History will remember the WUHAN virus; now the CORONAVIRUS or COVID 19. But, India will remember 23rd of March 2020 when LOCKDOWN was announced and it now remains extended until 30th April 2020.

If your heart bled at visuals of the flocking migrant workers, the plight of farmers who crops are dying, mankind that lost lives; and mankind that is helping the country in these testing times, please read on!

**An Industry that is in ECONOMIC STRESS: The Indian Leather & Leather Products Industry!**

The Leather Industry is an employment intensive sector, providing jobs to about 4.42 million people, mostly from the weaker sections of the society. This Industry holds a prominent place in the Indian economy. This sector is known for its consistency in high export earnings and it is among the top ten foreign exchange earners for the Country. “Exports from India have reached a value of US$ 5.69 billion last year. We have so far achieved US$ 4.34 billion this fiscal and we need to catch up with another 1.4 billion to touch last year’s numbers. We are waiting final numbers for this fiscal quoted Mr R Selvam, IAS, Executive Director, Council for Leather Exports.

Chairman of the Council for Leather Exports, Mr Aqeel Ahmed Panaruna says “Overseas buyers have cancelled orders to the tune of US$ 1 billion upwards causing a chaotic trickle down effect.” With the supply chain cut-off and orders being cancelled, coupled with liquidity crunch, this is a serious problem for the Indian Leather and Leather Products Industry. The financial liability alone extends even beyond the cancelled orders.

**HOW SERIOUS?** Mr K R Vijayan, Chairman of Indian Finished Leather and Manufacturers Association says that “revival my happen in a very slow manner beginning the third season.” This means that the production for the AW 20/21 season (that normally runs from April 2020 through September 2020) will
be hit; new developments for Spring Summer 21 (for production from October 2020 until March 2021) will be hit and there maybe some light beginning the AW 21/22 season. Mr V Muthukumaran, President of Indian Shoe Federation has also mentioned that “the profit margins have always remained low. There is liquidity crisis everywhere. This season’s sale is almost over. The impact of COVID 19 will be seen during the next two seasons.” Many global brands have huge unsold stocks in their ware-houses. There will be immense economic stress and this Industry will go down by at least 30%. There is a fear of losing some players in the field too! As economists predict, there will be negative per capita growth and this will be the worst depression since 1930’s.

The Government of India through the Ministry of Commerce is in constant touch with the Members of the Indian Leather Industry and is taking steps to assist the Industry in every which way. This is the kind of compassion and leadership that we expect. The corona virus is already having an outsize impact on the world, and its ramifications will leave lasting impacts on fashion: this is the Industry we serve - the Leather and Leather Products Industry!

**NEED OF THE HOUR:** Dr M Rafeeqe Ahmed, President of All India Skin & Hide Tanners & Merchants Association and Member of Research Council of CSIR-CLRI had vociferously called for simple methods of Leather Tanning using fewer chemicals. His advocating has come at the most opportune moment. Recently, Mr C Anbumalar, Director of PA Footwear P. Limited discussed with Team CSIR-CLRI that we need to look at upgrading low ends. CLRI is in touch with the Industry during this LOCKDOWN period and both Industry & CLRI will look at ‘Innovation led Technology’ for the future. Team India Fashion Studio of Shoe and Product Design Centre, CLRI is gearing up to support the Indian Leather Industry. Visit [www.clri.org](http://www.clri.org) for a basket of technologies!

Already, CSIR-CLRI under the leadership of Dr KJ Sreeram, Director, CSIR-CLRI is touching the lives of the common man through manufacturing at its Chemical Pilot Plant, hand sanitizers and handed them over to Greater Chennai Corporation and other government bodies. CSIR as a whole is rising to the challenge of COVID 19 by partnering with the best of India’s industry leaders and its own formidable intellectual resources.

A wise-man once said: ‘You sometimes trip while walking, you may fall and have a few bruises, but, you get up and continue walking’

**STAY POSITIVE as you impact many lives and their livelihood!**

**Complied by:** Mohamed Sadiq, Chief Scientist, CSIR-CLRI