



Use Biofuels to Save Taj Mahal

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The Central government announced plans to put in place steps to convert Agra into a city that relies only on biofuel. This will address two issues i.e. excess sugar production by farmers in western Uttar Pradesh, and the yellowing of the Taj Mahal due to air pollution.

Recently, the Supreme Court told the Centre that the Taj Mahal should either be restored or demolished because the white marble, which had first become yellowish, is now turning brownish and greenish.

What has led to the change of colour of the Taj Mahal's marble?

- The polluting industries and the vehicular emissions in the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) area are a major source of air pollution.
- The Yamuna river, which flows behind the Taj Mahal, has become highly polluted which has caused insect and algae infestation on the Taj Mahal.
- Recently, WHO has released a report according to which Agra has become the world's eighth most polluted city in terms of PM 2.5 levels.

NOTE: In 1982, the government of India had declared the formation of the TTZ – a trapezoid-shaped area of 10,400 sq km around the monument where setting up or expansion of polluting industries was prohibited.

Proposed Solution

- 1,000 industrial units will open in the next five years with 1 lakh crore litres of ethanol being produced.
- An expert committee will be set up under Union Environment Secretary C K Mishra, and will have experts from IITs and NEERI. It will look into each of the industries on a case by case basis.

- There are several industries (units) in neighbouring Rajasthan, and within UP itself and those which are completely hazardous ones should be shut down, but some for which standards can be set and their pollution levels brought down should be considered.
- In UP, ethanol can be produced because of excess sugar production. This will be cost-effective, and pollution-free.
- Other clean fuels such as biodiesel, bioethanol and electricity for public transport vehicles will be used to tackle air pollution.
- Proper management and treatment of water to reduce or remove the organic matter, solids, nutrients, disease-causing organisms and other pollutants from the wastewater before it is discharged to river water.
- Measures for Ganga's main tributaries i.e. the Yamuna stretching from Gurgaon, Delhi, Mathura and Agra.
- Detailed project report (DPR) for an inland waterway and a river port just behind the Taj has been drawn up and it will help in improving the quality of river water.