

August 1, 2025

Volume 6



PRAGYA CONSULTING

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL SENSIBLE

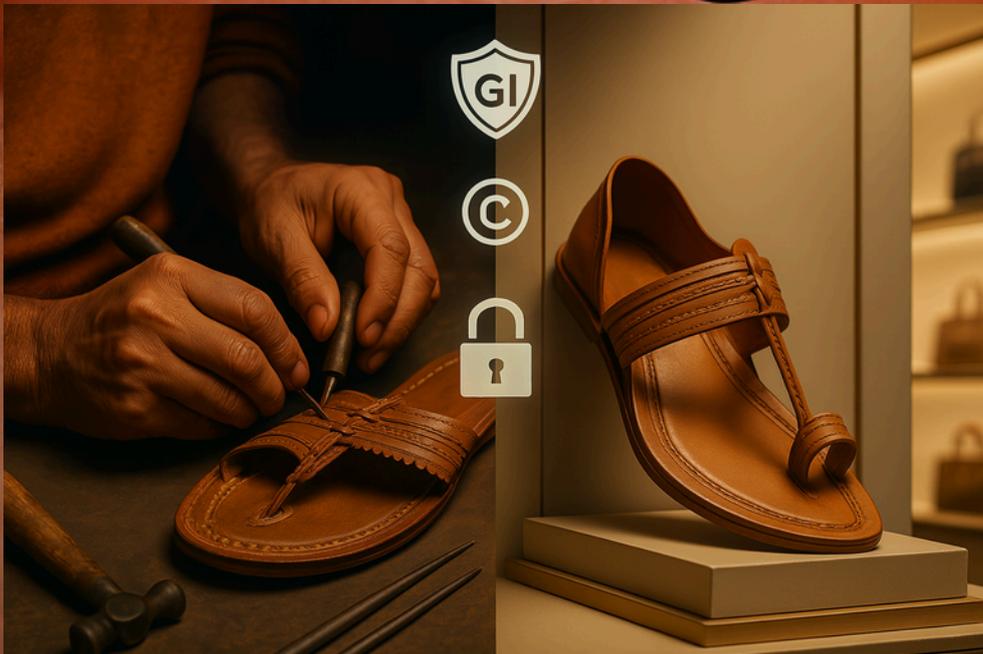
Proudly Presents

India's First Magazine dedicated to MSMEs

BizIgnite

POWERING INDIA'S MSME REVOLUTION

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



[The Prada Controversy & the Case for Stronger GI Laws in India](#)

[Use of AI for IPR: Competitive Edge for Businesses](#)

[The Asymmetric Trade Storm](#)

About Us

Pragya Consulting is a registered MSME dedicated to empowering micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with **strategic marketing and branding solutions**. Our mission is to provide sustainable, cost-effective, and tailored solutions that enhance the visibility, credibility, and growth of MSMEs in competitive markets.

Our Vision

We envision a future where MSMEs seamlessly **transition from informal operations to structured, scalable enterprises**, unlocking their full growth potential and evolving into future multinational corporations (MNCs).

With a strong foundation in economics and marketing, Pragya Consulting blends data-driven insights with innovative marketing strategies to help businesses create a strong market presence.

We specialize in:

- ✔ **Knowledge Management** – Enabling businesses with critical market insights and industry intelligence.
- ✔ **Custom Reports** – We go beyond standard insights by offering customized reports tailored to the specific needs of various stakeholders including industry and Government.
- ✔ **Brand Strategy & Positioning** – Crafting compelling brand narratives that enhance visibility and trust.
- ✔ **Digital & Performance Marketing** – Leveraging online platforms for lead generation, engagement, and conversions.
- ✔ **Thought Leadership & Content Marketing** – Showcasing MSMEs as credible industry leaders through strategic content.
- ✔ **BizIgnite** – **First indian magazine** dedicated to MSMEs for providing information on policy and regulatory framework in addition to various schemes being offered by Government for empowering MSMEs.

At Pragya Consulting, we don't just offer services; we build partnerships for success.

Our mission is to transform MSMEs from informal enterprises to structured, competitive businesses ready to scale and compete in global markets.

Editorial

In today's innovation economy, owning your idea is as critical as creating it. For India's MSMEs, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are no longer optional, they are essential shields and strategic tools in the race for recognition, market access, and sustainable growth. This issue of BizIgnite brings IPR to the center stage. From trademarks and patents to design rights and GI tags, we explore how these invisible assets translate into visible impact—protecting artisan crafts, fuelling startup innovation, and amplifying brand value in global markets.

Our cover story dissects the Prada-Kolhapuri Chappal controversy—a wake-up call that heritage without protection is vulnerable to appropriation. Through exclusive insights from ni-msme's IPFC head, we unpack how MSMEs can leverage government support, simplify registrations, and build IP portfolios.

We also spotlight the intersection of AI and IPR—a timely reminder that as machines create, the laws must evolve.

We also have a special story on “Asymmetric Trade Storm” covering briefly the United States' looming tariff threats and the long-anticipated UK–India Free Trade Agreement. Next issue will delve deeply into these.

Welcome to **BizIgnite**—Your Partner in Growth.

Meera Bhalla
Editor-in-Chief, BizIgnite
Pragya Consulting



Table of Content

- **MSME News**

Your Gateway to MSME Insights & Innovation

- **Cover Story**

Heritage vs. Hype

- **Special Section**

Do I Really Need a Trademark for My Brand?

- **AI Focus**

Use of AI for IPR

- **Spotlight**

From Survival to Scale

- **ni-msme**

Strengthening India's Blue Economy

TOP MSME HEADLINES

Your Gateway to MSME Insights & Innovation

The Asymmetric Trade Storm

India's Strategic Gambit Amid UK FTA Windfalls and US Tariff Onslaught

The convergence of India's landmark free trade agreement (FTA) with the UK and punitive US tariffs represents a tectonic shift in global trade dynamics. This analysis deciphers the multi-layered impacts of these divergent events—one opening doors through tariff elimination, the other slamming them shut with 25% duties. We reveal how India's strategic choices will redefine its economic future, reshape global alliances, and determine the fate of its 63 million MSMEs.

The New Trade Dichotomy: FTA Windfall vs. Tariff Shockwaves

India-UK CETA: Signed on July 24, 2025, this historic pact eliminates tariffs on 99% of Indian exports to the UK—covering \$56 billion in bilateral trade—while granting preferential access for UK automakers and whisky producers. Projected to boost bilateral trade by \$34 billion annually by 2040, it anchors India within Western economic blocs despite Brexit upheavals.

US Tariff Onslaught: Effective August 1, 2025, President Trump's 25% tariff plus an "unspecified penalty" targets India's "obnoxious non-monetary trade barriers" and Russian energy imports. This dwarfs tariffs on Vietnam (20%) and Indonesia (19%), deliberately penalizing India's strategic autonomy. With \$87 billion in Indian exports at risk, this move jeopardizes the \$500 billion trade target set by Modi and Trump.

