

Today's Prelims Topics

Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DNCs)

Context

Community leaders are demanding the **establishment of a permanent National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs)**.

Definition of DNTs (Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes)

- **Denotified Tribes:** Communities that were listed as “criminal tribes” under the British-era Criminal Tribes Acts (1871–1947) and later “de-notified” after the Acts were repealed in 1952.
- **Nomadic Tribes:** Social groups that historically practiced seasonal or periodic migration as a livelihood strategy.
- **Semi-Nomadic Tribes:** Communities that move less frequently and over shorter distances compared to fully nomadic groups.

Status of DNTs in India

- Over **10 crore Indians** belong to more than **1,400** DNT, Nomadic, or Semi-Nomadic communities.
- These groups are spread across various States and have distinct socio-economic challenges.
- Two important commissions were formed:
 - **Renke Commission (2008):** To identify and list DNT communities.
 - **Idate Commission (2014):** Tasked with creating a State-wise list and recommending welfare measures. Tenure: 3 years.
- Many DNTs fall under SC, ST, or OBC categories but still face exclusion from mainstream welfare schemes.

Schemes for DNTs by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

- **Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs**
 - **Launched:** 2014-15 (Centrally Sponsored Scheme)
 - **Target:** DNT students not covered under SC/ST/OBC
 - **Eligibility:** Parental income ≤ ₹2 lakh per annum
 - **Implementation:** Through States/UTs; cost sharing 75:25 (Centre:State)
 - **Scholarship Rates:**
 - **Pre-Matric:**
 - Class I–VIII: ₹1000/year (10 months)
 - Class IX–X: ₹1500/year (10 months)
 - **Post-Matric:**
 - Hostellers: ₹380–₹1000
 - Day Scholars: ₹230–₹550
- **Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of Construction of Hostels for DNTs**
 - **Launched:** 2014-15 (Centrally Sponsored)
 - **Target:** DNT students (not SC/ST/OBC) pursuing higher education
 - **Eligibility:** Parental income ≤ ₹2 lakh per annum
 - **Implementation:** Through States/UTs/Central Universities
 - **Support:** Up to 500 hostel seats/year nationwide
 - **Cost Norm:** ₹3 lakh per seat + ₹5,000 for furniture
 - **Funding Pattern:** 75:25 (Centre:State)

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

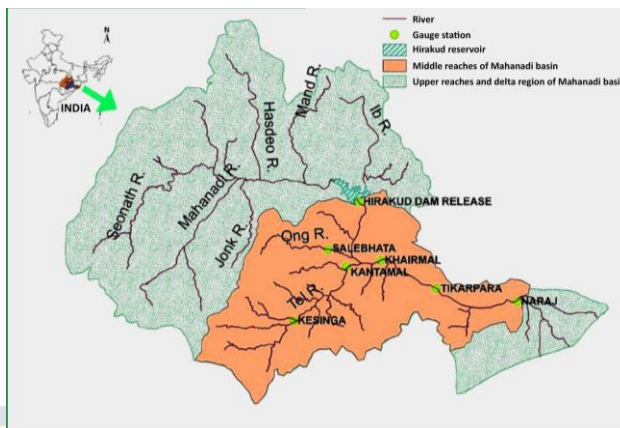
Mahanadi River

Context

Odisha and Chhattisgarh have shown willingness to amicably resolve the Mahanadi river water dispute, prompting the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal to defer its hearing to allow further negotiations.

About Mahanadi River

- It is a major **east-flowing** river in India.
- It ranks **second to the Godavari River** among peninsular rivers in terms of water potential.
- Known as one of India's **most active silt-depositing rivers**.
- **Course:**
 - It originates from the **Sihawa hills** in **Dhamtari district**, Chhattisgarh.
 - Enters the **Odisha plains** near **Cuttack** and forms a **delta** before draining into the **Bay of Bengal** near **False Point**, close to **Paradip** port.
- **Length:** Approximately **860 km**.
- **Boundaries:**
 - **North:** Central Indian hills
 - **South & East:** Eastern Ghats
 - **West:** Maikal hill range
- **Basin Area:** Spreads across **Chhattisgarh**, **Odisha**, and small parts of **Jharkhand**, **Maharashtra**, and **Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Major tributaries:**
 - Seonath
 - Jonk
 - Hasdeo
 - Mand
 - Ib
 - Ong
 - Tel



