



Footwear & Fashion Matters



LEATHER
SECTOR
SKILL
COUNCIL



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

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Chairman's Message

The Indian leather sector begins the New Year with energy and optimism for growth. Leather and its related products always have predominance in the export arena and in the global market as reflected by the data. According to data published by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI &S) India's export of leather, leather products and leather footwear constituted a huge share of 93.10% in total export of USD 5.69 billion in 2018-19 from Indian leather and footwear sector. Not only this, leather footwear constitutes about 39% in value terms in global import of footwear and 14% in volume terms in the global export of footwear.

With a huge and growing global market, we see very good opportunities for growth in 2020. We expect additional support measures for the sector in the upcoming Union Budget 2020-21 and also in the Foreign Trade Policy which will further catalyze our growth.

Series of events scheduled to be held in Chennai as part of India Leather Week 2020, will augment the growth potential of the industry. Besides opening up new avenues for business, these events will demonstrate new technologies in the leather sector. It is beneficial to participate in international events to build the network and showcase India's talent globally. We hope you are able to develop long-term business relationships.

The non-leather footwear also has a huge potential for export growth. Considering the non-availability of domestic production base for PU which is the basic raw material for producing non – leather footwear and also high import duty of 20% on this item, CLE has been requesting for providing duty exemption on import of PU at various forums. Besides, CLE is promoting the investments under Make in India/ Invest in India in the non-leather footwear segment, considering its huge potential for growth.

CLE will be organizing the participation of members in major overseas events including the Mipel Fair, Milan, Italy, Feb. 16-19, 2020 (for Leather Goods), Micam, Milan, Italy, Feb. 16-19, 2020 (for footwear) and Poznan Fashion Fair, Feb. 19-20, 2020, Poznan, Poland (for leather, leather products and footwear) ; Asia Pacific Leather Fair and Fashion Access in Hong Kong (March 31- April 2, 2020).

With major domestic and overseas events lined-up in the next two months and with additional support measures of the Government, the leather, leather products and footwear industry aims at good export growth in 2020.



Shri P R Aqeel Ahmed, Chairman
Leather Sector Skill Council - LSSC

CEO's Message



Shri Rajesh Rathnam
CEO, Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC)

Let me begin by wishing you a happy and prosperous 2020! New year brings new energy and new hope in everything that we do. I hope this year helps you realise your business goals in building capacity through skilled workforce. As we are aware, most of the leather industry operates through MSMEs that depend on unskilled or semi-skilled people to produce footwear and fashion products. Being unorganised, often their knowledge and skills are limited and they don't know how to grow and scale business. Most importantly, they need to understand that skilled people are essential to improve quality and productivity - the key parameters for success in the leather industry.

This year, I wish to focus on how we can help the MSME sector in actively participating and getting benefited by various skill development programs. This includes PMKVY, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and adopting National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS). As a country, we lag way behind in the number of apprentices. Engaging at

least one apprentice in each MSME could considerably widen the reach and help the industry in grooming talent as per their requirements. Alongside, we need to improve the skills and knowledge of the trainers by imparting them training in the latest methods, techniques through practical exposure. I look forward to your participation and support.

LSSC conducts RPL Certificate Distribution Ceremony and launches Mochi Swabhimaan at 'Meet at Agra' 2019



The 13th Edition of Meet at Agra, the International Leather, Footwear Components and Technology event was held from 8th to 10th November at Agra Trade Center. The Fair was inaugurated by Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey, Hon'ble Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. On this occasion, LSSC conducted RPL Certificate Distribution Ceremony and launched Mochi Swabhimaan for the Agra cluster.

Shri P R Aqeel Ahmed, Chairman CLE & LSSC, appreciated the efforts from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for placing skills high on agenda. He also conveyed the criticality of skilling the youth to make them employable and how the leather industry is able to contribute to this cause. Addressing the huge presence of people from leather, leather products and footwear industry in the country at the event, he shared the urgency of skilling youth in India, and invited the industry to implement Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Shri P R Aqeel Ahmed, thanked Dr. Mahendra Nath Pandey, Hon'ble Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India for showing keen interest in the leather sector and participating in the previous RPL certification ceremony held in Chennai on 22nd September 2019, where in 1500 trainees received their certificates. The RPL Certification event in Agra, held as a part of "Meet at Agra" was the second event to formally recognize the skills and knowledge of leather workforce and certify them through RPL assessments.

