

# Waste pickers cringe over sanitary waste

## Blast manufacturers for 'unsanitary' disposal, urge them to make provisions

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**Pune:** "We are also human beings, then why should we pick up sanitary waste generated by others?" asked the waste pickers, who also made a strong plea to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and the manufacturing companies to make provisions for disposal of sanitary pads.

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, on Friday, the members of Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchyat (KKPKP) 'gifted' used sanitary pads collected from various parts of the city to their manufacturing companies.

After using the sanitary pads, women and girls often throw them openly or loosely wrapped in papers, usually in a newspaper.

"After using such products, people hardly think about what happened to these products. But at the receiving end, waste pickers suffer the ill-effects of used sanitary pads. The KKPKP members prepare small paper bags (ST Dispo bags) and sell them at a price of Rs 1 each for disposal. But very few women willingly buy them," said Mangal Kamble, a waste picker.

According to the KKPKP and SWaCH, around five lakh pads are collected per month from the city and Pimpri Chinchwad. But the KKPKP members manage to sell just 30,000 ST Dispo bags. They have demanded that the manufacturers should take the responsi-

### PROPER DISPOSAL

■ For ST Dispo bags (made up of scrap newspaper, bearing a yellow label) call 9765999500. This makes it easy for the waste pickers to identify and segregate it.

bility for proper disposal of sanitary pads.

"These companies make huge profits selling the sanitary pads. They spend so much money on advertisements. Can't they afford to spend some money on buying dispo bags from us, which they can sell with the sanitary pads," suggested Baby Mohite, another waste picker.

For the last six months, KKPKP and SWaCH have been trying to communicate with the PMC and manufacturers like Johnson and Johnson, Hindustan Unilever Limited and Procter and Gamble. But none of the representatives of these companies attended the meet organised by the PMC nor have they bothered to respond to their letters, the women said.

"As the companies did not reply, we are presenting a sack full of used sanitary pads to them. They should see how difficult it is to pick them up and experience the foul odour. We expect that as a part of extended producer responsibility (EPR), these companies take the initiative for the proper disposal of sanitary pads," said Malti Gadgil, chief executive officer of SWaCH.