

Taj Mahal: Legal Battle Over Origins

Allahabad High Court issued notices to the Centre and ASI regarding a plea challenging an Agra court's refusal to survey the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal is a 17th-century ivory-white marble mausoleum in Agra, India, built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal.

KEY EXAM POINTS

- The **Allahabad High Court** issued notices to the **Centre** and the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** in **July 2026**.
- The notices were in response to a plea challenging an **Agra trial court's** order refusing a **survey** of the **Taj Mahal**.
- Advocate **Harishankar Jain** filed the petition, contending that the Taj Mahal is a **Hindu temple**.
- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** had unambiguously stated in **2017** that the Taj Mahal was a **17th-century tomb**.
- ASI** cited the **construction technology** and design, including **pietra dura**, as evidence that it did not exist in **pre-medieval days**.

STATICS & SYLLABUS FOCUS

The **Taj Mahal** was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in **1983**.

It was commissioned by Mughal Emperor **Shah Jahan** in **1631** to house the tomb of his wife, **Mumtaz Mahal**.

The construction of the **Taj Mahal** was completed around **1653**.

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is an Indian government agency responsible for archaeological research and the conservation of **cultural heritage**.

ASI was founded in **1861** by **Alexander Cunningham**, who also became its first **Director-General**.

The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act** of **1958** governs the protection of ancient monuments and archaeological sites in India.

Pietra dura is a term for the **inlay technique** of using cut and fitted, highly polished colored stones to create images.

The **Taj Mahal** is considered the finest example of **Mughal architecture**, combining elements from **Islamic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Indian** architectural styles.

REVISION FLASHCARD

Taj Mahal, a 17th-century Mughal tomb and UNESCO site, faces legal challenge over its origins.

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