- A basin area, also known as a drainage basin or watershed, is the area of land where all surface water converges to a single point, like a river mouth or a lake.
- **Article 262(1) of the Constitution** empowers **Parliament to make laws** for resolving disputes related to the **use, distribution, or control of inter-State rivers or river valleys**.
 - Based on this provision, **Parliament enacted the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956** to handle such conflicts.
 - The Act allows a **State Government to submit a formal request** to the Union Government if it believes there is a river water dispute.
 - If the **Central Government is satisfied** that the dispute **cannot be resolved through negotiations**, it can refer the matter to a **Tribunal for adjudication**.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Vishnugad hydroelectric project

Context

12 labourers were injured after a landslide hit the Vishnugad hydroelectric project site (situated on the **Dhauliganga River**) in **Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, India**.

About Dhauliganga River

- **Origin:** Rises near the **Niti Pass**, in the border region between the **Garhwal region of Uttarakhand** and **southwestern Tibet**.
- **Important Confluence:** Joined by the **Rishi Ganga River** at **Raini**, a region notable for ecological sensitivity.
- **Tributary of Alaknanda:**
 - One of the key tributaries of the **Alaknanda River**.
 - Other major tributaries of Alaknanda include:
 - **Nandakini**
 - **Pindar**
 - **Mandakini**
 - **Bhagirathi**
- **Confluence Point:** Merges with the Alaknanda River at **Vishnuprayag**, one of the Panch Prayags in Uttarakhand.
- **Length:** Approximately **94 kilometers** long.
- **Tapovan:** The town of **Tapovan**, known for its **natural hot springs**, lies along the banks of the Dhauliganga River.



Other Major Hydroelectric Projects in Uttarakhand

- **Tehri Dam**
 - River: **Bhagirathi**
 - Location: **Tehri Garhwal**
- **Koteswar HEP**
 - River: **Bhagirathi**
 - Downstream of Tehri Dam
- **Lata Tapovan HEP**
 - River: **Dhauliganga**
- **Maneri Bhali I and II**
 - River: **Bhagirathi**
 - Location: **Uttarkashi**

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

Balfour Declaration

Context

The **Balfour Declaration** is back in focus as the **U.K.'s possible recognition of Palestine**—108 years after endorsing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

About the Balfour Declaration (1917)

- Issued by the British government during World War I.
- Declared support for the establishment of a “**national home for the Jewish people**” in Palestine.
- Palestine was then part of the Ottoman Empire with a small Jewish minority.

Origins

- Came in the form of a letter from **British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour** to **Lord Rothschild**, a British Jewish leader.
- Officially published on **November 9, 1917**.

Historical Background

- Issued during **World War I (1914–1918)** as the **Zionist movement** was gaining momentum.
- Zionism aimed to establish a homeland for Jews facing persecution in Europe.

About the Zionist Movement

Founded on the belief that Jews needed their **own sovereign nation** to escape persecution.

Theodor Herzl, regarded as the father of Zionism, proposed this idea in his 1896 work “**Der Judenstaat**”.

Prominent Zionist figures like **Chaim Weizmann** (later Israel’s first president) and **Nahum Sokolow** lobbied Britain for support.

Why Did Britain Support the Idea?

- **Strategic Interests:** Palestine’s location was vital to **protect the Suez Canal** and the route to **British India**.
- **Political Calculations:** Hoped to win support of Jewish communities in **Russia and the USA** to strengthen the Allied war effort.
- **Sympathy for Jewish persecution** also played a role.

Why Is the Balfour Declaration Controversial?

- **Britain promised land it didn’t control** – Palestine was under Ottoman rule.
- **Contradicted previous British promises** to Arabs in the **McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915–1916)**, which promised Arab independence in exchange for support against the Ottomans.
- It recognized “**civil and religious rights**” of non-Jews but ignored their **political rights**.
- **No Palestinian or Arab leader** was consulted before issuing the declaration.



- Seen as the beginning of a **long-standing conflict** in the region.

