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[Home](#) » [Nation](#) » [Current Affairs](#)

While Modi dreams of smart cities, IISc pitches for smart villages

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Bengaluru: If Prime Minister Narendra Modi dreams of creating smart cities in the country, researchers of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have outsmarted him and gone a step ahead. They are trying to create a 'Smart Grama' or smart village to bridge the rural-urban divide.

A survey of eight villages under the Ragi Hosahalli Gram Panchayat, about 20 kms from the city, is currently underway to collect data on their basic amenities like water, health and sanitation, communication and transport facilities, scientific advice for farmers and work population as the researchers firmly believe that the only way to curb mass migration from rural areas to cities is to make the villages self-sustaining.

The study has already caught the attention of Union minister, Ananth Kumar, who has reportedly agreed to take the project forward if the pilot is successful.

Dr T.V. Ramachandra, head of IISc's Energy and Wetland Research Group, says creating smart villages may be easier than building smart cities.

"We are looking at the lack of facilities in these villagers and trying to establish a connection between them and migration to urban areas, which is not only creating problems for the urban centres but also an imbalance in villages where large tracts of land are left uncultivated due to lack of water and the right expertise.

"Once we are finished with the survey we will try to rope in a few crop experts and arrange a meeting with the villagers," he explained.

Interestingly, although the village selected for the pilot project is located close to Bengaluru, its lack of facilities is driving the youth to the city for work in its malls and markets.

"Some kind of migration is always necessary, but not for the reasons that are prompting the youth here to hurry to Bengaluru," added the concerned researchers.