Table: The Dual Policy Shock at a Glance

Metric	India-UK FTA	US Tariff Measures
Tariff Change	99% Indian exports duty-free to the UK	+25% on \$87 billion(B) Indian exports to the US
Key Sectors	Textiles (+£2.9B), Marine Products (+50%), Auto Parts	Gems (-\$10B at risk), Pharma (\$8B exposed), Electronics
GDP Impact	+0.13% UK GDP (£4.8B), +0.06% India GDP (£5.1B)	(0.8)% projected contraction in Indian GDP
Timeline	Full implementation in 10 years	Effective August 1, 2025

The Opportunity: A UK Window Flung Wide Open

Let's get specific:

- Textiles/Apparel: Expect a £2.9B export windfall, turbocharging your edge over Bangladesh or Vietnam.
- Marine Products: Zero tariffs mean a run at the \$5.4B UK shrimp and tuna market, where India's share could multiply.
- Engineering & Auto: If you're producing auto components, rejoice: tariffs slide from 110% to just 10%—you're now on par with EU rivals.



“VOCAL FOR LOCAL”

Page 2

MSME News

But wait, it's not just about goods. The FTA delivers 1,800 new visas for Indian chefs and yoga instructors, cuts customs red tape (48-hour clearance!), and gives Nashik wines and Kanchipuram silks a protected, premium slot on UK shelves.

Worried about sensitive sectors? India has you covered—dairy, cereals, apples, and staple crops remain shielded. And pharma? Your generics are safe from harsh data exclusivity threats.

The Threat: Uncle Sam Knocks the Wind Out

Flip the page and the mood changes. The new US tariff regime hits gems & jewellery, pharma, textiles, electronics, and even your marine products. Think about it:

- Gems & Jewellery: \$10B at risk. Margins shrivel, job losses escalate.
- Textiles: Orders evaporate as buyers switch to cheaper suppliers in Bangladesh and Vietnam.
- Electronics: Apple's \$14B supply chain pivot to India? Now in jeopardy.
- Refining Giants: Reliance and IOCL lose their Russian crude discount edge.

It gets worse: the new 25% tariff is above what the US now charges Vietnam (20%) or what's "pending" for China. No special deals, no mercy.

Silver Linings: Can You Play Offense When Forced on Defense?

Surprise: There's upside even here. US tariffs could jumpstart a "Make in India" renaissance:

- Import substitution is about to accelerate, with Indian food processing, electronics, and component manufacturing receiving fresh capital.
- MSMEs can move up the value chain—think smart tech, automated manufacturing, and truly branded goods.
- And don't be surprised if your best US-facing innovations find new homes in the EU, GCC, or Oceania, as the government strikes more UK-style deals.

MSMEs: Time to Reset—Not Retreat

If you run a small or medium business, here's your action list:

- Re-route exports: The UK is calling, and new FTAs may open other doors.
- Embrace tech: IoT and smart goods not only drive productivity, they earn tariff exemptions.
- Tap safety nets: Government-backed guarantees (up to 80%) and export support are rolling out fast for affected sectors.

Digital-first rules, self-certification for sub-£1,000 UK shipments, and green tech partnerships are just the tip of the iceberg.

Geopolitics: The Big Game Behind the Tariffs

Why the US crackdown? It's not just trade. It's India's relationship with Russia, energy autonomy, and BRICS alignment. Meanwhile, the UK FTA cements "Global Britain" and gives India a launchpad into the EU. Emerging trade corridors with the Global South, rupee-ruble trade with China and Russia—it's a trade realignment in real time.

The Decade Ahead: Are You Ready?

India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal says these shocks will "catalyze inclusive growth... accelerating India's journey toward becoming a global economic powerhouse." It's not just political rhetoric—it's a call to arms for decision-makers, from textile magnates to startup founders.

Bottom Line: There's turbulence ahead, but also tailwinds for the agile. With the right pivots—diversifying markets, scaling up innovation, leaning into government support—Indian enterprises can not just survive, but lead this new era of global trade. Are you poised to seize the windfall, or will you just weather the storm? The future of Indian business—and possibly your own—depends on how you answer, and how fast you act.

Based on inputs share by Mr. Ramanathan N.S. Iyer having 30+ years in driving Global Logistics & EXIM excellence, and now empowering businesses as a consultant, trainer, as well as Mentor at AG Hub ,Expert Panel Member (SME-EXIM/Intl SCM) and founder of a Hyderabad-based trading firm.

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Our next issue will explore this topic in greater depth. Stay tuned for our in-depth analysis!

National-level updates**Modi Reaffirms 'Make in India' Drive as Goyal Pledges Stakeholder Protection Amid US Tariff Threats**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking at a public rally in Uttar Pradesh, emphatically urged citizens to prioritise domestically made goods under the Make in India banner, even as the US threatened a 25 percent tariff and additional penalties for continued Russian oil imports—asserting that India remains free to choose its energy suppliers and will not halt its purchases of Russian crude.

Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal echoed this stance in the Lok Sabha, assuring members that the government is actively safeguarding the interests of farmers, labourers and MSMEs while engaging in five rounds of discussions with the US on a balanced bilateral trade agreement since April. Goyal highlighted India's ascent from the 11th to one of the top five global economies in under a decade and noted that exports have steadily risen amidst an "increasingly protectionist world," underscoring ongoing negotiations with key partners such as the UAE, UK and Australia. Both leaders stressed independent foreign policy decision-making and committed to securing fair, mutually beneficial trade terms without compromising India's strategic and economic priorities.

Centre Allocates ₹1,000 Crore to Drive Energy Efficiency in MSMEs

The Ministry of Power has launched the Assistance in Deploying Energy Efficient Technologies in Industries and Establishments (ADEETIE) scheme, earmarking ₹1,000 crore to modernize India's MSMEs through cutting-edge, energy-saving technologies. Implemented by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, ADEETIE provides ₹875 crore in interest subvention for concessional loans and reserves ₹50 crore for capacity-building and implementation support.

Rolled out across 60 industrial clusters and 14 energy-intensive sectors—including textiles, foundries and food processing—the program aims to slash energy consumption by 30–50 percent, enhance power-to-productivity ratios and catalyze green growth. Early beneficiaries include pharma hubs in Medak, Baddi, Madgaon, Ahmedabad and Bidar, where state-designated agencies are engaging MSMEs to undertake Investment Grade Energy Audits and develop Detailed Project Reports for technology upgrades. Officials project that ADEETIE will mobilize over ₹9,000 crore in total investments, generate employment, reduce carbon footprints and reinforce India's commitment to sustainable industrial development.

