, where the eclipse would be visible at sunset.

In other parts of the world, away from this narrow band, the eclipse would be partial. In Delhi, partial solar eclipse will be visible between 4.03 pm and 5.56 pm.

However, live webcasts will be available all through the path of the eclipse. The

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National Aeronautical Space Agency, Nanjing Purple Mountain Observatory and Shanghai Astronomical Observatory Online will broadcast the eclipse live on the Internet.

'Totality' of the eclipse occurs when the moon completely overshadows the sun for a few minutes. The complete blockage of the sun exposes its outer atmosphere — known as corona — which is otherwise not possible to see because of the intensity of sun rays.

The Nehru Planetarium has made arrangements at Jantar Mantar and Teen Murti Bhavan for the special screening of the event from 4 pm to 6 pm on Friday. At Jantar Mantar, the eclipse will be shown using a pinhole camera and at Teen Murti Bhavan, the event will be shown on a large screen using a projector.

"Solar eclipses should not be viewed with the naked eye except during the



A PRETTY SIGHT: Total solar eclipse seen from Zambia in June 2001.

brief period of totality, which will not be visible in India. No method of directly seeing a partially eclipsed sun is safe. But it can be seen using the pinhole camera under the shade of a tree," said N. Rathnasree, director of Nehru Planetarium.

Two Indian scientists — S.M. Bhandari from Space Applications Centre, Ahmed-

abad, and Dr C.G. Deshpande from Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune — will be conducting experiments at the Indian research station at Svalbard in the Arctic, which falls in the totality path.

"They will collect data about the levels of ozone by sending balloons to the height of 30 km," said Rasik Ravindra, director of the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research, Goa.

In summer, the sun does not set in the Arctic. "The central eclipse will continue for about two hours. During summers, we can watch the eclipse for longer duration in the Polar region. Besides, the sky is pollution-free and clear and that helps in better observations," said Rathnasree.

Five Indian schoolchildren — who won the Heliodysey 2008 contest conducted by Science Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators — have also gone to Novosibirsk in Russia to observe the eclipse.

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