

The Story of Observing TSE2009 From Its Focal Point



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Preface

This document is to share our experience with people all over the world. While writing, I used natural English language instead of very rich literature so that general people can understand from anywhere of the world what I am trying to express.

In the case of timing, I used the Daylight Saving Time (DST) format in Bangladesh. I used a GPS at the prime focal point to synchronize all of my clocks with the local GMT. So if anyone wishes to know the GMT, just deduct one hour from the time stated here. e.g.: 7:00 AM DST means 6:00 AM +6 GMT.

All the pictures and videos are completely the property of Abdul Quader Munshi (Mishu), i.e. me. The pictures are not for sale, resale or to use anywhere without the prior permission of the author.

Abdul Quader Munshi (Mishu)

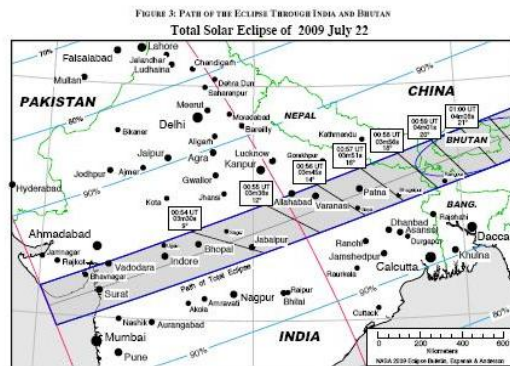
July 26, 2009

June 7, 2009: It was the starting of my regular daily life as usual, at the breakfast table, with the Daily Prothom Alo. While having a look in the inside pages, in page 3 of the Feature Page “Biggyan Projonmo”, a heading caught my attention. “Purnogrash Shurjogrohon porjobekkhoner Prostuti”. After a through reading, I just simply decided to observe it, as it will again happen after 105 years.

I already have the Global Coordinate from the newspaper and also checked in NASA website. So the Global Coordinates are

$26^{\circ}24.725'N$

$88^{\circ}39.314'E$ (Source: Daily Prothom Alo), $26^{\circ}15.4'N$ $88^{\circ}00.1'E$ (Source: NASA Website) with the time. Also I got the map for the whole TSE2009. After having a check in google Earth, and since the central line of the eclipse will pass through Panchagarh, my plan is to stick with



the GPS target $26^{\circ}24.725'N$ $88^{\circ}39.314'E$.and go there to observe it live. As it is that much special to me, I want to make it as error free as possible.

July 17, 2009: Suddenly it came to my knowledge that I do not have enough time to prepare for the TSE2009. Though I had the necessary data and a lot of time to get prepared, but I am always lazy and late. As usual, the result is same... a rush before the journey. Not enough time to prepare perfectly. But after all I have to go...

So the very first thing is informing my family about my plan. And after doing so, I finally now have the SUV with my driver available and booked for the entire trip from Dhaka to Panchagarh

July 18, 2009: Since now I already have solved the transportation problem, now I have to prepare my equipments. In the morning, I arranged a grade 11 welding glass as a filter since my goal is to take photograph of the TSE2009. I'm planning to take my Sony DSLR

A200 with my Sony 70-300mm G lens for taking pictures. Also planning to take my Germin GPS for pinpointing the location.

July 19, 2009: In the morning I got informed that one of my colleagues, Mr. Farukee is joining with me from Chittagong by July 20, 2009. It is great for me. But Farukee will have to go to Rajshahi by July 20, 2009 midnight as he will have to handover some important office documents there. We decided to stay the night at Rajshahi and will start for Panchagarh on July 21, 2009. Meanwhile, I discovered that my filter is not ready yet. Thanks to Javed Bhai for his kind helping hand to make the filter for me. All the batteries are now charging.

July 20, 2009: Suddenly it came up in my mind that why only taking still pictures? Why not some videos? Since Farukee is joining with me, I can take the opportunity. But alas! Right now I do not have the video camera with me. But I made an alternate decision. I'm planning to use my Digital Cam for taking mid grade video. So I need another filter. Thus again rushed to get another grade 11 welding glass. Meanwhile, the final touch for my journey. Preparing

the batteries, cleaning the lens, checking the tripods, checking the laptop, card reader, etc.



Farukee arrived at 4:00 PM DST and then we started the journey for Rajshahi at 5:00 PM DST. While hopping into the SUV, I suddenly discovered that the GPS is not ready yet. Actually my plan was to use an external antenna on the rooftop of my SUV for better signal reception from the GPS satellites. But I discovered that the connector of the antenna is TNC male, where the GPS needs a BNC male. I checked my inventory and found a Type-N to BNC. Also I had some Type-N males. Thus brought the antenna to home and soldered the Type-N male.

