

'Village Buddha' project aimed at connecting with rural market

Project launched at Thattanahalli village on Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border

ANIL URS

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Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), along with TVS Motor Company, has launched its 'Village Buddha' project at Thattanahalli village in Attibele on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border.

"Through the project, a concerted effort is being made by CII to create a structured approach for manufacturers to engage with villages," said Venu Srinivasan, past president of CII and Chairman, TVS Motor Company.

"The project promotes the concept that business and society are interconnected and interdependent, providing both the context and impetus for development," he added.

Launching the project, Srinivasan said the aim is to train 150 to 200 'Village Buddha' experts in

the first year through three models and cover at least 10,000 villages over the next five years.

For expanding the module, CII will train guides, mentors and subject experts from Indian industry with proven experience of implementing village improvement practices and supporting community activities.

Rural market needs

Explaining the Village Buddha programme, Shoji Shiba, Chief Adviser, Champions for Societal Manufacturing Project, said it is built on three beliefs: Today's unsolved problems of the society are tomorrow's business opportunities. Society can be best improved through systematic and organised initiatives. And business and manufacturing/services capability will enhance if



Venu Srinivasan, Chairman, TVS Motor Company

business organisations work with society. Shiba said Village Buddha will help companies appreciate the needs of rural markets and develop business models to tap opportunities at the bottom of the pyramid. The concept also envisages corporates working with the villagers and panchayats to identify

breakthrough projects around community needs such as clean water or self-sufficiency in energy and education.

Appreciating the initiative, Karnataka Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj HK Patil said it offered an opportunity for holistic development of villages by inculcating a sense of brotherhood between industry and society. Earlier, contributions from the industry meant donating physical infrastructure.

Part of CSR strategy

Navas Meeran, Chairman, CII Southern Region, and Managing Director, Eastern Condiments, said, "Through this process, organisations will explore and enhance their capability to develop new businesses and offerings for the emerging markets in the rural and urban fringes of India, where significant growth is expected in the coming decades."