

Khobong TE sanitary napkin unit to raise daily output

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 30: A team of five young women at Khobong Tea Estate's (Apeejay Tea) sanitary napkin production unit is aiming to raise production from the current level of 300-450 napkins to 650-700 pieces a day.

The objective is to make the unit – launched on International Women's Day – a financially viable manufacturing facility capable of generating Rs 3,000-Rs 3,500 per month per worker engaged in production.

The initiative is a result of a partnership between Indian Tea Association (ITA) and the Netherland-based Zorg van de Zaak Foundation that seeks to promote personal hygiene and make it available at the doorstep.

“The project also creates livelihood for women living in the estate, including differently-abled persons in the pro-

duction of sterilized, low-cost sanitary napkins,” Shikha Mukerjee, Adviser of CSR, Apeejay Tea, said.

Khobong Tea Estate is one of the four estates in Zone-1 Dibrugarh which is piloting the sanitary napkin initiative of ITA.

ITA donated one unit, including raw material, for approximately 65,000 sanitary napkins to Khobong Tea Estate for producing low-cost sanitary napkins under the supervision of the management.

“A healthy women work force matters most as it directly impacts production and productivity. Personal hygiene affects women in many ways, including fertility. On International Women's Day, the production unit set up a stall at the celebrations and sold 310 pieces in hours so there is a potential,” Debasish Barua, Manager of Khobong Tea Estate, said.

The use of sanitary napkins amongst women and adolescent girls in tea gardens has been an uncommon practice, primarily because of lack of knowledge, low availability as well as high costs of commercial products in this segment. Recent survey conducted at ABITA estates in Upper Assam show that knowledge about use of napkins amongst adolescent girls has been good compared to the middle-aged female population resident in tea estates of Assam.

The napkins have been priced at below market rate for similar products. The distribution of the products in tea gardens is done through the adolescent groups and the members of the production team. The company is helping the team in their sales effort and also looking at the possibility of replicating this pilot project in other estates of Apeejay Tea.