MSME Business Confidence Climbs to 63.75 in Q1, SIDBI Survey Shows

Business confidence among MSMEs rose to 63.75 in the April–June quarter from 60.82 in the previous quarter, according to SIDBI's latest MSME Outlook Survey, underscoring buoyant domestic demand and a supportive financial environment. Manufacturing and trading enterprises drove the gains while the services sector held steady, reflecting broader resilience across the sector. Improved access to finance was reported by 88 percent of respondents—up from 79 percent—indicating effective transmission of the RBI's rate cuts. Over half of surveyed units recorded higher sales and profitability, and the Business Expectations Index for July–September stood at 62.19, signalling sustained optimism despite global trade headwinds. However, exporters voiced concerns over tariff uncertainties, with 40 percent expecting adverse impacts on their operations.

State-level initiatives**UP CM Charts New Leather Policy to Spur Industry Growth and Employment**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to finalize the UP Footwear, Leather and Non-Leather Sector Development Policy 2025, aiming

to position the state's \$1 trillion-plus economy on the global map by leveraging clusters in Agra, Kanpur and Unnao. Highlighting UP's strengths—skilled artisans, abundant raw materials and over 200 operational tanneries—the CM called for a results-driven, cluster-based model that integrates production, design, research and training on a unified platform. Emphasizing the need for modern infrastructure such as flatted factory complexes, he was told the policy could generate some 2.2 million new jobs and create a fully localized “design-to-delivery” ecosystem. The initiative also proposes incentives for ancillary units producing components and specialized machinery, alongside streamlined land allotment via transparent e-auctions to accelerate private industrial park development.

Tamil Nadu and IIT Madras Launch Centre for Advanced Semiconductor Technologies

The Tamil Nadu government has joined forces with IIT Madras to inaugurate the Centre for Advanced Semiconductor Technologies at the Central Polytechnic Campus in Chennai, marking a cornerstone of the Tamil Nadu Semiconductor Mission 2030 announced in the 2025–26 State Budget. Backed by an initial ₹100 crore seed grant, the centre will host India's first in situ semiconductor

fabrication facility dedicated to advanced research, technology localisation, rapid prototyping and startup incubation. As part of the ‘Schools of Semiconductor’ initiative, over 4,500 professionals will undergo targeted skilling programmes to build a robust talent pipeline across the semiconductor value chain, while parallel efforts will support MSME capability building, interdisciplinary R&D and innovation in sectors such as electric vehicles, space technology, data centres and diamond-based power electronics. Implementation will be overseen by the Department of Industries and the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation in collaboration with MeitY, reflecting a strategic push to make Tamil Nadu a global hub for semiconductor talent and manufacturing.

Mamata Banerjee Unveils ‘Shilpanna’ Hub to Empower West Bengal’s Leather and Cottage MSMEs

During the July 11, 2025 inauguration in Alipore, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hailed the ‘Shilpanna’ centre as a landmark platform—featuring an air-conditioned complex with 45 stalls and three exclusive outlets—to showcase traditional handicrafts, leather goods and handloom products while empowering women-led self-help groups. She highlighted West Bengal's leadership in the MSME

sector, with over 90 lakh operational units employing 1.3 crore people, supported by 660 clusters and bank loans exceeding ₹9.5 lakh crore, and noted that the Bhabishyat Credit Card scheme has disbursed nearly ₹2 lakh crore to youth entrepreneurs. Banerjee urged a move beyond negative narratives toward creativity and self-reliance, asserting that ‘Shilpanna’ will bolster artisans' livelihoods, fortify rural economies and cement the state's socio-economic resilience.

Tamil Nadu Secures ₹32,554 Crore Investment Pacts at “TN Rising” Conclave

The Tamil Nadu government inked 41 MoUs totalling ₹32,554 crore at its first regional investors' conclave, “TN Rising,” held in Tuticorin, signalling a major push toward balanced economic growth across the state. These agreements span strategic sectors—electronics, defence, shipbuilding and non-leather footwear—and are expected to create nearly 50,000 jobs, particularly in southern districts. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin presided over the event, unveiling plans for a 250-acre space park and a new shipbuilding PSU, underscoring the administration's commitment to industrial diversification. Stakeholders say the conclave's success reflects Tamil Nadu's resilient investment climate and

could spur further inflows amid global headwinds.

UP Launches 'UP Mart' Portal to Accelerate MSME Growth

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the 'UP Mart' portal during the YUVA Conclave on July 30, 2025, unveiling a unified digital marketplace that allows entrepreneurs to source machinery, connect with service providers and obtain real-time quotations across the state. Designed to streamline "Ease of Doing Business," the platform aggregates equipment suppliers, franchise owners and technical experts—enabling startups to log in, search for sector-specific tools and liaise directly with vendors, saving time and resources. Nodal Officer Sarveshwar Shukla noted that UP Mart will not only bolster industrial development but also inspire youth self-employment by simplifying access to critical inputs and market linkages. Machinery suppliers can register to expand their customer base statewide, while policymakers anticipate the portal will strengthen the demand-supply ecosystem and catalyze balanced MSME growth throughout Uttar Pradesh.

AI and Technology

Pearson and HCLTech Forge Multi-Year AI-Powered Learning Alliance

Pearson, the world's lifelong learning company, and HCLTech have entered a multi-year strategic partnership to

revolutionize workforce skilling in an AI-driven era, combining Pearson's global learning and assessment expertise with HCLTech's digital transformation and GenAI engineering capabilities. The alliance will co-develop AI-powered learning products and assessments—integrating HCLTech's Career Shaper™ platform and AI Force with Pearson's Faethm and Credly credentials—to close critical skills gaps and future-proof talent pipelines across enterprises, higher education and government. A dedicated AI Innovation Lab will serve as the engine room for joint product development, while go-to-market acceleration efforts aim to rapidly scale these solutions in high-demand sectors globally. Both CEOs emphasized that this collaboration underscores their shared vision to empower individuals, enhance career resilience and drive transformative learning experiences worldwide.

Shiprocket Unveils Shunya.ai AI Engine to Empower MSMEs

Shiprocket has introduced Shunya.ai, a domestically developed multimodal AI engine designed to assist over 100,000 MSMEs and D2C businesses within the first year by enabling multilingual commerce and scalable automation in more than nine Indian languages, leveraging voice, text, and image intelligence built and hosted

entirely in India. Developed in partnership with Ultrasafe Inc. and powered by Larsen & Toubro's GPU infrastructure Cloudfiniti, Shunya.ai integrates seamlessly into Shiprocket's seller panel to automate cataloguing, marketing, order fulfilment, GST-compliant invoicing, WhatsApp voice-to-order and image-to-alt-text SEO optimisation, delivering an estimated 30–40 percent time savings in content creation workflows. Targeting India's USD 1 trillion MSME economy and a projected USD 350 billion digital commerce market by 2030, Shiprocket aims to level the playing field for small businesses across Bharat by providing intelligent, localised tools that adhere to domestic data sovereignty requirements. In a pilot phase, Shunya.ai demonstrated significant efficiency gains, and according to Shiprocket MD & CEO Saahil Goel, the platform's India-centric design will democratise access to AI-enabled commerce capabilities for over 1.5 lakh sellers, fostering greater market inclusion and competitiveness.