The event also saw the launch of **Mochi Swabhimaan** in the presence of Shri Kapil Dev Aggarwal, Hon'ble Minister for Skill Development and Vocational Education, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh. Shri Anil Agarwal, Joint Secretary, DPIIT,

Government of India, informed that the government has provided a special package of Rs. 2600 crores to promote the leather sector, out of which Rs. 696 crores has been earmarked for skill development.



Shri Puran Dawar, Regional Chairman (North), CLE & President, AFMEC, emphasized the need to collaborate and work collectively to capture the global markets. He reiterated the importance of Agra in the leather exports with the Agra Footwear Cluster making a direct exports footwear worth Rs.3378 crores during the year 2018-19. It caters to 65% of domestic consumption and 28% of total footwear exports, involving one-fourth of the population of Agra directly or indirectly. Hence, the Agra Fair acquired a special place as it provided international information on latest manufacturing technologies, emerging design trends, eco-friendly production and access to new markets.



Certificate distribution for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL certification under PMKVY recognizes the skills and knowledge acquired informally, and assesses them as per National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) levels. Besides formalizing the workforce, the RPL certification will help in mobilizing industry-ready workforce, particularly women, who form a large part of the leather sector.

LSSC organized a certification program under RPL – Best in Class Employers scheme in the Agra cluster and distributed certificates to the candidates trained under the HRD sub-scheme of the IFLADP scheme during the event.



While distributing the certificates to the RPL trainees, **Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey** brought out the historical significance of the leather cluster in Agra and said how it has been a key player in the Indian economy. He said that through the leather sector, we are able to showcase our skills and craft globally, receiving world-wide recognition. This has also increased the competition for skilled workforce that can meet international quality and hence, initiatives like RPL are highly crucial.

Distribution of Mochi Swabhimaan Tool kits

Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey launched the Mochi Swabhimaan initiative in Agra by giving away the first tool kit to the self-employed 'mochis' (cobblers). Shri P R Aqeel Ahmed distributed 10 sponsored tool kits and informed the recipients about how they can make use of it to improve their income and increase productivity. The kits were sponsored by Florence Shoe Company, AFMEC and CFTI, Agra. LSSC will play a seminal role in implementing Mochi Swabhimaan by seeking support from the industry through their CSR funds. This will help in empowering the cobblers with a better working environment through organized tool kit and umbrella set up. The mochis were given a demonstration of the tool kits through a mobile workshop.



An interview with Mr. Junaid Ahmed, CEO, KH Group– Glove Division, Chennai, Tamil Nadu



KH Group is one of the leading manufacturers of a wide range of leather products. Their specialisation in glove making has uniquely positioned the company in international markets. We spoke to Mr. Junaid Ahmed, CEO, K H Group - Gloves Division, to learn more about the skills required in glove-making and how they've trained their workforce in the niche area and established themselves as a leader in the leather industry.

Please tell us more about K H Group.

This is a 75 year-old company; it started with tannery and it gradually entered into leather goods like small wallets, shoes, belts and later we moved into glove making. Tannery is not the same anymore as it was 30 years ago. Pollution has to be controlled and environmental conditions have to be protected and kept undisturbed.

How does K H Group prepare their workforce with skills and latest knowledge for different job roles?

We have a diverse range of products pertaining to tannery, footwear, leather goods, and gloves. Since the job roles differ, each job role requires a specific skill set. With this wide range of products, it is very important that our workforce is skilled and well-trained.

So we have our own training and HR team, who are dedicated to provide the required training to the workforce. Apart from our own training team, we are also getting a considerable amount of help from LSSC which is a motivating force for our workforce.

What kind of craft and skills are needed for glove making?

