



Right to Repair: European Union

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Why in News

Companies that sell refrigerators, washers, hair dryers or tele-visions in the **European Union** (EU) will need to ensure that those appliances can be **repaired for up to 10 years**.

The “**Right to Repair**,” as it is sometimes called, came into force across the 27-nation from March 2021.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The Right to Repair electronics refers to government **legislation that is intended to allow consumers the ability to repair and modify their own consumer electronic devices**, where otherwise the manufacturer of such devices require the consumer to use only their offered services.
 - Idea of Right to Repair originally **originated from the USA** where the **Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act 2012**, required the manufacturers to provide the necessary documents and information to allow anyone to repair their vehicles.
- **New Rules:**
 - Under the new EU rules, **manufacturers will have to ensure parts are available for up to a decade**, though some will only be provided to professional repair companies to ensure they are installed correctly.
 - New devices will also have to come with **repair manuals** and be made in such a way that they can be dismantled using conventional tools when they really can't be fixed anymore, to **improve recycling**.

- **E-Waste Generation in Europe:**
 - As per the **Global E-Waste Monitor 2020**, Europeans produce more than **16 kilograms** (kg) of electrical waste per person every year.
 - Asia and Africa were much lower: **5.6 and 2.5 kg** respectively.
 - **Global E-Waste Monitor:** It is a collaboration of the **Global E-waste Statistics Partnership** (GESP), formed by **United Nation** University (UNU), the **International Telecommunication Union** (ITU), and the **International Solid Waste Association** (ISWA), in close collaboration with the **United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
 - About half of that junk is due to broken household appliances, and the **EU recycles only about 40% of it**, leaving behind huge amounts of potentially hazardous material.
- **Significance:**
 - It will help **reduce** the vast mountain of **electrical waste (e-waste)** that piles up each year on the continent.
 - It will **save consumers money**.
 - It will **contribute to circular economy objectives** by improving the life span, maintenance, re-use, upgrade, recyclability and waste handling of appliances.
 - It would tackle **two manufacturing trends:**
 - Cavalier attitude towards planned obsolescence.
 - Tendency on the part of manufacturers to control the repair and maintenance network.
- **Problem with Repair of Modern Appliances:**
 - **Need Special Tools:**
Modern appliances are often glued or riveted together, if you need specialist tools or have to break open the device, then you can't repair it.
 - **Lack of Spare Parts:**
Lack of spare parts is another problem, campaigners say. Sometimes a single broken tooth on a tiny plastic sprocket can be challenging work.
- **Concerns For Manufacturers:**
 - Manufacturers have pushed back against a broader "right to repair" as that would **hurt their ability to sell new products** more frequently, and **would push them to become a service provider** rather than a product maker.
 - They also say allowing the consumer to **repair high-technology products is a risk**, think of **lithium-ion** batteries in cars.

E-waste in India

- **Official Data:**
According to the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, India generated more than **10 lakh tonnes of e-waste in 2019-20**, an increase from 7 lakh tonnes in 2017-18.

- **Indian Initiatives:**

- **E-Waste Management Rules, 2016:**

- The rules aim to enable the **recovery and/or reuse of useful material from e-waste**, thereby reducing the hazardous wastes destined for disposal and to ensure the environmentally sound management of all types of waste of electrical and electronic equipment.

- **E-Waste Clinic:**

- Aimed at segregating, processing and disposal of waste.

E-Waste

About:

- E-Waste is short for **Electronic-Waste** and the term is used to describe old, end-of-life or discarded electronic appliances. It includes **their components, consumables, parts and spares**.
- It is categorised into 21 types under **two broad categories:**
 - Information technology and communication equipment.
 - Consumer electrical and electronics.
- E-waste includes their components, consumables, parts and spares.

Way Forward

Such regulations could be **especially valuable in a country like India**, where service networks are often spotty and authorised workshops are few and far between in the hinterland. India's informal repair sector does a good job with jugaad. But the **quality of repair and maintenance services could improve** substantially if such legislation was adopted