

Pics: Agencies

Venus' date with the sun!



Priyanka Naithani

People around the world turned their attention to the daytime sky on Tuesday and early Wednesday in Asia to make sure they caught the rare sight of the transit of Venus. Viewed across the globe through telescopes and viewing glasses, this once-in-a-lifetime event where Venus slid across the sun, was indeed a moment nobody wanted to miss. The view was visible across different parts of the world including South Asia, the Mid-



dle East, east Africa and most of Europe. Pune astronomy enthusiasts managed to catch a glimpse of the transit. At the science centre in Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), there were arrangements made for public viewing. They had kept three telescopes and two small projec-

tion systems for 600 people who had gathered at the science centre since 5 am. "The transit started at 3.39 am and lasted till 10.22 am. In Pune, the Venus had crossed the sun and we could see it only after sunrise at 6 am. But due to the clouds, we couldn't see it at first. Luckily, around 9 am as the clouds started thinning around, we could catch a glimpse," says Samir Dhurde, who is part of Public Outreach Programme at IUCAA. The rains and cloudy sky did wash away some of the enthusiasm, but around 600 people turned up to watch this once in a lifetime experience. Sharing the experience, Arvind Paranjpye, director, Nehru Planetarium, Mumbai, says, "Usually, a transit helps one find the distance between the earth and sun. Unfortunately, due to the cloudy sky, Mumbaikars were disappointed and couldn't see it clearly."

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VENUS TRANSIT

Venus looked like a black dot gliding across the face of the sun over the course of about six hours. It appeared only about a 30th the diameter of the sun, so it looked like a pea in front of a watermelon. On average, we see four transits of Venus within 243 years. The events happen in pairs spaced eight years apart, and they alternate whether Venus crosses the top or the bottom of the solar disk. Transits usually happen when a planet crosses between Earth and the Sun. Only Mercury and Venus, which are closer to the sun as compared to other planets, can undergo this unusual alignment.