Source: [TheHindu](#)



Act East Policy

Context

Indian Railways commissioned a new **51.38 km rail line to Sairang near Aizawl**, boosting regional connectivity and strengthening the **Act East Policy**, despite cross-border project delays due to regional instability.

Act East Policy

- Launched in **2014 by PM Narendra Modi**, replacing the older **Look East Policy**.
- Focuses on strengthening **economic, strategic, and cultural ties** with **Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific** nations.
- Aims to transition India's approach from passive observation ("Look") to **active regional participation** ("Act").

Objectives of the Act East Policy

- Enhance **economic engagement** through increased trade, investment, and market access in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Deepen **cultural understanding and people-to-people relations** via educational and cultural exchanges.
- Build **long-term strategic partnerships** through **bilateral, multilateral**, and regional dialogues.
- Promote **regional cooperation and integration** in political, economic, and socio-cultural domains.
- Collaborate on **shared challenges** like terrorism, maritime security, and disaster management.

Three Pillars of the Act East Policy

1. **Economic Pillar:**
 - Integration with global supply chains
 - Boost trade and investment in East and Southeast Asia
2. **Socio-Cultural Pillar:**
 - Foster mutual understanding
 - Promote shared cultural and civilizational links
3. **Political-Security Pillar:**
 - Enhance defense cooperation
 - Promote regional stability and balance of power

Key Features

- **ASEAN-Centric Approach:** Close alignment with ASEAN and participation in ARF, EAS, and ADMM+.
- **4C Framework:** Focus on **Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, and Capacity Building**.
- **Strategic Security Ties:** Partnerships with countries like **Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines**.
- **Connectivity & Infrastructure Focus:** Cross-border highways, rail links, and digital platforms.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** Active participation in **ASEAN, BIMSTEC, and EAS** for regional cooperation.

Major Projects under Act East Policy

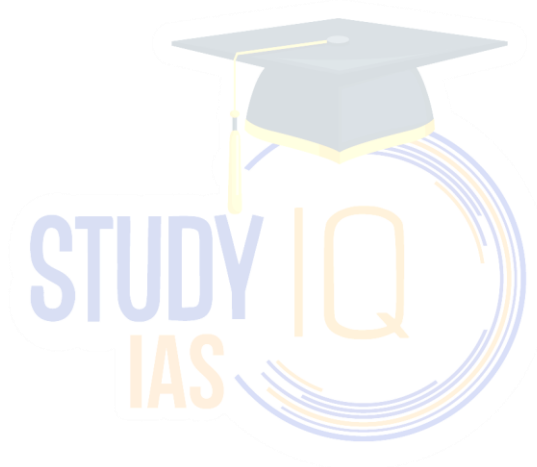
- **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** – Boosts road connectivity.
- **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project** – Connects eastern ports of India with Myanmar's Sittwe port.
- **Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link** – Enhances connectivity between Northeast India and Bangladesh.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** – Advances digital ties through India-ASEAN Fund.
- **Mekong-India Economic Corridor** – Links India's east coast with Southeast Asia.

- **ITEC Programme** – Capacity building for Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, etc.
- **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)** – Promotes shared Buddhist heritage.
- **BIMSTEC Initiatives** – Encourages regional cooperation around the Bay of Bengal.

Look East Policy vs Act East Policy

Aspect	Look East Policy (1991)	Act East Policy (2014)
Initiated By	PM Narasimha Rao	PM Narendra Modi
Focus	Economic and strategic ties	Economic, strategic, and cultural ties
Geographical Scope	Southeast Asia	Southeast Asia + Indo-Pacific
Key Goal	Build trade ties	Strengthen regional influence
Security Focus	Limited	Strong focus on defense & security
Infrastructure Projects	Minimal	Major cross-border connectivity projects
Approach	Diplomatic and trade-based	Comprehensive and assertive

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)



Sea of Japan

Context

China and Russia began a three-day joint naval drill, “**Joint Sea-2025**,” on the Sea of Japan.

