

# Urban studies gather steam

*TISS, IIT & NY's New School To Offer Course By June 2008*

Anahita Mukherji / TNN

Mumbai: Urban development seems to be the flavour of future academics with prestigious **institutions** planning to offer new courses on the subject over the next year.

**Tata Institute of Social Sciences**, in collaboration with IIT and New School, New York, plan to offer an MA in urban planning and governance. While the course would, in all probability, be taught on the **TISS campus**, there would also be faculty exchange between the three **institutions**. Teachers from New School would be invited to put up at **TISS**.

"So far, most courses on urban studies have a very conventional view of land use, where the human element is missing. We want to focus on the needs of the common man. Given that half the people in cities can't afford houses, there is a dire need to redesign urban development," said RN Sharma, dean of **social sciences, TISS**.

The course, which the **institute** hopes to introduce by June 2008, will have a strong component of research and will also take a look at how the common man can take part in governance.

The three big players are not the only ones to put the spotlight on the urban landscape. Kamla Raheja Vidyaniidhi **Institute** for Architecture and Environmental Studies (Juhu), too, plans to start a Masters course called urban studies programme. The course will have two streams—Master of Architecture in urban design and Master of Architecture in urban conservation.

Both courses would take a critical look at the existing models of development and study urbanisation, not just in terms of buildings and transport, but also in terms of people and the human cost of development.

"At present, development is driven solely by profit. We want students to analyse the human cost of projects like SEZs as well as the redevelopment of Dharavi," said Kamla Raheja **Institute's** director Anirudh Paul.

Students will get to analyse real-time projects developing around them, as they look at alternative forms of development in which profit is not the only motive. They will also get to brainstorm with officials from agencies such as BMC and Mhada. "This way they'll discover new ways of imagining the city," said Paul.

The courses, which will be site intensive, will include visiting different parts of Mumbai and other cities as well. In addition, students will get to travel to the peripheries of cities and rural areas to take a look the problems that occur due to urbanisation and uneven distribution of resources.

The course at Kamla Raheja has been approved by the Council of Architecture and is awaiting approval from Mumbai University. The **institute** hopes to start the course in August.

Another **institute**, Rachna Sansad, currently offers a diploma in urban planning and management.

Architect Labaina Rangwala believes that such courses are essential especially because urban development is facing global pressures from both the corporate sector as well as international agencies.

The model for development, she points out, may not necessarily reflect the needs of the city, which is why a critical look at the current growth in urbanisation is needed.

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