

New database launched to track infrastructure projects across country, The Hindu, Mumbai, 31st May 2019

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Student-built database on 250 roads aims at enhancing efficiency of infrastructure development

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Comprehensive infrastructural data on 250 roads across the country, built on a public-private partnership (PPP) model, has been made available at a single destination by an initiative of Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras).

The institute, on Wednesday, launched a data platform called 'Integrated Database on Infrastructure Projects (IDIP)', which is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of infrastructure development in India and to enable effective decision-making among different stakeholders involved in the infrastructure sector.

Principal Investigator of the Project, Professor A. Thillai Rajan, Department of Management Studies, IIT Madras, said that quality data on infrastructure projects in the country was scarce. While data sets provided by the government are often very dated, those from external agencies such as banks



Road report: Prof. Rajan (second from right) at the launch of the Integrated Database on Infrastructure Projects at IIT Bombay on Wednesday • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and funding institutions lack details. "The existing data is not sufficient for more probing questions. For example, does the time from project announcement to project award have any bearing in time overrun or cost overrun? Can we see patterns or traits in different developers, which helps them finish a project in time? It is questions like these that IDIP

hopes to provide answers to," he said.

'Major lacuna'

Mr. Rajan also cited a major lacuna in the available data on various infrastructure projects which IDIP will help to bridge. "Most of the time the data sets we have are from the initial project award phase. There is not a lot of data on the construc-

tion phase of projects and there's even less data on the operations phase. The latter is crucial to know if the project is profitable and how profitable it is for investors. We provide the operating information about various projects, which makes it more comprehensive," he said.

IDIP was launched at the World Conference of Transport Research at IIT Bom-

bay. While the database will expand to cover other infrastructure in the country, the initial focus of IDIP would be on the road sector, which has received the highest private investment among all infrastructure sectors. "Not many know that the Road PPP in India is the largest in the world. We will soon be working on adding around 680 roads built on the Engineering Procurement and Construction model," Mr. Rajan said adding that they will also be working to include infrastructure projects on ports, airports and power sectors.

The current database has been built over the last three and half years by graduate research students at IIT Madras. Mr. Rajan said that the project used the data for their individual thesis and the database would serve as a resource to future students of the institute.

The others will need to subscribe to the database in order to access it.