Hitachi Vantara's Inspire 2025 Summit Advances Partner-Led AI and Data Strategies

Kerala hosted Hitachi Vantara's annual Inspire 2025 Partner Summit from July 23–25, drawing nearly 100 partners from India and the SAARC region for three days of strategic collaboration

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and innovation. Participants engaged in deep-dive sessions on data resilience, advanced storage solutions, cybersecurity and AI orchestration—anchored by the Virtual Storage Platform One (VSP One) as the foundation for future-ready deployments. The event also saw the launch of “Run to Win 3.0,” a revamped incentive program running through December 2025, designed to streamline partner engagement with a simplified point-based structure, enhanced digital-marketing support and targeted regional enablement. An exclusive Partner Advisory Board forum enabled 20 senior executives to shape Hitachi Vantara’s innovation roadmap, reinforcing the company’s commitment to co-innovation and ecosystem growth in the era of AI.

Finance

RBI Allows Voluntary Gold and Silver Pledges for Agri and MSME Loans

The Reserve Bank of India has clarified in a circular dated July 11, 2025, that banks may accept willingly pledged gold and silver as collateral for agriculture and MSME loans, even when the loan amount falls within collateral-free limits. This move enables lenders, including scheduled commercial banks, small finance banks, regional rural banks and co-operative

banks, to leverage the widespread household holdings of precious metals to expand credit access for rural and small business borrowers. By unlocking the liquidity of personal gold and silver assets, the policy is poised to reduce dependence on informal moneylenders, accelerate loan disbursements and strengthen repayment discipline in underserved segments. Financial analysts note that while the clarification does not contravene existing collateral-free loan norms, seamless implementation will require clear communication to borrowers and robust risk management frameworks within banks.

Public Sector Banks’ MSME Bad Loans Ratio Falls to 6.18% in FY25, Government Reports

The Finance Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha that the gross non-performing asset ratio of public sector banks’ MSME loans declined from 7.99% at end-March 2024 to 6.18% by March 31, 2025, marking a steady improvement in asset quality. This reduction was driven by an 11.3% rise in MSME credit to ₹13.07 lakh crore alongside a 14% fall in absolute bad loans to ₹80,749 crore, reflecting both growth in lending and enhanced recovery measures. Small enterprises saw their NPA exposure drop by 28% year-on-year to ₹19,677 crore, while medium-sized units recorded a

30% decline to ₹8,553 crore; however, micro enterprises experienced only a modest 3% reduction, leaving ₹52,519 crore still under stress. Officials attributed these gains to improved credit transmission of RBI rate cuts, stronger risk-management frameworks and specialised stressed-assets verticals within PSBs. Stakeholders urge continued focus on targeted support for micro units and robust sector-specific interventions to sustain this positive trajectory.

SLBC Targets ₹2 Lakh Crore MSME Credit for Bengal in FY26

The State Level Bankers’ Committee (SLBC) has set an ambitious ₹2 lakh crore credit target for Bengal’s MSME sector in 2025-26, up from the ₹1.8 lakh crore achieved in FY25, SLBC convenor and PNB GM Balbir Singh announced at a ‘Varta’ financial inclusion event organized by PIB. With 45 lakh registered MSMEs representing seven percent of India’s total, the committee also aims for 15 percent growth in agricultural lending after disbursing ₹1 lakh crore to the sector last year. Credit to self-help groups is slated to rise to ₹35,000 crore, building on the ₹30,000 crore extended in FY25, while the state’s overall credit-deposit ratio of 70 percent—well above the 40 percent benchmark—underscores strong financial

inclusion despite disparities in 14 districts. NABARD's support for 118 financial literacy centres across Bengal is expected to bolster these efforts and drive deeper outreach into underserved regions.

NSIC and IDBI Bank Ink MoU to Boost MSME Credit Support

Under the MSME Credit Facilitation Programme, the National Small Industries Corporation signed an MoU with IDBI Bank on 11 July 2025 to refer potential MSME customers to the bank's loan products, aiming to streamline financing for small and medium enterprises nationwide. The agreement extends financing to MSME projects across all regions where IDBI Bank branches and key industrial clusters operate, leveraging NSIC's outreach to connect underserved entrepreneurs with formal credit. The MoU was formalized by Sanjay Rautela, Chief General Manager of NSIC, and Chandra Shekhar Arya, General Manager of IDBI Bank's Priority Sector, in the presence of NSIC CMD Dr. Subhransu Acharya and Director (Finance) Gaurav Gulati, underscoring leadership commitment to bolstering MSME growth.

Partners Group Commits ₹1,950 Crore to Acquire Majority Stake in Infinity Fincorp

Swiss private equity firm Partners Group will invest ₹1,950 crore to acquire a majority stake in Mumbai-based non-bank lender Infinity Fincorp Solutions, which

focuses on providing secured loans to MSMEs, the companies announced on Wednesday. The transaction comprises a ₹600 crore primary capital infusion alongside secondary share purchases from existing investors including Indium IV (Mauritius) Holdings and Jungle Ventures, enabling Infinity to expand its branch network, enhance technology platforms and streamline customer onboarding. Partners Group's entry highlights robust investor confidence in India's NBFC-led MSME lending landscape and is expected to leverage the firm's global operational expertise to accelerate growth in Tier II and III markets. The deal, subject to regulatory approvals, underscores Partners Group's continued commitment to India following prior investments in companies like Darwinbox, Ecom Express and Vishal Mega Mart.

Satellite Data Set to Transform Credit Access for MSMEs

Formal credit to MSMEs has risen to ₹40.4 lakh crore by March 2025, yet only 14 percent of enterprises tap formal channels, forcing many to rely on expensive informal lenders. High-resolution satellite imagery can now capture real-time signs of business activity—land use changes, production cycles, facility expansions and foot traffic—to assess creditworthiness where conventional financial records are absent.

By blending these insights with utility payments, supplier invoices, mobile-phone usage patterns and Udyam registration data, lenders can build comprehensive, multi-dimensional credit profiles that enable faster, fairer lending decisions. Experts warn that scaling such alternative models will require strict data-privacy safeguards, ethical transparency and close collaboration among fintechs, banks and regulators.

