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NIIST Displays Vegan Leather Technology as an Alternative to Synthetic Leather

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NEW DELHI: The National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) today displayed an innovative technology for making vegan leather from agro-residues, providing an industry-ready alternative to animal and synthetic leather in an eco-friendly and cost-effective manner.

Thiruvananthapuram-based NIIST, which developed this technology as part of the year-long 'One Week One Lab' (OWOL) programme, demonstrated it during the two-day CSIR Foundation Day celebrations at the swanky Bharat Mandapam in the national capital, which began here on Tuesday.

NIIST, which is the only interdisciplinary lab of CSIR, has made vegan leather alternative with a huge industrial application from various agricultural residues such as mango peel, banana stem, pineapple waste, cactus, water hyacinth, corn husk, and rice-related waste. It has the potential to replace around 30-50 per cent of synthetic chemicals from the existing leather available in the market. Also, the developed leather sheet costs 50 per cent less than synthetic and animal leather and has smaller carbon footprint.

NIIST Director Dr. C Anandharamakrishnan said this developed process will find a good place in the market owing to the urge from the people to find alternatives to animal and synthetic leather.

"Vegan leather has a shelf life of more than three years. It has also shown strong tensile strength, sleek finish, good water retention properties, temperature resistance, and stability compared to other existing synthetic and animal leather," he noted.

Though the synthetic leather had a booming market valued at over \$30 billion in 2020 and is likely to hit \$40 billion in the next six years, there is also a huge environmental hazard associated with leather products and synthetic leather. Also, the production of leather involves toxic chemicals while the processing of leather is highly energy- and water- consuming.

The year-long OWOL initiative, the first of its kind in the country, was launched in September 2022. It was aimed at showcasing the legacy, exclusive innovations and technological breakthrough achieved by each of 37 laboratories of CSIR that would support entrepreneurial development in a wide range of areas and give an impetus to the national mission of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Tags: csir-foundation day, National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, NIIST, One Week One Lab, synthetic leather

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