

**SPACE celebrated Summer Solstice at Jantar Mantar
Longest day of the year!**

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June 21st marks the beginning of summer in the northern hemisphere and is called the summer solstice. In 2011, the solstice occurs in the Northern Hemisphere on June 21, at 17:16 UT (22:46 IST). It is the longest day for people living in the northern hemisphere. For example in New Delhi, sunrise on summer solstice day in 2011 was at 5:24 am and sunset will be at 7:22 pm making it a day which is almost 14 hours duration.

SPACE Foundation celebrated this day as Solar Fest at Jantar Mantar by conducting public outreach and by performing various activities.

There were around 250 people present at Jantar Mantar, Delhi who had come out of curiosity to learn about various astronomical instruments. Jantar Mantar was constructed by Maharja Sawai Jai Singh in 1710.

The team from SPACE explained all the four yantras – Jai Prakash Yantra, Ram Yantra, Samrat Yantra and Mishra Yantra to all the people present there. Students from different schools also came out to know more about Jantar Mantar and its historical significance. Some foreigners were also enthusiastic to get familiar with the astronomical instruments. Astronomica- an amateur astronomer's wing of SPACE volunteered to do public outreach. People were in awe after knowing how accurately these yantras worked.

SPACE had stationed pin-hole cameras and ball projectors for the people to watch the sun. Kids were quite excited to see the sun through solar view goggles. People took turns to watch the sun through these special goggles which don't harm the eyes. Students from IIT associated with SPACE Foundation, performed a skit (Nukkad Natak) to make them aware about the significance of the sun and summer solstice day. The skit also contained parts to help remove the myths and superstitions related to the sun and eclipses.

Pratibha from Rohini said "My kids are quite interested to know about space sciences and always wanted to know about such new projects. Today it was a great experience to come here and watch these instruments. We hope to join SPACE in future for such activities". She applauded our efforts to break the myths related to eclipses in our recent campaign 'Chaand Ka Langar' on Lunar Eclipse 15 June.

Jayanti from Punjab who was on her first visit to Jantar Mantar said, "It was a great experience to come here and know more about astronomy".

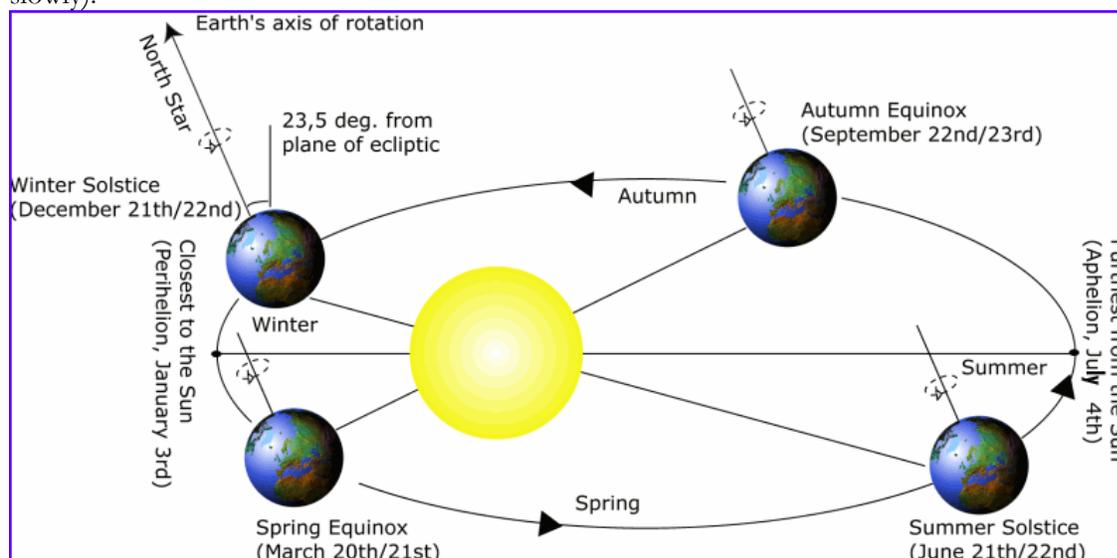
Shikha Gupta from Green Park who came with her kids to show Jantar Mantar was also on her first visit said, " Being a Delhi resident, I never came here and always thought that it's just a red structure and didn't know that Jantar Mantar has so much to offer."

Bindu Sharma who heard about SPACE public outreach on radio came with little expectations but was awed by the initiative of SPACE Foundation. She was happy to be there and got to know more about astronomical instruments at Jantar Mantar.

About Summer Solstices

June 21 is a very important day for our planet in its relationship with the sun. June 21 marks the beginning of summer in the northern hemisphere and is called the summer solstice. It simultaneously heralds the beginning of winter in the southern hemisphere. **It is the longest day for people living in the northern hemisphere. In 2011, the solstice occurs in the Northern Hemisphere on June 21, at 17:16 UT (22:46 IST).**

The name is derived from Latin sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still), because at the solstice, the Sun appears to stand still in its movement during its motion (it appears to travel slowly).



The earth spins around its axis, an imaginary line going right through the planet between the north and south poles. The axis is tilted somewhat off the plane of the earth's revolution around the sun. The tilt of the axis is 23.5 degrees; and thanks to this tilt, we enjoy the four seasons. For several months of the year, one half of the earth receives more direct rays of the sun than the other half. Days are longer in the summer for the northern hemisphere due to the tilt of the Earth's axis allowing for more sunlight to be projected onto the surface.

At the June solstice, Earth is positioned in its orbit so that the North Pole is leaning 23-and-a-half degrees toward the sun. As seen from Earth, the sun is directly overhead at noon 23-and-a-half degrees north of the equator, at an imaginary line encircling the globe known as the Tropic of Cancer. The sun's rays are directly overhead along the Tropic of Cancer (the latitude line at 23.5° north, passing through Mexico, Saharan Africa, and India). This is as far north as the sun ever gets. This results in the longest day of the year.

When the axis tilts towards the sun, as it does between June and September, it is summer in the northern hemisphere but winter in the southern hemisphere. Alternatively, when the axis points away from the sun from December to March, the southern hemisphere enjoys the direct rays of the sun during their summer months. All locations north of the equator have day lengths greater than 12 hours at the June solstice. Meanwhile, all locations south of the equator have day lengths less than 12 hours. Around December 21 the solstices are reversed and winter begins in the Northern hemisphere.

Cultures around the world, starting from historical times, mark this special day in celebration of the sun's powers.

For more information log on to www.space-india.org

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