Then I returned to the SUV and started the journey. But I was not getting any signal reception at all. While the SUV was running for Rajshahi, on the way I was trying my best to bring the GPS up. But after a lot of trying, I got no signal reception from any of the

satellites and I finally came up with the decision that the problem was not in the connector, but in the antenna feed line. I just connected the local short antenna (indoor) supplied with the GPS and then I was able to get a moderate level of signal by placing the GPS beneath the front windshield with an accuracy of 8m. That was enough for me.

And after arriving at Rajshahi, now I am preparing for the last time for the TSE2009. A little training to Farukee for camera operation, a little briefing and a little planning for the journey from Rajshahi to Panchagar, that



Jul 21: My SUV at Panchagor.



Jul 21: At Panchagor stadium, My SUV parked at right. Where Diganta Channel's SUV at left.



Jul 21: We are only 62m away from the exact focal point.



Jul 21: I am taking a tea break at the final destination.



Jul 21: I am informing my family about my arrival at destination. To my left, it is the office building of the tea estate and the shed was our observation place.



Jul 21: Farukee is taking a tea break.

is the happy ending of today. Thanks to Farukee for bringing a map of the highways for the trip to Panchagarh from Rajshahi.

July 21, 2009: Early in the morning, we woke up in Rajshahi. Our plan is to start for Panchagarh as early as possible. After having our breakfast, at 8:00 AM DST, we started for the long trip to Panchagarh via Natore, Bogra, Dinajpur and Thakurgoan. Thanks to Farukee again for his map. Because my driver never came here before and I came here long time ago, the map was a very useful aid for us.

At near about 2:00 PM DST, we

arrived at Panchagarh, had our lunch at BDR canteen and looked for a hotel to stay. Unfortunately all of the hotels were already booked and finally I got only a single room after a hardship. After booking the room, we went first to the Panchagarh stadium, the main camp and venue for public for observing the TSE2009. On arrival there and observing about the preparation, we just decided to do a reconnaissance at the main focal of TSE2009, which is at Modhupara village in Harivasha union under Panchagarh District ($26^{\circ}24.725'N$ $88^{\circ}39.314'E$). The plan was simple, Plan A: Observe it at the main focal point. Plan B: On failure to reach main focal point, we will observe it from Panchagarh stadium. I left my driver at hotel for rest, as he was very tired.



Jul 21: Farukee, beside the prime focus.



Jul 21: Our observation place selected.

At 4:00 PM DST, Farukee and I started for our desired location. We gave the coordinate in our GPS as the next waypoint and started driving our SUV to find the spot. While driving, we asked some



Jul 21: temporary stalls for our snacks.



Jul 21: The search light of Indian Border.

local people for the village Modhupara. While following their directions, we were always taking the reading from our GPS. But for unknown reason, the aerial distance between the spot and us was constantly increasing. Meanwhile, we met three trekkers, Tinni, Esha and Tonmoy. They were also looking for the focal spot and got lost like us. They joined with us. And then we started the journey again. It is a lifetime experience of mine while

I was driving the SUV through very rough terrain, narrow muddy roads, off road and highly congested bamboo bushes at both sides of the roads. Farukee and Esha was helping me to navigate and taking

away the bamboo, jute bunches etc for a clear road for our SUV. As all of us were so busy and tensed about the arrival at the spot by daylight, we actually forgot to take some pictures of our tough journey.

Finally after a lot of tough driving, hard work and explore, we found a road and also found that our GPS is indicating a decreasing in distance between the spot and us. We continued to follow that road and finally we got almost near, around 200 metres of the focus point. We finally parked our SUV beside the M.M. Tea Estate's site office and hopped down from the SUV. Farukee and I started to find the exact point using our GPS holding on our hand. The GPS was indicating the position with an error radius of 7 metres. We found that we are around 62 metres from the focal point. But that time it became really hard for us to find the



Jul 21: The guy who invited us for dinner in his home.

exact point. As per our plan, we decided to observe it within the 100 metres of radius around the main focal. Thus finally we accepted the current location and fixed a place, i.e. the bank of the pond in front of the tea estate. It was really exciting for all of us that finally we were able to arrive at the focal point. I also understood that if we returned back to Panchagarh and attempt to come back in the very morning, then we would miss it. We decided to spend the night here.



Jul 22: I am ready for the briefing to Farukee. Also ready to write my reports and sleep. Behind my SUV, it was the police car brought by the NSI guy.

