



NGT ban on Jantar Mantar Protests

Why in news?

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Recently National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned protests at Jantar mantar, Delhi.

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What is the significance of Jantar mantar?

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- The Jantar Mantar area in Delhi became the preferred site for those protesting against government policy and injustice, since it is easily accessible to citizens while being close to Parliament.

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- It is the place where many defining moments of citizens' actions like the Anna Hazare fast against corruption, rallies and meetings demanding justice for Rohith Vemula, Indian farmers protest and sit-ins against lynching and in defence of free speech have taken place.

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- These have underlined India's democratic culture, reminding institutions and legislators of the anxieties and rights of the citizens they are supposed to address and serve.

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How NGT justifies this ban?

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- Some permanent residents of this part of central Delhi had pleaded to the NGT that the protests cause noise pollution and inconvenience to the residents.

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- The NGT ban has come primarily on three grounds:

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1. Jantar Mantar is not an authorised site for protests as there is no executive order that demarcates it as such.
2. Jantar Mantar Road is marked as a residential area in the Delhi Master Plan and hence cannot be allowed to be used for other purposes.
3. The protestors and agitators cause pollution, particularly noise pollution, because of unregulated use of loudspeakers and amplifiers, public address systems, etc.

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- Issues of littering, sanitation, and even of cow protection groups bringing cows and carts to the area have been mentioned in the NGT order as justification for the ban.

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What is the way ahead?

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- NGT has clearly ignored in its passion to sanitise the area is that master plans and zoning laws are open-ended documents.
- They must necessarily incorporate room for changes that urban areas undergo over time.
- If NGT says that no protests should be allowed at Jantar Mantar because it is noisy, then every part of India should have a right to noise protection.
- Thus NGT ban must be urgently reconsidered as democracy and protest is also important in a society.

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Source: Indian Express

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