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US satellites find cause of winter pollution in north India

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US satellites find cause of winter pollution in north India

New Delhi, Mar 8: American [satellites](#) have found the reason for haze and smog during winter that leads to cancellation of [flights](#) and brings day-to-day life to a standstill in north India.

Analysis of data from instruments onboard [NASA](#) satellites has shown that ash from coal-fired thermal power plants is the main culprit.

The [study](#) found that aerosols (particulate matter) in the northern plains, especially Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, pollute the air and create haze in the entire Indo-Gangetic basin and not bio-fuel [cooking](#) or burning cow-dung as previously thought. About 600 million people live in this basin.

The joint Indo-US study was carried out by Professor Ramesh Singh and his [student](#) Anup Krishna Prasad of the Department of Civil Engineering in IIT Kanpur and Professor Menas Kafatos of the George Mason [University](#), US.

Their report was [published](#) today in the online edition of 'Geophysical Research Letter', the prestigious journal of the American [Geophysical](#) Union.

Singh's group analysed the MODIS and MISR satellite data and found very high "aerosol optical depth" - a measure of particulate pollution - especially over the coal-burning thermal power plants in the Ganges basin.

"These power plants use thousands of tons of very low grade coal daily (with 30-45 per cent ash content)," Singh told PTI.

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