I was looking around for making my next plan, where to place tripods, how to shoot, etc. Meanwhile, we came to know that in the tea estate, some boy scouts are staying and this place has been selected as the point for the researchers on astronomy. We found a few tea stalls there and had taken raw tea. As we were all tired, the manager of the tea estate agreed to give a little place for us. But I was not interested to stay inside the tea estate's office because

always I cannot sleep in very much crowd. Also I was worried about a deep sleep because since I am always lazy, I may fail to wake up in time. It was about to dusk and we got the chance to have a little shower. It was

a great thing for all of us as we finally could be fresh. After sunset, we met a field officer from NSI who was surprised when he learnt that we were from Chittagong. He also requested us to stay in the office, but we refused as there were many people staying and the room would be suffocated at the time of sleep.

At this time, Farukee and I were thinking about dinner. We planned



Jul 22, 4:30 AM DST, People are coming.



Jul 22, 6:24 AM DST: People are gathering to observe



Jul 22, 6:52:50 AM DST: Everybody is ready, but bad weather. To the left of the microbus, it was the prime focus.



Jul 22, 7:28:16 AM DST: Eclipse already started. But dense cloud.



Jul 22, 7:48:54 AM DST: Suddenly the first glimpse.



Jul 22, 7:53:26 AM DST: We first saw a star.

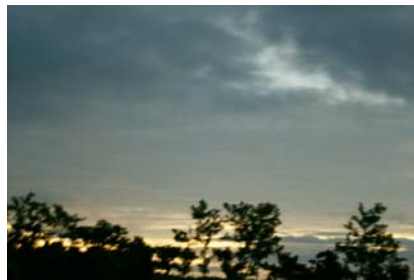
to have some biscuit, peaju, etc as our dinner. Suddenly the NSI guy came and asked about the dinner. We told him about our plan and asked his favor to send someone to bring eggs for us. He assigned a local guy to bring the eggs for us, where the guy suddenly invited us for the dinner in his residence. Lucky us.

After dinner, we returned to our SUV. Meanwhile, our three guests were about to sleep and I gave Farukee on the To-Do of the next early morning. Also I asked my driver to come to our location by a van. Meanwhile, we became really VIP there. When people

saw our preparation, they were confused about us... were we from any media? Or we were the scientists for research?

Then we were having some chitchat with the NSI guy about the local security of the people coming here. Also I was waiting for our driver's arrival. Meanwhile, I discovered that the sky was getting cloudy. It was a bad sign for us because the continuation of it will bring a complete mess.

July 22, 2009: I woke up around 3:30 AM DST. Could not sleep well due to the crowd of so many people incoming. Just came down



Jul 22, 7:56:36 AM DST: Time of total eclipse. But we lost the sun again



Jul 22, 7:58:10 AM DST: We again found the sun.



Jul 22, 7:58:28 AM DST: The Eclipse



Jul 22, 7:59:58 AM DST: This is what we all were waiting for.



Jul 22, 8:00:14 AM DST: One of my best shot ever.



Jul 22, 8:00:20 AM DST: One of my best shot ever.

from my SUV and astonished when saw so many people are coming to the place. On foot, rickshaw van, bicycle, motorcycle, even sedans. It was telling me how much interested the mass people were about the TSE2009.

Both local and near by people were coming as well as people from other districts. Boys and girls, men and women, even little kids and aged persons, all were coming to observe it. It was telling me that no matter what age, education, profession, or society we all were from, but we all had one goal, to observe the last Total Solar Eclipse of this century from Bangladesh. And that was right

from the focal point of it. Though at Panchagarh stadium, there was a very good arrangement to observe it, but people were rushing for this spot.

I talked to the manager of the tea estate and he agreed to allow me to do my works on our selected place. My plan was to work minutely because under any circumstance, I was not interested to miss any thing. If I missed, I would miss it for the rest of my life. And the exact focal point was reserved for the researchers from Astronomical Society. So I was not interested to go there and interfere in there work. I stayed 60 meters west from the exact focus and since it was under my tolerable range (100 metres), I was fully satisfied working here.



Jul 22, 8:01:08 AM DST: The sun is coming out



Jul 22, 8:03:28 AM DST: The special lighting effect after the diamond ring.

About 4:30 AM DST and still people were coming. There were a parking lot established for temporary basis and people were parking their vehicles there. Though my SUV was parked just beside my



Jul 22, 8:05:26 AM DST: The moon is moving away from the sun.



Jul 22, 8:06:04 AM DST: The moon is moving away from the sun. Birds are confused.

observation place. Still I thank to the some of the local people, employees of the tea estate and the NSI guy for their kind helping hand to make the place for my observation.

