

## Pune should focus on public transport: study

Asian cities like Pune need to give priority to public transport that meets their economic requirements rather than accommodating more vehicles, says a new study backed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

'In many cases, the emphasis has been on adding roads or building high cost systems such as rail-based metros at the expense of more environmentally sustainable modes such as non-motorised transport and lower-cost bus systems,' says the study 'Sustainable Urban Transport in Asia' made available Friday.

The result is high level of pollution, says the research carried out by the Partnership for Sustainable Urban Transport in Asia (PSUTA), a pilot programme of the Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia).

The study was funded by the Swedish International Development Agency and the Shell Foundation through ADB, and the World Resources Institute's Center for Transport and the Environment.

Done in partnership with three Asian cities (Hanoi in Vietnam, Pune in India, and Xi'an in China), the study is aimed at helping decision makers better understand the long term viability of the urban transport systems and develop more structured approaches to policy making.

'The air pollution from motor vehicles is particularly serious in Pune but also bad in Xi'an and in Hanoi, because roughly 50-70 percent of all trips in these cities are made on foot or by two or three-wheeled vehicles. Exposure of a majority of people to direct emissions from motor vehicles is a problem,' the study states.

'Vehicle fleets are doubling every five-seven years,' Bindu Lohani, director general of ADB's Regional and Sustainable Development Department, is quoted in the study as saying.

'Poor road safety, increased congestion and air pollution not only negatively affect the quality of life but also carry large economic and social costs.

'An effective and sustainable transport system for people and goods is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth.'

The study developed a set of indicators for each of the three cities, including access, safety, environment, economic and social sustainability, and governance.

The project found that based on these indicators, passenger transport is heading in unsustainable directions in all three cities.

'This is because the number of individual vehicles is growing more rapidly than public or private forces can accommodate them and is slowing all traffic,' the report says.

'Traffic deaths are low relative to population, but high relative to distances travelled. Average speeds are low, except in the outlying regions of cities, but there the high speeds lead to greater traffic deaths.'

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