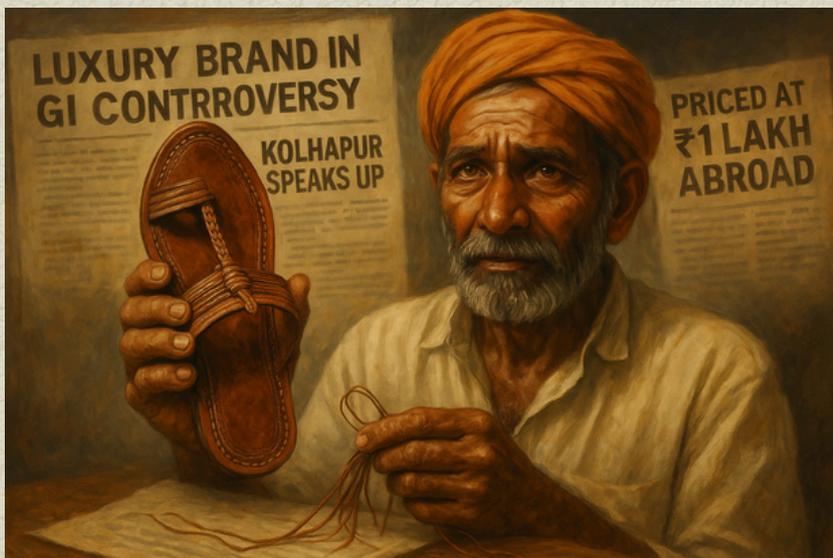
Others

NPC to Host Consultant Training Program in Pune under MSME LEAN Scheme

The National Productivity Council will host a consultant training program later this month at the Engineering Cluster in MIDC, Chinchwad, Pune, as part of the Ministry of MSME's Competitive (LEAN) Scheme. This intensive workshop will equip participants with Lean manufacturing tools—such as waste reduction techniques, process optimization and value-stream mapping—to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of Udyam-registered MSMEs. Attendees will gain practical experience in implementing Lean interventions and securing certified handholding support, bolstered by government subsidies for consultancy services. NPC officials highlight that building a cadre of skilled Lean consultants is vital for scaling resource-efficient practices and driving sustainable growth across India's MSME sector. ♦

HERITAGE VS. HYPE

The Prada Controversy & the Case for Stronger GI Laws in India



The recent buzz around luxury fashion house Prada and our very own Kolhapuri Chappals was more than just a fashion faux pas. It was a loud and clear wake-up call, highlighting just **how crucial Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Geographical Indication (GI) tags are**. When Prada showcased sandals that looked strikingly similar to our ancient Kolhapuri Chappals, without a nod to their origin or a thought for the artisans, it sparked a global conversation.

This incident truly emphasized that Indian artisans and small businesses (MSMEs) need to step up and protect their traditional knowledge and unique creations. It's about ensuring they get the recognition, financial

benefits, and cultural preservation they deserve in today's global market. While social media can certainly grab attention, lasting legal protection is the real shield against exploitation.

The Prada-Kolhapuri Chappal Case: A Wake-Up Call

Picture this: It's June 2025. Prada launches its latest collection. Among the leather high-fashion items? Sandals that look shockingly similar to our centuries-old Kolhapuri Chappals. And the price tag? Over ₹1 lakh! Now compare that with the original artisans who earn a few hundred rupees per pair.

Social media erupted. People called out the brand for lifting

Indian heritage without so much as a mention. The uproar forced Prada's CSR head, Lorenzo Bertelli, to acknowledge that the sandals were inspired by traditional Indian footwear and express willingness to collaborate with Indian artisans.

But here's the twist—though Kolhapuri Chappals have had a GI tag since 2018, Prada didn't use the name or tag. So, legally, no direct violation. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL)? Dismissed. Only registered GI holders like LIDCOM and LIDKAR could sue.

So what does this tell us? A GI tag is helpful, but when it comes to enforcing it—especially against design imitation—it's complicated.

Demystifying IPR: Why It Matters

Think of IPR as legal ownership for your ideas—whether it's a design, name, or artistic work. It ensures that you, the creator, reap the rewards of your creativity. In India, laws protect various forms of IPR, and for traditional crafts like Kolhapuri Chappals, GI tags are key.

What is a GI Tag, Anyway?

A GI tag is like a legal badge that says, "Hey, this product comes from a specific place and has unique features because of it."

Famous examples? Darjeeling Tea, Mysore Silk, Kashmiri Saffron.

Here's why GI tagging is powerful:

- **Protects from Copycats:** Only genuine makers from the registered region can use the name.
- **Builds Trust:** Consumers know they're getting the real deal.
- **Preserves Heritage:** Safeguards traditional skills passed down generations.
- **Boosts Income:** Authenticity helps fetch better prices and uplifts local economies.

The Big Picture: Why IPR and GI Tags Matter for India

Strong IPR systems do more than protect rights. They:

- Fuel economic growth by promoting exports of GI-tagged goods (like Naga Mircha, Assam Lemon)
- Preserve our rich culture and traditional wisdom
- Empower rural artisans and promote fair earnings
- Enhance tourism by turning products into cultural ambassadors

But Here's the Challenge...

Despite all these advantages, India still faces hurdles:

- **Low Awareness:** Many artisans don't know how to protect their work.
- **Enforcement Woes:** GI law focuses on names, not designs. Without naming, proving violation is hard.

- **Limited Global Recognition:** GI tags registered in India aren't automatically valid abroad.
- **High Costs & Bureaucracy:** Applying for and maintaining GI rights isn't easy.
- **Benefits Not Trickle Down:** Artisans often don't see financial gains.
- **Fake Products Online:** Counterfeits hurt both sales and trust.

Turning the Prada Moment into an Opportunity

Yes, the Prada-Kolhapuri faceoff was frustrating. But it also put our artisans in the global spotlight. Now is the time to act.



So what can be done?

- **Go Global:** Embrace e-commerce and reach international buyers directly.
- **Show the Story:** Use social media to share behind-the-scenes content—from crafting to culture.
- **Highlight Heritage:** Stress

- that each chappal is handmade, ethical, and sustainable.
- **Collaborate Smartly:** Partner with global designers for fair-trade collaborations.
- **Promote Craft Tourism:** Let people see and experience the craft firsthand.
- **Government & Institutional Support:** The Need of the Hour
- **Support Exports:** Help artisans navigate global markets
- **Provide Legal Help:** Set up legal aid for fighting international infringement
- **Fund Branding:** Train artisans to build their brand and story

In Conclusion

The Prada-Kolhapuri Chappal controversy, though frustrating at first, emerged as a powerful catalyst. It underscored the urgent need to protect India's cultural heritage through strong IPRs, especially GIs tags. More importantly, it opened a global window of opportunity for Indian artisans and MSMEs. By embracing IPR, going digital, showcasing authentic craftsmanship, and building strategic collaborations, our artisans can safeguard their legacy and confidently compete with global luxury brands. The future of Indian crafts lies in a smart blend of tradition, innovation, and global outreach.

Now, it's our turn to own the story. ♦



My Country, My SAMVADINI

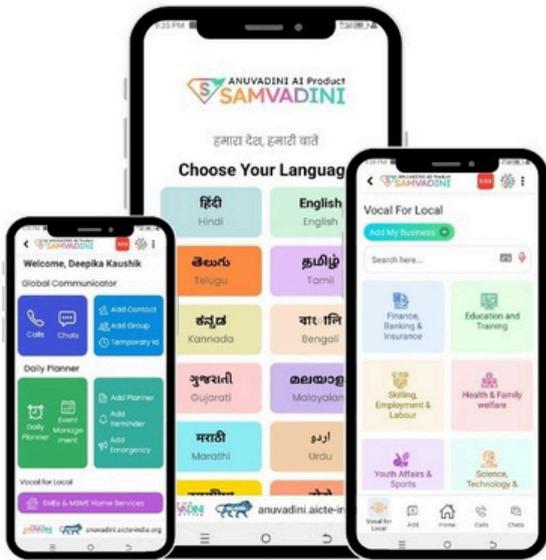
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"DO I REALLY NEED A TRADEMARK FOR MY BRAND?"