As by then my observation spot was ready for me, I took my GPS and synchronized the clock of my both cameras and cell phone with it. My plan was simple, setting the clock of both cameras to the local GMT of Panchagarh and the cell phone to the local time in DST. Now I am almost ready for my observation. I Called Farukee and my driver went for a sleep. Around 6:30 AM DST in the morning, I asked Farukee to give a

hand with me to setup the equipments. We brought all of our tripods, cameras, portable chair with the laptop, filter, etc to the observation spot. We were completely ready and the heart was beating. But we were anxious and worried as there were thick and dense clouds. There was no way of the visibility of the sun. We all were waiting for the sunrise time. The time passed, and we understood the sun had risen though no sign of the sun. So many people were waiting for the little glimpse of the sun. I was watching my cell phone's clock for the starting time of the eclipse.



Jul 22, 8:33:36 AM DST: The moon is moving away from the sun.

It was 7:00 AM DST, according to the calculation, news, the moon had started to cover the sun already, but no sign of sun. We all were simply hopeless due the dense cloud. Already many people started to went back with great sorrow because they were hopeless.

Meanwhile, our NSI guy came and greeted us. We all were really tensed.

I was full time standby with my setup, no matter what weather condition it was. And I planned to stay till the last. We all were looking to the sky with very anxiety. It was at 7:48:54 AM DST



Jul 22, 8:42:22 AM DST: My last shot.

when some of the villagers suddenly shouted out loud with joy. The sun was somehow visible through the cloud. I just started shooting as planned. Farukee started taking video footage of it. Then

the whole thing started, hide and seek game of the eclipse through the cloud. We all were then very excited and started to observe. I was shooting and watching my cell phone clock for the exact timing. At 7:53:26 AM DST, we first saw the star in the sky. That was just a feeling that cannot be described.

At 6:56:19 AM DST, it was supposed to be the total eclipse, but no sign of sun. At 6:59:02 AM DST, we finally got the visual of the total eclipse. All I still can say is it was God's miracle. Through that dense cloud, there was no way to see that total eclipse but somehow we saw that. I was taking pictures, changing camera settings and again taking pictures. My goal was taking exclusive pictures of the total eclipse, using no filter at all. It was really exciting. At 8:00:14 AM DST, finally I was able to take the total eclipse as naked human eye view without any filter. Meanwhile, the time was gone. The total eclipse lasted for 3 minutes 56 seconds.



Jul 22, 8:58 AM DST: From the right, sitting: Mishu, Tinni, Tonmoy, Esha.

Within this short time, we all had to take the pictures we were looking for. I could take some more nice pictures without filter if I could set my camera settings properly. But since from the time of sunrise, there were clouds, I got no chance.

When the total eclipse ended, the sun started to come out, that was a look. After 8:03:28 AM DST, the sun came out with a special lighting. It was looked like there was a big mercury light pointed to the area for lighting. Or may be there was a big magnesium flame on the sky that made the whole area bright with that light. I still do not know how to express that lighting effect. It was not the regular daylight, but a special lighting effect that is completely caused by a natural phenomenon. And this effect will not come before 105 years.



Jul 22, 8:59 AM DST: From the right, sitting: Mishu, Tinni, Tonmoy, Farukee.

At 8:42:22 AM DST, I took my last shot. Though I wanted to take shot till 9:03 AM DST, but again the dense cloud came and covered the sun fully again. Farukee and I decided to pack up. I asked Farukee to pack our things up and to take a little rest. Meanwhile, I had some chitchat with some other persons came here. The NSI guy left, and we were actually sharing our feelings,

experiences with each other. My driver was still sleeping. Suddenly I got the idea to have a sight seeing. I went out and walked around. Even I went to so close to the border, I could see the fencing, BSF out posts, patrolling of them, etc. It was a lifetime experience.

Finally my driver woke up, and we started for Panchagarh city. Tinni, Esha and Tonmoy joined with us. They dropped at Panchagarh and we started for Dhaka. Meanwhile, we took our breakfast at the BDR Canteen again. And then we started for a direct drive to Dhaka, the same route but opposite direction. My SUV was running carrying us, two guys with joy and indescribable happiness. Behind, there was Panchagarh...

Conclusion

I was tired and after arrival at Dhaka, I got a sleep and now I am writing the report. It was really a memorable event in my life. I still do not get any words to express the feelings of mine. It is my lifetime achievement and I feel myself really lucky because I finally could observe the TSE2009 right from its focal point. I will say that those who missed it, they simply missed it forever.

Though there were some errors in our work, and I am not satisfied with some of the video and still images, but there is no way. I have to wait for 105 years to rectify and take error free shots. Thus all I can say is I am really lucky.

And finally I like to thank first to my beloved parents for their constant encourage and support. Also thanks to some of my senior brothers, little sisters and friends for their encouragement. Thanks to the NSI guy (I am not mentioning his name) for his help regarding our staying, food and security there. I also thank to the employees of the tea estate for their constant help. Also to the villagers and of course, thanks to Tinni, Tonmoy and Esha for their accompaniment with us, that made the whole trip really enjoyable.

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