About the Sea of Japan (also called East Sea)

- A marginal sea of the western Pacific Ocean.
- **Borders:**
 - **East:** Japan and Sakhalin (Russia)
 - **West:** Mainland Russia, North Korea, South Korea
- **Major Straits:**
 - **South:** East China Sea via **Tsushima** and **Korea Straits**
 - **North:** Sea of Okhotsk via **La Perouse** and **Tatar Straits**
 - **East:**
 - Inland Sea of Japan via **Kanmon Strait**
 - Pacific Ocean via **Tsugaru Strait**

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)



Oaxaca region

Context

A **magnitude 5.7 earthquake** struck **Mexico's Oaxaca region**, causing tremors in Mexico City but **no major damage or injuries** were reported.

Oaxaca region of Mexico

- **Location:** Oaxaca is a southern state in **Mexico**, bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the south, and the states of Puebla, Veracruz, Chiapas, and Guerrero.
- **Capital:** Its capital city is **Oaxaca de Juárez**.
- **Geography:** It is a **mountainous region** with rugged terrain, part of the Sierra Madre del Sur mountain range.
- **Indigenous Population:** Oaxaca has one of the **largest indigenous populations** in Mexico, including Zapotecs and Mixtecs.
- **Culture:** Known for its **rich cultural heritage**, traditional crafts, textiles, cuisine (like mole), and colorful festivals such as **Guelaguetza**.
- **Archaeology:** Home to ancient sites like **Monte Albán** and **Mitla**, key centers of Zapotec and Mixtec civilizations.
- **Biodiversity:** One of the most **biologically diverse** states in Mexico, with varied ecosystems from beaches to mountains.
- **Seismic Activity:** Located in an **earthquake-prone zone** due to its position near the **Cocos and North American tectonic plates**.
- **Tourism:** Popular for its **colonial architecture**, beaches like **Puerto Escondido**, and eco-tourism.
- **Economy:** Based on **agriculture, tourism, artisanal crafts**, and small-scale industries.

Source: [IndianExpress](https://www.indianexpress.com)



Lok Adalats

Context

Banking disputes, NBFC recovery cases, and gas supply issues have been brought under the purview of **Lok Adalats** to ensure faster, cost-effective resolution.

What is Lok Adalat?

- **Origin in Ancient India:** Concept inspired by **village panchayats** that settled disputes informally.
- **Statutory Backing:** Formalized through the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**.
- **Objective:** To ensure **affordable, accessible, and speedy justice**, especially for those **financially or geographically disadvantaged**.

Legal Provisions

As per Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987:

- **Section 19:** Establishes Lok Adalats at various levels – State, High Court, District, and Taluk.
- **Section 20:** Describes which cases may be referred to Lok Adalat:
 - Pending in court.
 - At pre-litigation stage.
- **Section 21:**
 - The **award of Lok Adalat is deemed a decree of a civil court**.
 - It is **final, binding, and enforceable; no appeal lies** against it.
- **Section 22:** Lok Adalats have the powers of a **civil court** under the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC), including:
 - Summoning witnesses
 - Receiving evidence
 - Requisitioning public records

Latest Developments (2024–2025)

- Lok Adalats are now addressing:
 - **Banking disputes and NBFC loan recoveries**
 - **Gas supply issues**
 - **Traffic challans, electricity bills, insurance claims, etc.**
- Digital Lok Adalats are increasingly being used to **expand access** and **reduce backlog**.
- **AI-based e-Lok Adalats** piloted in some states (e.g., Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan).

Key Features

- **Voluntary:** Parties must agree to settle the matter.
- **No Court Fees:** Any court fee paid is refunded if the case is settled.
- **Speedy Disposal:** Cases resolved in a single sitting.
- **Non-Adversarial:** Focus is on **compromise and harmony**, not winning/losing.

Types of Lok Adalat

- **Permanent Lok Adalat (PLA)**
 - For **Public Utility Services** (transport, water, electricity, health, etc.).
 - Can give binding decisions if no compromise is reached (except in criminal cases).
- **National Lok Adalat**
 - Held **nationwide on a single day**, across all court levels.
 - Focus on **pending and pre-litigation civil, cheque bounce, and compensation** cases.
- **State Lok Adalat**
 - Conducted by **State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA)**.
 - Settles referred cases from High Courts and subordinate courts.