A Conversation That Every MSME Must Hear

Scene: A bustling co-working hub in Hyderabad. Two MSME founders—**Priya**, who runs a sustainable fashion label from Kolkata, and **Ravi**, who recently launched an AI-based diagnostics startup from Coimbatore—are grabbing coffee during a business seminar.

Priya: (*sipping coffee*) You won't believe it—someone in Delhi started selling saris under my brand name last month. Our designs, colors, everything... but they changed just one alphabet in the name.

Ravi: That's rough! Did you have your brand trademarked?

Priya: I didn't think it was necessary back then. Now I'm dealing with confused customers and a diluted brand image. What about you?

Ravi: Oh, I locked everything early on—trademarked the logo, copyrighted my pitch deck, and even filed a provisional patent for our AI model. Our mentor from the MSME-DI session drilled it into us—"Your ideas are your assets. If you don't protect them, someone else will."

Priya: (*nodding*) I wish I had known better. Isn't it too expensive and complex for small businesses like ours?

Ravi: Not anymore. The government offers up to **50% fee concessions** for MSMEs. Plus, there are **IP Facilitation Centres**



and workshops by **ni-msme**, **CIPAM**, and **IP India**. It's all becoming much more MSME-friendly.

✓ This short exchange isn't just relatable—it's real. In today's hypercompetitive and globalized market, **Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)** are not just a legal checkbox. They're **strategic tools for growth, protection, and differentiation.**

Whether you're a solo founder in Surat, a women-led cluster in Manipur, or an export-focused startup in Bengaluru, knowing the right kind of IPR to use—and when—is critical.

Here's a concise yet comprehensive guide to the **6 key types of IPRs**, their validity,

relevance for MSMEs, and the government-backed support you can tap into right now. ↓

1. Trademark (™ / ®)

- **What it covers:** Names, logos, symbols, slogans, or combinations thereof used to distinguish an MSME's products or services from those of competitors. This is your brand's unique identifier in the marketplace.
- **Validity:** 10 years from the date of application, and it can be renewed indefinitely every 10 years, ensuring perpetual brand protection.
- **Relevance to MSMEs:** Crucial for building brand identity, reputation, and customer loyalty. A registered trademark empowers an MSME to prevent competitors from using similar marks, thereby safeguarding goodwill, differentiating offerings, and facilitating effective marketing and expansion into new markets.

2. Patent

What it covers: New, inventive, and industrially applicable inventions, which can be either

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- novel products (e.g., a new sensor for industrial machinery) or innovative processes (e.g., a more efficient manufacturing technique). The invention must demonstrate novelty, inventive step (non-obviousness), and industrial applicability.
- **Validity:** 20 years from the date of filing the application, after which the invention enters the public domain. It is non-renewable.
- **Relevance to MSMEs:** Protects technological innovations, granting the MSME a temporary monopoly over their invention. This secures a competitive advantage, attracts potential investors or collaborators, and enables monetization through licensing, sale, or exclusive production.

3. Copyright (©)

- **What it covers:** Original literary, artistic, musical, and dramatic works. For an MSME, this encompasses a wide array of creative assets: unique fabric patterns, textile designs, website content, marketing brochures, product photographs, social media graphics, software codes, databases, architectural drawings, and even scripts for promotional videos.
- **Validity:** Generally, the lifetime of the author/creator plus 60 years after their death. For works published

- anonymously or pseudonymously, or works of government/public undertakings, it's 60 years from the date of publication.

- **Relevance to MSMEs:** Essential for protecting creative outputs and marketing collateral. It grants the MSME exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display their work, preventing unauthorized copying, adaptation, or exploitation, thereby preserving the integrity and value of their creative assets.

4. Industrial Designs

- **What it covers:** The unique visual features of a product, focusing purely on its aesthetic appeal. This includes the shape, configuration, pattern, ornamentation, or color combinations applied to an article. It protects how your product looks, not its functional aspects.
- **Validity:** Initially 10 years from the date of application, which can be extended by another 5 years, providing a total of 15 years of protection.
- **Relevance to MSMEs:** Critical in industries where product aesthetics significantly influence consumer choice and drive sales, such as fashion (e.g., a distinctive garment cut or print), handicrafts, jewellery, toys, and furniture. It

safeguards distinctive product designs from being imitated by competitors.

5. Geographical Indications (GI) (®)

- **What it covers:** Products originating from a specific geographical location, known for unique characteristics, quality, or reputation directly attributed to that region. Examples include Kolhapuri Chappal, Darjeeling Tea, Banarasi Silk, and recent additions like Telangana's Nalgonda Nimma (acid lime) or Mahadevpur Tussar Silk Products.
- **Validity:** Initially 10 years, and it can be renewed indefinitely every 10 years, ensuring continuous protection for the community.
- **Relevance to MSMEs:** Adds premium value to products by guaranteeing authenticity and unique origin. GIs boost exports, support local artisan communities by preventing misuse of the name, and ensure the preservation of traditional skills and heritage, fostering collective branding and market differentiation.

6. Trade Secrets

- **What it covers:** Confidential business information or processes that provide a competitive edge. This can include recipes (e.g., a unique food formula), manufacturing methods, client databases, marketing strategies, pricing algorithms, or supplier lists.
- **Validity:** Indefinite, as long as strict secrecy is maintained

- and the information is not publicly disclosed. It relies on robust internal security measures and confidentiality agreements.
- **Relevance to MSMEs:** An ideal and cost-effective method for protecting proprietary methods or knowledge without the need for public disclosure or formal registration costs, providing a continuous competitive advantage.

Government Support for MSMEs on IPR in India

Recognizing the pivotal role of IPR in empowering MSMEs, the Indian government has implemented several supportive initiatives:

- **MSME Innovative Scheme (IPR Component):** Launched by the Ministry of MSME, this scheme provides direct financial assistance for IPR registrations. For instance, MSMEs can receive 100% reimbursement for trademark registration costs (up to ₹10,000), design registration (up to ₹15,000), GI registration (up to ₹2,00,000), and significant support for patents (up to ₹1,00,000 for domestic patents and ₹5,00,000 for foreign patents).
- **IP Facilitation Centres:** These centers, often operated by government

- bodies or authorized agencies, provide comprehensive guidance and assistance to MSMEs in understanding IPR and streamlining the filing process for patents, trademarks, designs, and GIs.

- **Fee Reductions:** MSMEs are eligible for substantial fee concessions (often up to 80% for patents and 75% for designs) when filing applications for patents, trademarks, and designs, making IPR protection more accessible and affordable.

