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Patna, October 8. A 10-day **Capacity Building Programme on Promotion of Sikki Art Design** for imparting skills in making the eco-friendly and GI-tagged traditional Sikki handicraft got off to a start today at the EIACP-CSEC unit of Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) today. Sikki products can range from modern functional items like baskets, trays, bowls, and caskets to decorative items such as 3-dimensional figures of deities, temples, etc. It is made out of the golden-coloured Sikki grass found all over Bihar, but especially so in Mithilanchal.

Professor Rajani Shrivastava of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) at Patna set the ball rolling with a touch of nostalgia about how Bihari families would send elaborate and multi-coloured large gift hampers made out of Sikki during marriages in the old days. Unfortunately, demand for Sikki has nearly disappeared today. The beauty of this art is in the transformation of a linear material like Sikki grass into 3-dimensional artefacts by an ingenious technique. She urged the women trainees to use their imagination once they start creating Sikki products. They should also think about whom these should be made for- be it college students, children or adults. Next, Professor Ragini Ranjan, also of NIFT-Patna, stressed on the fact that using Sikki on a larger scale can help save our environment, which is under threat due to the rampant use of plastics. There is a demand for this art everywhere in the world. We should keep persevering while trying to master this technique.

Also present on the occasion was the multi-award winning Sikki artist Nazda Khaton of Jainagar. She pointed out that the trainees will become familiar with the golden qualities of this art only after they start practicing it. She reminisced about how people would issue curses if Sikki products made out of Sikki were not part of the gifts that would be exchanged between the families of the bride and groom during marriages.

Aiming to provide secure livelihoods to women, this *pro bono* Sikki training initiative is supported by the Government of India's Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change. EIACP Co-ordinator at ADRI, Dr. Mousumi Gupta, welcomed all the guests. Dr. Sunil Kumar Gupta, Mausam Bahar, Sanjeev Kumar, and Gulshan Patel of ADRI went about enthusiastically organizing the event.

(Abhishek Prasad)