We've been in the glove making business for the last 30 years. When we started in 1986, we had trainers from Philippines who trained our people in cutting operation which is quite intricate. Later, we came out with our own techniques and now we have in-house trainers, specialized in gloves.

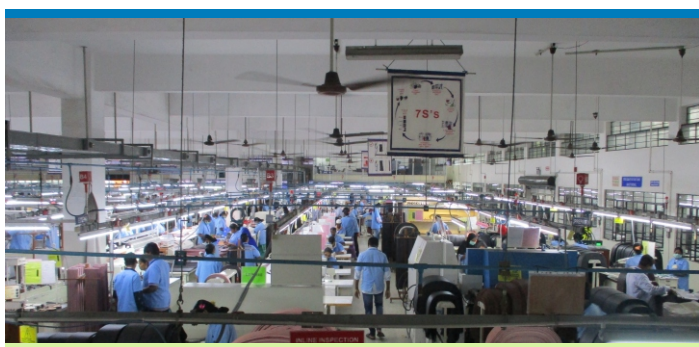
People say that glove making is an art and it requires specifically trained workforce and a thorough knowledge of all the processes. Here, all the processes are entirely different yet closely connected with each other. Cutting and sewing requires a different setup; for example, Table Cutting, which is one of the ways of manual cutting.





What is the export potential? How do you foresee the business perspectives in glove making?

The potential for glove making is limited and it is more of a seasonal business as people wear gloves to protect themselves from harsh cold winter. Due to global warming, winter is not so prolonged and the weather is not that cold any more. This is the reason people are more inclined towards fabric and cheaper options when it comes to gloves production. As leather is more expensive, people are going for cheaper options. Now, we are diversifying with components of non-leather materials. The European market prefers authentic leather while the USA is more inclined towards non-leather, fabric and woolen gloves.



How do you ensure your workforce gets benefitted by government skilling programs like RPL and apprenticeship?

We are aware about these programs and are continuously contributing towards making them successful. We have been participating actively in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to build capacity. This also helps us cut down the long recruitment and training process to some extent. Leather Sector Skill Council (LSSC) has played a crucial role in keeping the industry updated about various skill development schemes like RPL and apprenticeships.



How do you ensure international quality and standards are adhered to in all your products?

We also have a dedicated team for Quality Assurance. They are trained regularly through various leaning forums. We are serious about quality hence ensure that our customers get their desired products with the highest quality. Our workforce periodically updates themselves on quality requirements as per global standards.

Now looking at the environmental conditions, we are directing our efforts towards making eco-friendly leather goods which are chrome-free and vegetable tanned leather which is not harmful to the ecosystem.

How do we attract the young generation to the leather and non-leather industry?

We already have students from various Institutions involved in different studies such as VSM, Lean management etc., and we also send some of our workforce to Italy for 3-month training. The youth can explore the opportunity for entrepreneurship in the leather and non-leather sector after completion of the training program.

Apprenticeship, the win-win way of building talent pool in the Leather industry

Indian Leather industry comprises one of the youngest workforces with around 55% workforce below 35 years of age. Being a \$17.5 billion industry (ref: makeinindia.com/sector/leather) and with the outstanding workforce, it might reach greater heights sooner than we realise. However, the question is, how does this highest export earner of India ensure a well-trained workforce as per emerging industry needs?

Apprenticeship, a global solution for all industry needs, is the favourable response to questions like this. While other training and skilling programs are catering towards the skill development, apprenticeship, however, has been proven to be a win-win way of building talent pool.

To drive greater participation in the apprenticeship program, the government has brought significant reforms to the apprenticeship rules. The initiatives like National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) are catering towards the apprentices needs of industry and is crucially connected in the skilling of young talents.

The significance

The Leather industry, which falls mostly under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is extensively skill based, so the demand for skilled workforce is huge. If executed properly, apprenticeship can become the driving force to bridge the skill gap as it has the potential to serve the purpose of both the government who wants to provide jobs and the industries which have a need of trained and experienced workforce. The importance of apprenticeship is paramount because;

- Apart from having a high rate of return on investment, the apprenticeship program allows a company to get educated and skilled people from the ecosystem.
- Industry can engage the students as apprentices, train them on their own shop floor processes, assess them on their relative strengths and weaknesses and then employ them, only if found suitable.
- Engaging apprentices on the shop floor can boost the productivity of the companies.