- **Awareness Workshops & Training:** Organizations like the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ni-msme), MSME-Development Institutes (MSME-DIs), Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), and the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks (CGPDTM / IP India) regularly conduct extensive training sessions and workshops nationwide to educate MSMEs on IPR best practices.

- The **National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM)**, for example, has reached millions, including students and faculty, across all states and UTs.

- **IP Sarthi Chatbot:** A digital assistant designed to provide instant support and guidance to users navigating the IPR registration processes, offering quick answers to common queries.

- **One District One GI Initiative:** This initiative aims to nurture and promote Geographical Indications at the district level, providing support for existing GI products or identifying potential products for GI registration in districts currently lacking them.

- **Startup India Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP) Scheme:** While primarily aimed at startups, the principles and support mechanisms of SIPP, including expedited examination of patent applications and facilitation of IPR filings, often create a beneficial ecosystem that influences and supports broader MSME IPR initiatives.

This structured understanding of IPR types and the available government support empowers MSMEs to strategically leverage their intangible assets, secure their market position, foster continuous innovation, and sustainably scale their businesses in both domestic and increasingly competitive global markets.

Protecting your intellectual property is not just a legal formality; it's a strategic imperative for long-term success. ♦

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USE OF AI FOR IPR

A Competitive Edge for Businesses Seeking Scalable and Secure Innovation

The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is transforming how intellectual assets are created, protected, managed, and enforced.

As innovation accelerates, AI is becoming a critical tool for IP stakeholders including inventors, attorneys, regulators, and rights holders to streamline processes, ensure compliance, and improve strategic decision-making.

Key Applications of AI in IPR

• Patent Search and Analytics

AI-powered search engines use natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms to perform:

- Prior art searches
- Patentability assessments
- Freedom-to-operate (FTO) analyses
- Invalidity searches

Example: Tools like Derwent Innovation, PatSnap, and The Lens provide semantic search capabilities to detect relevant patents that keyword-based searches might miss.

• Automated Patent Drafting

AI tools assist in drafting patent specifications, claims, and drawings using:

- Structured input from inventors or engineers
- Templates based on similar granted patents
- Legal language generation models

Example: Platforms like Specif.io and TurboPatent can auto-generate patent drafts.

• Trademark Search and Monitoring

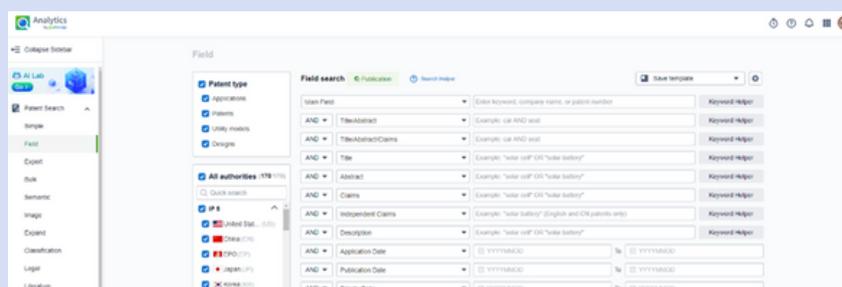
AI can analyse logos, words, phonetics, and domain registrations to:

- Identify potentially conflicting marks
- Monitor new filings in real time
- Suggest available and distinctive brand names

Example: Tools like Corsearch, TrademarkNow, and CompuMark assist IP attorneys in clearing and policing trademarks efficiently.

• Copyright Infringement Detection

AI algorithms can scan internet platforms, social media, and streaming services to detect:



- Plagiarism in text, music, and video
- Unauthorized use of content
- Use of copyrighted material in derivative works



• **IP Portfolio Management**

AI enables IP owners to:

- Assess patent value using citation and litigation data
- Track renewal dates and cost optimization
- Make data-driven decisions on licensing, abandonment, or litigation

Example: IPwe uses blockchain and AI to manage patent portfolios and facilitate licensing via smart contracts.

• **Predictive Analytics for Prosecution and Litigation**

AI systems can predict:

- Likelihood of patent grant based on claim scope and examiner history
- Success of appeals or oppositions
- Court outcomes in IP litigation

Example: LexisNexis PatentAdvisor and Juristat offer prosecution analytics tailored for decision support.

Challenges and Legal Considerations in the Indian Context

As India accelerates its digital transformation and champions innovation through the Digital India, Startup India, and Make in India missions, the convergence of AI and IPR poses unique regulatory, ethical, and capacity-building challenges for the nation's innovation ecosystem—especially MSMEs, startups, and academic institutions.

• **Inventorship Issues: Patentability of AI-Generated Inventions**

India's Patent Act recognizes only humans as inventors, leaving AI-generated innovations unprotected. No policy yet addresses the DABUS-type cases within the Indian context.

• **Bias in Training Data: Incomplete or Skewed IP Outcomes**

AI tools trained on outdated or incomplete Indian IP databases may yield flawed or biased outcomes. This undermines accuracy in patent searches or trademark clearance.

• **Confidentiality: Data entered into AI systems must be protected under applicable laws and contracts**

Sensitive IP data entered into AI systems may be exposed if not

managed under India's DPDP Act, 2023. Many MSMEs lack safeguards or vendor compliance checks.

Ethical Use: AI tools must comply with IP laws and should not facilitate infringement

Uninformed use of AI for content or design may lead to accidental IPR infringement. Clear ethical guidelines and user awareness are urgently needed.

Conclusion

AI is revolutionizing the IPR landscape by improving accuracy, reducing manual effort, and enabling strategic insights. While the technology continues to evolve, legal frameworks must adapt to address emerging questions of authorship, ownership, and enforceability in the AI age. Stakeholders must embrace AI as an enabler, not a disruptor, to future-proof their innovation strategies.

Collaboration between policymakers, technologists, and IP practitioners will be essential to build a robust and responsible AI-IPR ecosystem. ♦

Article shared by: Mr. Srinivas Maddipati, Managing Director of Eeva IP & IT Service Pvt Ltd; Managing Partner of Eeva Quality Certification Services; President of Educational Society for Intellectual Property Rights (ESIPR); and Designated Partner in Highviews Patent Illustration Services LLP. He is a Registered Indian Patent Agent (Regd No. IN/PA 3124) with B.E. (Mechanical), MS (Mechatronics) (Germany), LLB degrees.

FROM SURVIVAL TO SCALE How Indian MSMEs Can Win with IPR



Indian Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are globally recognized for their innovation and creativity, yet many grapple with challenges such as limited access to finance, market visibility, and technological competitiveness. In a competitive global economy, the strategic integration of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) into core business practices is not just an option but a critical pathway to success.

Ms. Vanamala Swapna, Faculty member & Head IPFC, ni-msme, emphasizes that a robust IP portfolio is an **underutilized yet powerful tool** that can significantly enhance an MSME's brand identity, credibility, and overall market positioning. This article distills key insights from her perspective, offering a roadmap for MSMEs to leverage IPR for sustainable growth and competitiveness.

