Conserving Taj Mahal

What is the issue?

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- The iconic Taj Mahal is losing its shiny whiteness due to pollution.
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- Despite about 3 decades of conservation efforts, there seems little improvement, which is worrying.
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How is the case for Taj preservation proceeding?

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- Petitions for the conservation of Taj has been hovering the corridors of Supreme Court for over 3 decades now.
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- In a 1996 case, the SC ordered a slew of measures, including the closure of factories in the vicinity, to protect the monument.
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- But successive government haven't implemented these in spirit, which has resulted in the monument turning from "Whitish to yellowish" and then to the current state of brownish-green.
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- Recently, the SC criticised "Archaeological Survey of India" for its dismal performance in preserving the monument.
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- The union government has recently stated that it is mulling options for getting international experts to aid the conservation effort.
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What has led to the change of colour of the Taj Mahal's marble?

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- Firstly, the polluting industries and the vehicular emissions in the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) area are a major source of pollution.
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- Notably, Agra (location of Taj) has been rated the world's eighth most polluted city in terms of PM 2.5 levels as per a recent WHO Report.
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- Rampant construction and encroachments along with air pollution only compound the problem
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- The second reason is that the Yamuna River, which flows behind the Taj, has become highly polluted (due to Agra's drains).
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- The pollution has destroyed all aquatic life in the river, and has also proliferated insects around the river, which swarm the monument at night.
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- Fishes that would've eaten water breeding insects and their larvae have now been wiped out, which has led to the increase in population of the latter.
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- This insect swarming has led to algal growth on the surface of the monument.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Renowned experts and institutions working in the field of conservation and preservation might help in finding solutions.
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- As Taj Mahal is a World Heritage Site, considerable international interest is a granted one, which needs to capitalised on.
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Source: Indian Express

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