- **District Lok Adalat**
 - Managed by **District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA)**.
 - Common for **family disputes, civil cases**, and petty offenses.
- **Taluk Lok Adalat**
 - Held at the **sub-district level** (tehsil or taluk).
 - Provides access to justice in **rural and remote** areas.
- **Mobile Lok Adalat**
 - **Travels to underserved regions** to settle disputes.
 - Commonly handles **land, labor, and family matters**.
- **Mega Lok Adalat**
 - Conducted **simultaneously across multiple courts in a state**.
 - Aim is to resolve a **large volume of cases in one day**.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)



News in Short

Naangarni Spardha

News? Despite heavy rains and a red alert, large crowds gathered in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, for the traditional **Naangarni Spardha**.

About it

- It is a centuries-old traditional **Oxen race**.
- **Location:** Ratnagiri (Maharashtra)
- It is held during the rainy season.
- **Similar Traditions in India:**
 - **Maramadi** in Kerala
 - **Kambala** in Karnataka

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

ALSO IN NEWS

1	The Krasheninnikov Volcano erupted after more than 500 years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is located in the Kamchatka region of Russia.
2	More than 120 firefighters were trying to extinguish a blaze at an oil depot in Sochi (Russia) that was sparked by a Ukrainian drone attack.
3	The Khmer kingdom between the 12th-13th century encompassed portions of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar .
4	Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to Pingali Venkayya on his birth anniversary (4th August). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designed the first prototype of what would become the Indian National Flag. ● Presented two colours (red and green) flag in 1921, at the Indian National Congress session in Bezwada (now Vijayawada). ● Mahatma Gandhi later added a white stripe for other communities and a charkha (spinning wheel) to symbolise self-reliance (swadeshi).
5	Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched Matri Van' Initiative . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is a theme based urban forest dedicated to nurturing generations through mother-nature-inspired green efforts - would be developed in an area of 750 acres in the Aravalli Hill area.

Editorial Summary

Concerns related to India's commitments under Chapter 13 (Intellectual Property) of CETA

Context

The India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) raises several questions regarding India's commitments in the CETA's intellectual property chapter (Chapter 13) particularly Article 13.6.

Article 13.6 of CETA

"The Parties recognise the preferable and optimal route to promote and ensure access to medicines is through voluntary mechanisms, such as voluntary licensing."

Why It's Problematic

This provision:

- **Promotes voluntary licensing (VL)** as the "preferred" route.
- **Sidelines compulsory licensing (CL)** — a legal TRIPS-compliant measure India has historically used to ensure affordable medicine access.

What is Voluntary Licensing?

- Voluntary licensing is when the patent holder (usually a pharmaceutical company) *voluntarily* allows another company to manufacture and sell a patented product (usually a medicine), **on mutually agreed terms**. These licenses may include:
 - Conditions on price, supply, or territories
 - Technology transfer (optional and often limited)
 - Restrictions on sublicensing or sourcing ingredients
- **Example:** Cipla produced remdesivir during COVID-19 under a voluntary licence from Gilead Sciences.

What is Compulsory Licensing?

- Compulsory licensing is when a government allows a company to produce a patented product **without the consent of the patent holder**, under specific public interest conditions.
- Under Indian Patent Act (TRIPS-compliant), a compulsory licence can be granted if:
 - The patented product is not available at a **reasonable price**
 - The **public's reasonable requirements** are not met
 - The patent is not "**worked**" (i.e., commercially used) in India
- **Example:** In 2012, Natco Pharma got a compulsory licence to produce Bayer's cancer drug *sorafenib*, bringing the monthly cost down from ₹2.8 lakh to under ₹9,000.

Concerns with Article 13.6 of CETA

- **Position on Compulsory Licensing (CL):** India was a strong proponent of CL at the WTO, backed by the **Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health (2001)**.
 - CL allows governments to bypass patent restrictions to produce affordable medicines in public interest (e.g., **Natco Pharma's CL for sorafenib in 2012** brought cancer drug prices down by 97%).
 - CETA's wording implicitly **delegitimizes CL**, pushing India away from its original stance.
- **Demand for Technology Transfer on Favourable Terms:** India has long demanded **equitable tech transfer** (since **New International Economic Order (NIEO), 1974**) for industrialization & climate action (e.g., carbon-neutral technologies).