As Leather sector is cluster based, Apprenticeship allows the industry to provide basic training and classroom training. Under the approach, the companies can have a common basic training partner and common classroom where they can share the costs and purchase tools and equipment. Government will also share the cost of training.

It is high time, this MSME industry should have an apprenticeship focused work environment looking at the importance of the program.

Benefits to the students

- Apprenticeship will provide the students with a feeling of the real factory and helps them speed up and work under pressure. This is very different from learning in a school. The Leather industry needs apprentices in every department. Apart from hands-on experience, apprenticeship programme has other crucial benefits too, which are;
- An opportunity to learn while they earn from the age of 14 years
- Exposure to real work environment through hands-on training
- Acquire skills and knowledge from industry experts
- Better employment opportunity after completion of apprenticeship

Benefits to the industry

Leather sector is one of the 8 major industries that generates export revenue for the country. While leather industry is contributing to the export revenue, the non-leather industry is majorly contributing to the domestic market. So the industry has an urgent need for skilled manpower and apprenticeship is the best way to skill the youth as per global standards through demand-driven training. While apprenticeship ensures the skilling of youth, it has immense benefits for the leather industry as well. The benefits are:

- Apprenticeship is a great opportunity to ensure skilled workforce as per the requirement of the leather industry.
- 2.5%-10% of total workforce can be apprentices
- Reduce long-term costs and eases statutory and regulatory requirements
- Proactively address hiring requirements by training the apprentices as per industry needs.
- CSR budget can be utilized for apprenticeship program.
- The industry has the option to design and implement their own Apprenticeship program
- Under NAPS, the establishments / industry can get reimbursement upto 25% of the stipend paid to the apprentices

LSSC signs an MoU for DDU-GKY courses

LSSC signed an MoU at DDU-GKY Annual Workshop in Chennai. This is the first initiative from LSSC to promote skill development in rural leather clusters. The skill-based courses under DDU-GKY are aimed at improving employment opportunities and enabling sustainable livelihoods for rural youth.



Testimonials of successfully trained and placed candidates



"I had to quit studies as I was married off after completing higher secondary. My family consists of two children and my husband who is employed in a hotel as a daily wage worker. I always wanted to pursue a career in tailoring and stitching, but family obligations did not allow me to pursue my interests. When a friend recommended about the skill development courses offered by Leather SSC, I grabbed the opportunity and enrolled for the Leather Stitching course. I learnt a lot during the training and practical exposure in handling leather garments. The training helped me secure a job with a Leather product manufacturing unit as a Leather Stitcher with a salary of INR 10,000.

M. Nithya, Leather Stitching

"Since a young age, I had an interest in tailoring and stitching but did not know how to go about it. I could not continue my studies due to the poor economic background of my family. One day, a friend of mine handed me a pamphlet that contained details of the many skill development programs offered by Leather SSC. I enquired about a few of the programs and finally zeroed in on the Leather Stitching program. I enrolled for the training and received intensive training by my trainers which made me supremely confident of my ability to land a good job. The training helped me secure a job with a leather product manufacturing unit as a Leather Stitcher with a salary of INR 10,000.

V. Maheshwari, Leather Stitching



"I could not continue my studies because I got married when I was young. My husband works in a real estate office and is the breadwinner of the family. But his income was not sufficient to provide for the whole family. As his income depends on successful client referrals, we have never had a steady source of income. I felt that I could make use of my free time learning a skill and finding a job eventually. A friend of mine informed me about the courses offered at Leather SSC. I decided to join the Leather Stitching program. With this training, I learnt about different types of garments and how to stitch those craft fully." After attending this course, I was placed at Paragon Polymer Products Pvt Ltd as a Stitcher with a salary of INR 10,000.

C. Revathi, Leather Stitching



Contact us

Reach us for any suggestions and feedback;

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