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'Garden City' has just 0.1 tree per person

Special Correspondent

Unstoppable development has possibly deprived the 'Garden City' of its title.

According to a new study, the green cover has reduced to just 0.1 tree per person – a ratio that is far lower than other cities in the country. For example, Gandhinagar in Gujarat has four trees per person.

A ratio of at least one tree per person is considered necessary to maintain a healthy urban environment, said lead author of the study T.V. Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). He presented the findings at a press meet on Thursday.

The survey of Bangalore's green cover recorded 14,78,412 trees, using a combination of remote sensing data, topographic maps and GPS-based field surveys.

In the last four decades, vegetation cover has declined dramatically from 68 per cent of the total area in 1973 to 23 per cent in 2012, according to the study published by IISc and Karnataka Pollution Control Board. During the same period, the developed area grew from 7.9 per cent to 58 per cent.

Tree cover, however, varies between wards.

While areas such as Varthur, Bellandur and Agaram have more than 4,000 trees each (translating into more than one tree per person), Chickpet, Shivajinagar, Kempapura Agrahara and Kushalnagar have less than 100 (translating into 0.002 tree per person).

On the other hand, the IISc. campus alone has as many as 22,616 trees. Vegetation plays an important role as moderators of microclimate apart from sequestering greenhouse gases, Dr. Ramachandra said.

"The city needs sensible planning and a focus on environment education in school curricula. Today's children are after all going to be tomorrow's planners."

Urbanisation has also cost the city most of its lakes, according to the study. Over the last four decades, the city has lost no les than 74 per cent of its lakes.

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