- CETA promotes tech transfer only under “**mutually agreed terms**”, which typically favour patent-holders.
 - This **weakens India’s negotiation leverage** in climate forums and multilateral trade talks.
- **Reinforces Earlier Concessions:** India already **weakened the “working” requirement** in the EFTA FTA by allowing patent working declarations every 3 years (instead of annually). CETA reinforces this dilution.

Strategic Implications

- **Domestic:**
 - Threatens **public health access**, especially for life-saving medicines.
 - Undermines Parliament’s original intention when aligning the Patents Act with TRIPS (after JPC review).
- **Global:**
 - India risks **losing its leadership role among developing nations** on IP flexibility.
 - Weakens its **climate technology negotiation power** in platforms like UNFCCC.

Conclusion

- India’s acceptance of Article 13.6 in CETA marks a **significant strategic retreat**:
 - From its commitment to **compulsory licensing** as a public health safeguard.
 - From its long-standing **demand for fair technology access** for development and climate goals.
- This shift may **erode domestic policy autonomy** and affect India’s global standing in future IP and climate negotiations.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



Jugaad, Justice, and Jobs

Context

- In May 2025, India introduced a Repairability Index for electronics and improved e-waste rules to encourage formal recycling.
 - Yet, the systems that quietly sustain everyday life — especially the informal repair and maintenance economy — remain largely invisible in digital and policy frameworks.

Importance of the Repair Economy in India

- **Supports Circular Economy:** Repairers play a crucial role in extending product life cycles, reducing e-waste, and promoting reuse over disposal.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and Mission LiFE by reducing material extraction, pollution, and carbon footprint.
- **Employment and Livelihoods:** Provides informal employment to thousands, especially in urban centres like Karol Bagh (Delhi) and Ritchie Street (Chennai).
- **Preservation of Tacit Knowledge:** Repair work embodies intuitive, hands-on knowledge passed through generations via observation, not formal training.
- **Affordable Access to Technology:** Repairers make expensive electronics usable for longer periods, ensuring digital access for lower-income populations.
- **Contribution to Material Resilience:** Enables resilience against planned obsolescence and supply-chain constraints by promoting local reuse and improvisation.

Issues Associated with the Repair Economy

- **Durability & Disposability:** Product designs are becoming **less repairable** (e.g., only 23% of smartphones in Asia are rated repairable).
 - Consumer habits shift toward disposability.
- **Policy and Regulatory Neglect:** E-Waste Rules 2022 and skilling schemes under PMKVY mention recycling but not repair as a core strategy.
 - Lack of legal recognition or inclusion in formal sector schemes like e-Shram.
- **Erosion of Skills and Ecosystem:** Youth less inclined to learn due to absence of structured apprenticeships or incentives.
- **Lack of Documentation and Certification:** Tacit skills are not codified or formally certified, limiting recognition and scalability.
- **Market Exclusion:** Informal repairers have **little access to spare parts, manuals, or diagnostic tools** due to restrictive company policies.
- **Digital Divide in Skill Development:** National Education Policy (NEP) promotes experiential learning but lacks clear frameworks for supporting traditional skill domains like repair.

Impact of AI and Digital Technologies on the Repair Economy

Negative Impacts:

- **Design Centralization:** AI-driven designs optimize for performance and compactness, not repair.
 - Proprietary software locks reduce local diagnosis or repair interventions.
- **Displacement Risk:** AI may automate troubleshooting, but without integrating informal repairers, the benefits remain inaccessible to them.
- **Knowledge Extraction without Recognition:** AI systems can learn from repair patterns or user data, but the human contributors behind such tacit insights remain unacknowledged.

Positive Potentials (if inclusively implemented)

- **Documentation of Tacit Knowledge:** Large Language Models (LLMs) can codify oral repair stories into structured guides.

- **Decision Trees and Repair Pathways:** AI can map and disseminate common repair workflows, enhancing community learning and interoperability.
- **Digitally-Enabled Recognition:** Integration with platforms like e-Shram can formalize identity, access to benefits, and connect repairers to digital skilling platforms.

Conclusion

- India's traditions of **frugality and improvisation** long pre-date its AI ambitions.
- Recognising **repairers as knowledge workers** — not marginalised figures — is key to inclusive sustainability.
- With coordinated action, India can **lead globally** in aligning circular economy goals with AI, climate, and digital policy — rooted in ground-up innovation.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

