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Project to control fungus in screw-pine leaf products

A Correspondent



USEFUL: Screw-pine leaf products being made at a community centre.

The Kottappuram Integrated development Society (KIDS), Kodungallur, has initiated a two-year long project, in association with the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), to develop a suitable method to control the fungal growth in screw-pine leaf products.

As part of the agreement, the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Limited will bear the cost of the overall programme.

The key objectives of the project include developing and demonstrating treatment methods to prevent this microbial growth, in addition to transferring the know-how to the beneficiaries.

According to Sunny George, Consultant scientist, KIDS, prevention of fungal growth on the natural fibre products has great importance for the sustainability of this rural craft. "The growth of fungi on the natural fibre products is a vital issue that affects the marketability these green products," he points out.

He attributes the problem to excessive exposure of the material to humidity and light. Under the programme, the NIIST is mandated to conduct a study on improved handling and storage practices and develop methods to overcome the problem of microbial growth.

The KIDS, on the other hand, will conduct trials of these methods in an industrial production environment and provide training to the members involved in the production and handling.

Says Rev. Johnson Pangath, Director, KIDS, "our attempt is to improve the quality of artisan made products through scientific intervention, and there by promoting the sector in the state."