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Researchers to look for answers to urban woes

By By Our Correspondent

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Bengaluru, May 13: Why does IT City's infrastructure suck? That's a question hapless citizens have been asking for years. Researchers at the Centre for infrastructure, sustainable transportation and urban planning (CiSTUP), IISc, might be able to offer some answers — two years from now.

The CiSTUP researchers, as well as some researchers from abroad, are embarking on a two-year-long study on half a century of urban growth in India and China. They will study the dynamics of urban sprawl in 10 cities each in India and China.

They will also study and analyse the decision-making in the two countries — one the world's largest democracy and the other the world's most populous country presided over by a Communist regime — that have caused the different patterns of urban expansion.

The cities chosen for the city are categorised as coastal, fast growing and small cities.

They include the capitals of the two Asian giants, Delhi and Beijing; their financial centres, Mumbai and Shanghai; their major centres of foreign investment, Bengaluru and Hyderabad in India, Guangzhou in China; cities that have attracted much less foreign investment, such as Ahmedabad and Kolkata in India, Harbin and Wuhan in China; mid-sized cities, Bhopal, Coimbatore and Pune in India, Hangzhou and Zhengzhou in China; and their smaller but growing cities close to major industrial centres, Mysore in India and Suzhou in China.

“China is far ahead of India in infrastructure. Their infrastructure projects are completed within deadlines. In China, what the government talks, we can find it on the ground,” Dr T.V. Ramachandra of the IISc's Energy and Wetland Research Group told Deccan Chronicle.

“The comparative study will analyse decision-making and the influences on urbanisation patterns. We will also understand the environmental consequences of differences in peri-urban expansion.”

Dr Ramachandra also expects the study to help policy makers come up with sustainable development plans while implementing infrastructure projects in the future.

“Fast growing cities such as Bengaluru lack planning for the future, resulting in conflicts over tree-cutting, etc. They can be avoided through better planning,” he said. The study team comprises Dr Ramachandra and H.S. Sudhira from IISc, Bengaluru; Jeffery Sellar, University of Southern California, USA; Jingnam Huang, Wuhan University, China; Sun Sheng Han,

University of Melbourne, Australia; and Xi Xi Lu, National University of Singapore.

They are mapping the cities and their growth using satellite pictures of the last three decades. They will also go on field visits and interact with stakeholders. The study, funded by the Asia Pacific Network, is expected to be completed in 2010.

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