Cloud obscures annular eclipse

October 3 2005

Clouds obscured an annular eclipse for most sky-gazers across Europe and Asia Monday as the moon passed in front of the sun.

This was the fourth annular eclipse of the 21st century.

News media from Ireland to India reported cloudy conditions made viewing difficult as the moon appeared to be surrounded by a ring of fire, the BBC said.

An annular eclipse is less spectacular than a total solar eclipse because the sky does not go completely black.

If the moon happens to eclipse the sun on the near side of its orbit, it blocks out the star, creating a total eclipse. But if the moon eclipses the sun on the far side of its orbit, the satellite will not completely obscure the star, and a ring is seen.

The next total solar eclipse is March 29. It will traverse equatorial West Africa, the Sahara, the western Mediterranean, Turkey and Russia.