

Introducing water hyacinth, jute sanitary napkins for woman

Mansura Hossain . Dhaka | Update: 15:26, May 28, 2019

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Our society is breaking the years of prevailing ‘menstrual taboo’ these days. But there are lack of initiatives to make menstruation management more eco-friendly.

To work this out, women came forward, making sanitary napkins from water hyacinth and jute.

A British medical journal in its essay titled 'Menstrual hygiene management among Bangladeshi adolescent school girls and risk factors affecting school absence: results from a cross-sectional survey', showed that 41 per cent girls skip school for three days each month during their menstrual cycle. And 99 per cent of the girls feel uneasy at school during their period.

Assistant scientist of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) Farhana Sultana said, “Our waste management system is not that developed.”

“This causes risk for the environment as most of the sanitary napkins available in the market are not environment friendly,” she added.

Jute napkin project

Farhana Sultana has been working as the main researcher of several programmes for menstrual management. He received an award worth USD 100,000 (Tk 8.4million) from the Islamic Development Bank to make jute napkins, reducing the use of plastics.

She said that the project is still in the initial phases.

Quoting a survey from India, Farhana said, the napkins available in the market contain 3-4 per cent plastic.

A woman uses nearly 23 kilogrammes of plastic for period management in her life time that will take 500 to 800 years to dissolve in the soil.

Farhana Sultana and her team have been working on menstruation management for long. Intern researcher of the team, Tishan Mahfuz, said they installed biometric devices in four schools in Dhaka and Manikganj to inquire the reason of female students’ absence from classes.

After making arrangements of providing sanitary napkins in the school the rate of absence reduced, said Tishan.

Bangladeshi woman awarded for inventing napkin from water hyacinths

A student of Brac University Najiba Naila Wafa is conducting a pilot project of making sanitary napkins from water hyacinth.

“Our project is inspired by an Kenyan pad manufacturing company called JaniPad who took the initiative to make sanitary napkins from water hyacinth. We bought sterilising machines and small machines for pad manufacturing from the Dholaikhal in the city. We trained 10 women from Mohammadpur Geneva camp to make napkins,” Najiba told Prothom Alo.

“We also conducted another pilot project at Hazaribagh slum area four months earlier,” she added.

Najiba said she and two other members of the team use the pads made of powdered water hyacinths encased in cotton. The napkin dissolves within two weeks after disposal.

“There are still some drawbacks in using these pads, but we will work these out,” she added. Najiba Naila Wafa won the Global Student Entrepreneur Awards (GSEA) for Bangladesh organised by the Entrepreneur Organisation Bangladesh, an organisation of entrepreneurs.

She also won the ‘Social Impact’ award from China.

****This piece, originally published in Prothom Alo print edition, has been rewritten in English by Farjana Liakat***