



Formulation of Policy for 3D Printing

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Why in News

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) will soon come up with a policy aimed at promoting **3D printing** on an industrial scale in view of its emerging market.

Key Points

- **3D Printing:**
 - **3D printing or additive manufacturing** uses computer-aided designing to make prototypes or working models of objects by laying down successive layers of materials such as plastic, resin, thermoplastic, metal, fibre or ceramic.
 - With the help of software, the **model to be printed is first developed by the computer**, which then gives instructions to the 3D printer.
 - 3D printing and a viable industry around it is mostly in the shape of **additive manufacturing**, wherein **companies make specific products for projects where there are very specific demands** such as lightweight equipment, etc. One of the key applications for such products is in the medical and allied sector.
 - The **USA remains the global leader in 3D printing**, with **more than 35% market share**. In **Asia**, about **50% of its market is cornered by China**, followed by **Japan** at 30%, and **South Korea** at 10%.

- **Features of the Policy:**

- Encourage market leaders to establish global bases for 3D manufacturing in India, while also discouraging imports of printed material for domestic requirements.

- **Objectives:**

- Help develop a **conducive ecosystem** for design, development and deployment of 3D printing and additive manufacturing.
- Help domestic companies to overcome technical and economic barriers so that they can build supportive and ancillary facilities for world leaders in the technology, such as the USA and China.

- **Key Areas of Focus and Application:**

- Auto and ancillary auto and motor spare part business, such as engines, interior and exterior parts of luxury vehicles, or landing gear, complex brackets, and turbine blades.
- There can be some application of it in consumer electronics, printed circuit boards, clothing, toys and jewellery as well.

- **Challenges:**

- **Lack of Standards:** Since 3D printing is **a very niche and new domain**, there are **no global qualifications and certification norms**.
- **Hesitation in Adoption:** Another challenge is **to convince the industry and ministries to push for its adoption** in their respective sectors as any new technology, which is not understood easily, faces a tough time.
- **Risk of Job Losses:** In the initial meetings on the subject, there was a **lot of resistance on whether this technology would eat into the jobs of highly-skilled workers** in the medical equipment or aerospace technology sectors.
- **High Costing:** Although actual printing is cheap, **parts to build a 3D printer are very expensive as the equipment and manufacturing costs are very high**. In addition, there is a **concern about warranty** hence, resource companies are **hesitant to put 3D-printed parts into their machines if they are not covered for damage** in case the parts fail.
- **Sector Specific Challenges:** Globally and even in India, the **largest consumer of 3D printing is the automotive industry** and right now it is going through a lot of changes like the introduction of **BS-VI** and **electric vehicles**. **New vehicle design development has slowed** and so has the demand for 3D printing.

- **Potential Market:**

- According to MeitY's estimates, the **global market for additive manufacturing** is expected to reach **USD 34.8 billion by 2024**, which is growing at a compound annual growth rate of 23.2%.
- 3D printing **may not lead to an increase in net employment**, but this technology is something which can be pushed ahead.

Way Forward

- Lack of investment and fewer research and development centres for 3D printing are some of the additional factors that are holding back a large scale adoption. However, a better understanding of 3D printing technology and its applications among users will definitely help increase its adoption in India.
- Indian market has a high potential ground as the adoption of 3D printing solutions is continuously rising for the past few years with increased general market awareness and there is still a lot of growth here compared to markets that are more mature such as Japan, Germany or the USA.

Source: IE