

Forget Shanghai, Bengaluru is worse off than even China's 13th largest city

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Bengaluru : When the IT revolution was scripting the dreams and aspirations of Bengalureans, the city was getting ready to enter the big league. Bengalureans were promised a city that would mirror some of China's burgeoning metros, particularly, the glitzy Shanghai.

The reality, however, highlights the disparity between what was promised and what was delivered: When it comes to

dependence on public transport and commuting, Bengaluru pales in comparison even with Xi'an, the 13th largest city in China. This is the finding of a research project by T.V. Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science, who co-ordinated with researchers in Chang'an University in Xi'an as well as from University of Melbourne, Australia.

Long commute: Xi'an and Bengaluru have much in common. Both are among the fastest-growing metros in their countries. Both started as research and development hubs and witnessed massive urbanisation. The car population is similar: Xi'an has one million cars while Bengaluru has 1.4 million light motor vehicles and a further 3 million two-wheelers. Travel within the Central Business District is painful, with average speeds lower than 15 kmph.

Bengaluru Buses Far more polluting: Travelling by bus in Bengaluru contributes more than four times the carbon dioxide emissions than in Xi'an.

Though the Chinese city has 3,000 buses more than Bengaluru, the adoption of eco-friendly fuel (CNG, electric) as well as traffic decongestion methods have seen their emissions drop. The result is that an average trip in a bus in Xi'an results in emission of 0.087 kg of CO₂ while it is nearly 0.3 kg in Bengaluru.

Science needed in Planning: Research on commuting and transport systems in Bengaluru is aplenty. But is anyone listening?

T.V. Ramachandra, Associate Faculty at the Centre for infrastructure, Sustainable Transportation and Urban Planning (CiSTUP) in IISc., says his Chinese collaborators will use the findings of the study for decision-making while the findings will remain unheard in Bengaluru.

“They have managed to get science into decisions about running a city. Here, our politicians don't want science at all,” he said.