Taj Mahal

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture*

Why in News?

Shrouded in a heavy blanket of fog, the Taj Mahal seemed to disappear as dense mist engulfed Agra, drastically reducing visibility across the city and contributing to the 'very poor' air quality levels.

- **Location –** The Taj Mahal is a ***ivory-white marble mausoleum*** situated on the ***right bank of the Yamuna River*** in Agra, India.
- It was designated a ***UNESCO World Heritage site*** in 1983.
- **Built by –**Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal.
- **Construction –** Its construction was started in 1632 AD and completed in 1648 AD, and the entire complex, including a mosque, guesthouse, and gardens, was finished around 1653 AD.
- **Architecture & Layout -** It is regarded as the *pinnacle of Mughal architecture*, blending **Islamic, Persian, and Indian styles**.
- It is an ***octagonal tomb chamber*** with memorials of Mumtaz Mahal and Shah Jahan.
- It features perfect symmetry, and its beauty lies in the rhythmic play of solids & voids, concave & convex forms, light & shadow.
- **Main architect –**Artisans were employed on the project across India, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe & ***Ustad-Ahmad Lahori*** was the main architect of the Taj Mahal.
- **Colour harmony –** The colour combination of lush green scape, reddish pathway and blue sky over it showcases the monument in ever-changing tints and moods.
- **5 Complex elements –** Main gateway, garden, mosque, jawab (mirror building), mausoleum with 4 minarets.
- **Mausoleum –** Resting on a 23-ft high plinth and the real graves lie in the lower crypt.
- **Domes –** Central dome (large bulbous central dome) rises to 240 ft, surrounded by four smaller domes and four identical facades, each with a central arch (108 ft high).
- **Minarets –** Four elegant towers at plinth corners, enhancing symmetry.
- **Mosque & Jawab –** Built of red sandstone with marble domes, providing contrast to the white marble mausoleum.
- **Garden Layout –** ***Timurid-Persian style*** quadripartite garden (***charbagh***), nearly 17 hectares, divided by walkways.
- **Decorative Features –**
    - It uses White Makrana marble, red Sikri sandstone with inlay of precious & semi-precious stones;

    - **Pietra dura -** Inlay of semiprecious stones (lapis lazuli, jade, crystal, turquoise, amethyst) in floral/geometric designs;
    - Arabesque calligraphy (Quranic verses);
    - High and low relief carvings; and
    - Extensive jali (lattice screen) works.
- **Protection –** It is managed by the Archaeological Survey of India, protected under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958).*

To know about India's Journey of Heritage Preservation, click here

References

1. Deccan Chronicle | Dense fog Engulfs Agra, Taj Mahal Fades from View
2. UNESCO | Taj Mahal

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