

IIM Sambalpur to woo corporates for Smart Villages

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At a time when governments are obsessed with building Smart Cities, the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) at Sambalpur hopes to unlock value in Odisha's rural hinterland.

In a first, the institute aims to develop 'Smart Villages' in clus-

ters, depending on the potential in an area. "It is in the concept stage. The idea is to identify a cluster of villages that have a business potential, like weaving and eco-tourism," said Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director of IIM-S. He said there has to be an entrepreneur model, which will be proposed to various stakeholders, to work together.

The plan is to conduct a series of workshops and identify the clusters. "We will reach out to large industries in the public and private sector to get funding from their CSR (corporate social responsibility) and create the basic infrastructure," said Jaiswal. For making the business model viable, 10 to 20 villages will be taken as a cluster.

The chosen ones would not be far from an airport for convenience of the visitors.

At the initial stage, the idea is to develop two such clusters in the state and replicate if successful. "We will have a revenue model for smart villages to make them sustainable," said the director. IIM-S is also setting up a Centre for Social

Entrepreneurship to promote start-ups in the social sector.

In this academic year, the B-school has doubled its intake for the MBA course to 120. It has plans for an executive MBA (part-time) degree and doctoral programmes. IIM-S is one among the third-generation of IIMs, announced in Union Budget 2014-15. The others were

to be at Visakhapatnam (Andhra), Bodh Gaya (Bihar), Sirmaur (Himachal), Nagpur (Maharashtra) and Amritsar (Punjab). The institute is presently operating out of a makeshift campus. It has been allotted 237 acres by the Odisha government at Basantpur on the outskirts of Sambalpur for a permanent campus.