



Right to Repair

For Prelims: Right to Repair, E-Waste, Committee on Right to Repair

For Mains: Environmental impact of E-Waste, Scope of Right to Repair, how to counter companies growing monopoly, Government initiatives

Why in News?

Recently, **the Department of Consumer Affairs** announced that it has set up a [committee](#) chaired by **Nidhi Khare**, Additional Secretary to develop a comprehensive framework on ['Right to Repair'](#).

What do we need to know about Right to Repair?

▪ About:

- **The Right to Repair** 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.
 - When customers buy a product, it is inherent that they must **own it completely**, for which the consumers should be able to **repair and modify the product with ease and at reasonable cost**, without being captive to the whims of manufacturers for repairs.
- The idea 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.

▪ Proposed Framework:

- Under this regulatory framework, it would be **mandatory** for manufacturers to **share their product details with customers** so that they can either repair them by self or by third parties, rather than depending on original manufacturers.
- The law also aims to help **harmonise the trade between the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and third-party buyers and sellers**, thus also creating new jobs.

▪ Global Status:

- The right to repair has been recognised in many countries across the globe, including the **US, UK and European Union**.
- In the US, the **Federal Trade Commission** has directed manufacturers to **remedy unfair anti-competitive practices** and asked them to make sure that consumers can make repairs, either themselves or by a third-party agency.

▪ Benefits:

- This will help **boost business for small repair shops**, which are an important part of local economies.
- 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.

▪ **Proposed Sectors for Implementation:**

- Farming equipment
- Mobile phones/ tablets
- Consumer durables
- Automobiles/automobile equipment

Why do we need the Right to Repair?

- Generally, **manufacturers retain proprietary control** over spare parts, including their design, this kind of monopoly on repair processes **infringes the customer's "Right to Choose"**.
- **Warranty cards** of several products mention that getting them repaired from an outfit not recognised by the makers **would lead to customers losing their warranty benefit**.
- Companies also tend to **avoid the publications of manuals that can help users make repairs easily**.
- The technical service/product companies **do not provide complete knowledge and access to manuals, schematics, and software updates**.
- Manufacturers are encouraging a culture of **"planned obsolescence"**.
 - This is a system whereby the design of any gadget is such that it **lasts a particular time only and after that particular period it has to be mandatorily replaced**.
 - A product that cannot be repaired or falls under planned obsolescence i.e. designing a product with an artificially limited useful life, **not only becomes e-waste** but also **forces the consumers to buy new products** for want of any repair to reuse it.
- India has recently launched the concept of **LiFE movement (Lifestyle for Environment)** in India.
 - This includes the concept of **reuse and recycling** various consumer products.
 - Right to Repair will assist in achieving the targets under LiFE.

Way Forward

- **The parts and tools to service devices, including diagnostic tools** should be made available to third parties, including individuals so that the product can be repaired in case of minor glitches.
- Right to Repair law **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 the repairing work**.
 - But the quality of repair and maintenance services could improve substantially if such legislation was adopted.

Source: TH