

Threats to Taj Mahal

Why in news?

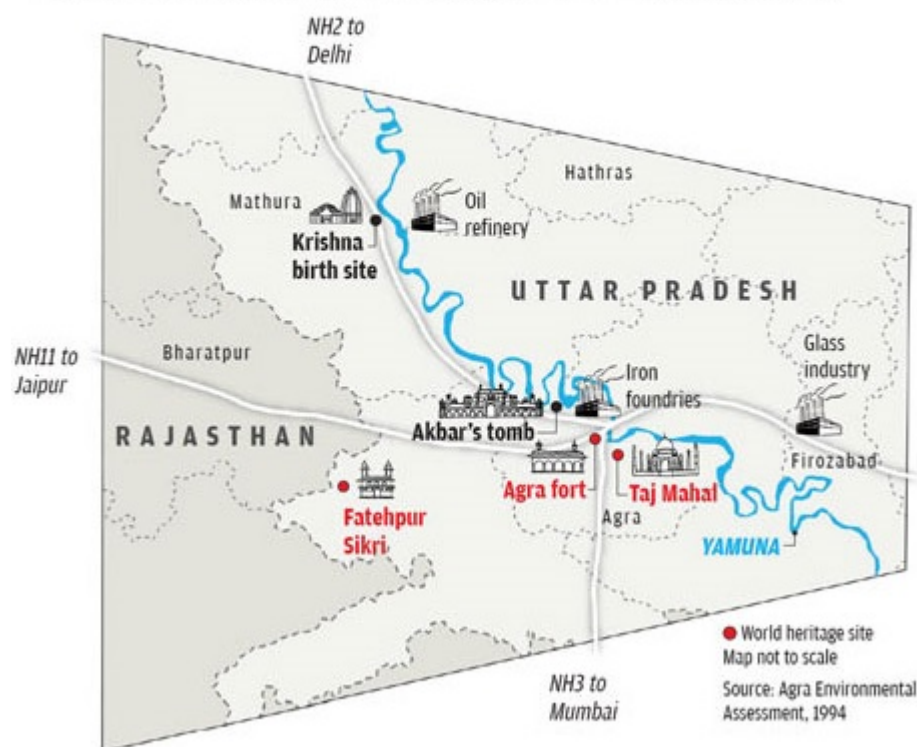
The Supreme Court has directed the Agra Development Authority to stop all commercial activities within a 500-metre radius of the Taj Mahal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

What is Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)?

- The emissions from industries near the Taj Mahal are causing the white marble surface of Taj Mahal to discolour.
- In order to protect the monument from pollution, the central government had demarcated a trapezoid shaped area of 10,400 sq. km around the Taj, called the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ).
- TTZ is spread across Agra, Firozabad, Mathura, Hathras and Etah district, and Rajasthan's Bharatpur District.
- The TTZ comprises monuments including three World Heritage Sites the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.

The right zone

The 10,400 sq km Taj Trapezium Zone, which was demarcated in 1983 to protect the Taj Mahal, has three Mughal-era World Heritage Sites



What is the TTZ case?

- Environmentalist M C Mehta had filed a petition before the Supreme Court in 1984 to take immediate measures to stop air pollution within the TTZ to protect the Taj Mahal.
- He claimed that industries, foundries, vehicles and the nearby Mathura petroleum refinery were releasing toxic gases like sulphur dioxide, which were harmful.
- In 1996, the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement in M.C. Mehta vs Union Of India & Ors, stated that the atmospheric pollution in TTZ has to be eliminated at any cost.
- It banned the use of coal/ coke in industries located in the TTZ.
- It directed the 292 industries operating in the zone to switch to natural gas as industrial-fuel, or relocate from their area.

How was the pollution after TTZ case?

- The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) report, 2010 found that despite various government schemes, the iconic Taj Mahal continued to face a threat from water and air pollution.
- Though the creation of a bypass, improvements in power supply and reduction of diesel generators had a positive impact, the emissions of nitrogen oxide and particulates had reached higher than the previous decade.
- The Yamuna water, contaminated with industrial discharge, sewage and solid waste, was also damaging the monument as well.
- **Other damages-** The Taj Mahal has also become discoloured due to contamination of the Yamuna, which has resulted in a loss of aquatic life.
- Now there is no sign of any aquatic species, which ate the insects and their larvae.
- This leads to insect and algae infestation of monuments situated on the river-bank.

References

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-climate/how-pollution-insects-are-threatening-taj-mahal-and-what-supreme-court-has-said-8176610/>