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Adopt a village, teach a child

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New Town: St Xavier's University has adopted five villages around its New Town campus to promote education among marginalised students.

Students of the university will visit the villages in groups and teach local youths as part of the undergraduate curriculum. Students from the villages will attend classes at the university every day.

Teaching marginalised students will be a component of all undergraduate courses in arts, science and commerce streams and the masters in social welfare (MSW) course offered by the university. The programme will take off when the university reopens after the Puja vacation.

"All undergraduate students will have to spend 60 hours in the villages, for

which they would earn two credits," Father Felix Raj, the vice-chancellor of St Xavier's University, said.

"We had adopted a similar project at St Xavier's College to promote education in villages. It was very successful. The scheme that we have planned for St Xavier's University has been designed on the same model," Felix Raj said.

The University Grants Commission guidelines lay emphasis on students' involvement in social work, he said. "There must be a connect between educational institutions and villages. Education will be more meaningful only if we can establish this connect," Felix Raj said.

The focus of the special coaching will be on English and mathematics.

"Many students from the



St Xavier's University,
New Town

rural areas find it tough to manage their jobs as they do not know English. Sound knowledge of English and communication skills in the language are essential. A lot of

emphasis will be given on improving the students' communication skills in English to help them do well in the job market," said the vice-chancellor.

Special attention will be given to mathematics as many students from marginalised families who study science subjects do not have access to special coaching.

Fifty students of St Xavier's University will frequent the five adopted villages between October 26 and November 30 to conduct a survey and examine the academic environment. They will also find out the number of schools and colleges in the localities and the standard of education there.

"Teaching materials will be prepared using the facts and figures that our students collect in the survey," said Fa-

ther Felix Raj.

The university held a meeting with local panchayat leaders, representatives of the five villages and heads and teachers of local schools and colleges on October 11.

"We hope to be able to implement the scheme successfully," said Father Felix Raj.

Classrooms on the New Town campus will remain open to the village students from 5pm to 7.30pm from Monday to Friday and on Saturdays and Sundays.

The adopted villages are Dharmatala Panchuria Part I and II, Kulberia Part I and II and Kantha Beria. Wari, Paikna and Haitishala villages will be included in the following phases, Felix Raj said.

Faculty members of the university will also teach the village youths along with the university students.