That’s my Venus! Skygazers gawk at beauty spot on Sun

BY GERARD LAI

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He was first in line yesterday, arriving at 6.40am at the Singapore Science Centre, before dawn broke.

For 11-year-old Thulani Keyuru Dhar

masena, a Primary 5 pupil at De La Salle School, it was exciting to be able to wit

ness a rare celestial phenomenon.

Accompanied by her mother, Mrs Aruni Dharmasena, 39, as well as her classmate, Grace Wong, 11, Thulani was among 2,000 skygazers who turned up to watch the planet Venus transit across the face of the Sun.

Mrs Dharmasena, a housewife, ex

plained why she took her daughter to the Science Centre: “Nowadays, kids spend too much time on their iPads. I wanted to expose her to nature and get some knowledge.”

Elsewhere, about 100 skygazers parked their telescopes in the field of the sports recreation centre at the National University of Singapore in the morning to witness the once-in-a-life
time event.

Venus slides directly between the Earth and the Sun twice in a century, with the two occurrences separated by eight years. The last transit occurred in 2004, and scientists predict that the next pair of sightings will not be for another 105 years.

The transit occurred from 6.15am to 12.42pm here yesterday, and was visible from around 8am onwards.

Although rain clouds threatened to rain on the crowd’s parade, the sky cleared at around 11am, for skygazers to witness a beauty spot on the Sun before the window of opportunity passed.

They filed onto a lawn at the Science Centre and took turns to peek through the 15 telescopes – equipped with solar filters – at the Sun and its “mole”.

The spectacle was not just about pretty pictures, though.

Associate Professor Lim Tit Meng, the Science Centre’s chief executive, hopes that the celestial phenomenon will stimulate people’s interest in understanding planetary movements.

Citing the fact that science can now accurately pinpoint the date of the transit, he said it can help many understand how the universe is governed by physical laws.

He said: “It makes you realise how insignificant you are. The universe can continue functioning for a long time, but human life is short.”

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Celestial: 天体的 tian de
Telescopes: 望远镜 wang yuann jing
Century: 世纪 shi ji
Pinpoint: 精确的确定 jing qu de que ding
数千人排队看“金星凌日”

黄顺杰

本世纪最后一次“金星凌日”（右图）昨早登场，吸引数千人涌入科学馆和新加坡国立大学观赏这个天文奇观。
“金星凌日”昨早6时15分开始，前后长6小时。由于本地日出较晚，民众到10时55分才观赏到金星（Venus）徐徐掠过太阳的表面。
约3000人前去观星，200多人在科学馆9时开放前，就在外排起人龙。适逢学校假期，家长都带着孩子前去。
尽管每人观星时间仅几秒，多数受访者都表示等待是值得的。

下一次“金星凌日”将在105年后的2117年12月11日。