

North Maharashtra University plans to develop 'Smart Villages'

■ The plan released on August 15, Rs 1 crore sanctioned

■ The varsity has adopted five remote and tribal-dominated villages from Dhule, Nandurbar and Jalgaon districts under the project

■ By Ajay Mardikar

WITH the announcement of developing a selected number of cities as Smart Cities, North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon, has taken an initiative to develop five remote villages of the state as 'Smart Villages'.

The plan for developing the villages into 'Smart Villages' was released on August 15 and the University has sanctioned Rs 1 crore for the project.

Explaining the plan, Vice-Chancellor of the University Dr Sudhir Meshram stated that the five villages from Dhule, Nandurbar and Jalgaon districts

The selection was based on the base-line survey conducted by students of Department of Social Work of the University. Information about physical infrastructure, social structure, educational facilities, health and economic status, water management and sanitary system in these villages was collected.

Those villages which lack basic amenities; those which are remote and tribal-dominated; fall under Group Panchayat (Gat Gram Panchayat); at least one member from the selected villages should be a member of the Gram Panchayat are some of the parameters for getting selected under the project.

Dr Meshram stated that developing physical infrastructure could be difficult with limited financial resources with the University.

However, awareness about education, improving quality of education using modern technology; health education, cleanliness and hygiene; cheaper methods of water purification, rain water harvesting and water

use of alternative sources of energy; developing basic amenities through people's participation; extension of research in the field of agriculture to farmers, promoting organic farming, sericulture, biotechnology, soil analysis and improving quality of soil; legal awareness; removal of superstition etc., will be undertaken with the help of villagers and students of the University.

The University is constituting various committees for monitoring the programme. The committees will have representation of taluka level magistrate, sarpanch, Police Patil, social activist, women representative from the village, representatives of all backward classes, expert in the field, primary teacher, journalist, Gram Sevak, representatives of a local college, MP, MLA, representative of local industries, NSS officer.

The ambitious programme of Dr Sudhir Meshram has been transfer of technology from lab to land, which he started as Director of Rajiv Gandhi Biotech Centre, of Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University. The

extension programme of Global Biotech Forum started with his initiative is also gaining popularity and demand from the villagers.

Under the Village Adoption programme, massive sapling plantation, propagating government schemes and helping the villages in completing the formalities; encouraging industries to adopt villages under Corporate Social Responsibility; technology and skill development, women empowerment, promoting sports, value education, leadership development, entrepreneurship development, building public libraries and connecting villages through Internet to higher education and research institutes, will be undertaken.

Dr Meshram is hopeful that this project will be a model for others to follow. The initiative of bringing about several changes in the University, including a Tribal Research Centre in Nandurbar has attracted attention of various universities and other research centres across the nation.