From being survival-led enterprises to becoming innovation-led businesses, Indian MSMEs stand at a pivotal juncture. As global competition intensifies and digital transformation accelerates, the ability to safeguard ideas, brands, designs, and traditional knowledge has become non-negotiable. IPRs are not just legal shields—they are strategic assets that determine whether an MSME can command premium value, scale globally, or simply survive the next disruption.

Interview: Ms. Vanamala Swapna, Faculty member & Head, Intellectual property facilitation center for Msmes (IPFC), ni-msme

Q: In your view, what should be the most relevant and urgent aspects of IPR that Indian MSMEs must focus on today?

Indian MSMEs often struggle with limited access to finance, market visibility, and technological competitiveness. IPR is a powerful, yet underutilized tool to address these challenges. Building a strong IP portfolio through trademarks, patents, design registrations, and GI tags can significantly enhance an MSME's brand identity, credibility, and overall market positioning.

Among the various IPR tools, the following are crucial:

- **Trademarks: The Foundation of Brand Identity** Trademarks are fundamental and should be an **immediate priority** for MSMEs. They help businesses distinguish their products in the marketplace and build long-term brand recognition. Major e-commerce platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra often encourage or require trademark registration for sellers, reinforcing brand protection, preventing counterfeiting, and building customer trust.
- **Patents: Fueling Technological Innovation & Competitive Edge** Patents are equally vital, particularly for MSMEs engaged in technological innovation. They safeguard novel products or processes, granting a business a competitive advantage and opening doors for lucrative licensing opportunities. A robust patent portfolio can also attract investors and facilitate funding, as exemplified by an MSME patenting an extended drug release formulation to prevent copying and create new income streams through royalties.
- **Design Registration: Protecting Aesthetic Value Cost-Effectively** Design registration is an important and cost-effective option that MSMEs should not overlook. It protects the visual or aesthetic aspects of a product, proving especially useful for sectors like consumer goods, textiles, and handicrafts. For instance, a start-up producing eco-friendly bottles can register the external shape or ornamentation under the Designs Act to prevent legal copying.
- **Geographical Indication (GI) Tags: Preserving Authenticity & Boosting Market Access** GI tags are essential for traditional and region-

- specific products, helping preserve authenticity and cultural value while boosting domestic and export market access. GIs enable market differentiation, protect traditional techniques, and command premium prices.

The Darjeeling Tea, for example, saw its prices increase fivefold post-GI.

- The most urgent issue for MSMEs regarding GIs is the immediate need to register as authorized users. Despite India having over 650 registered GIs, only a small proportion of authorized users are officially registered for most. This gap significantly undermines the practical impact of GI growth and directly affects the competitiveness, income, and legal protection of authentic MSME producers.

Q: What are the most common IPR-related challenges that MSMEs face—both in awareness and execution?

Indian MSMEs face significant hurdles in leveraging IPR, both in awareness and execution:

- **Awareness Gaps:** Many MSMEs lack a clear understanding of various IPR types, their applicability, and the benefits they offer. Artisans, weavers, and local manufacturers often remain unaware of Patents, Design registrations, GIs, or the importance of trademark protection. IPR is frequently not viewed as an immediate

- requirement or a strategic business tool.

- **Execution Obstacles:** MSMEs encounter significant obstacles, including **complex filing procedures, limited access to legal and technical expertise, and the perception of high associated costs.** This often leads to delays or complete avoidance of IP registration, resulting in missed opportunities for protection and growth.

Examples include design-rich products in Pambarthi (metal-ware) and Firozabad (glass-ware) remaining unregistered due to a lack of IP support.

- **Low Monetization & Enforcement:** Even when IP is registered, **monetization remains low.** Unlike large corporations that leverage IP through franchising or licensing, most MSMEs lack the knowledge and frameworks to capitalize on their IP assets. This stems from a limited understanding of IP valuation, legal agreements, and commercialization pathways. Furthermore, **enforcement of IP rights is rare** among MSMEs due to lengthy, expensive, and resource-intensive legal processes, discouraging action against infringement. Overall, Indian MSMEs account for only a small fraction of the over 40,000 annual IP filings in India, with approximately 85% coming from large corporation.



Q: How can MSMEs overcome these IPR challenges in a cost-effective and strategic manner?

India has launched several flagship initiatives, including Digital India, Start-Up India, Make in India, and Viksit Bharat, all aimed at fostering innovation and sustainable economic growth. Strengthening IPR awareness, protection, and commercialization among MSMEs is crucial for achieving India's vision of becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

Key support mechanisms and initiatives available include:

- **Intellectual Property Facilitation Centres (IPFCs) under MSME innovative scheme:** This flagship program by the Ministry of MSME aims to boost innovation, design intervention, and IPR protection for MSMEs. A core component is the establishment of **over 40 IPFCs across India** (as of 2025), hosted at premier institutions like ni-msme Hyderabad and Central Tool Room and Training Centre

- (CTTC), and industry associations. These centers, staffed by experienced patent and trademark agents and legal experts, provide crucial support. Their services include:
 1. **Conducting workshops, seminars, and training programs** to enhance MSMEs' knowledge about various IP types, their importance, and business benefits.
 2. **Assistance with IPR registrations**, including patent, trademark, design, and GI searches, drafting, and application filing.
 3. **Advice on licensing, IP valuation, technology transfer, and monetization.**
 4. **IP Management and other advisory services.** The centers also offer **reimbursement for IP registration fees**: up to ₹1.00 lakh for domestic patents, ₹5.00 lakh for foreign patents, ₹2.00 lakh for GI registration, ₹0.15 lakh for design registration, and ₹0.10 lakh for trademark registration.
 - **State Government Support:** Many state governments provide IPR support as part of their industrial or startup policies. For instance, the **Telangana MSME Policy 2024 offers a 100% subsidy** on expenses for quality certification or patent registration, up to ₹3 lakhs, for micro and small enterprises
 - **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme:** This World Bank-supported initiative under the Ministry of MSME strongly emphasizes IPR awareness and innovation. The National Institute for MSME (ni-msme) is actively implementing the scheme through district-level workshops across several states, educating entrepreneurs and policymakers on IPRs and supporting registrations.
 - **Building Brand Identity and Trust:** Trademark registration helped brands like *Paper Boat* protect their unique identity and build a loyal customer base. Design registrations, such as those secured by *Essenar Transformers*, protect the aesthetic appeal of products in design-focused sectors like electronics and handicrafts.
 - **Securing Market Position & Revenue:** Patents grant MSMEs exclusive rights over inventions, strengthening market position and enabling revenue through licensing. *MY SLATE MAKERS*, a Hyderabad startup, patented their Reusable Educational Slate to protect their innovation and scale effectively.
 - **Premium Pricing & Global Access:** GI tags differentiate regional products by verifying their origin and traditional methods. This boosts pricing and export appeal, as seen with *Pochampally Ikat* and *Darjeeling Tea*.
- Ample funds and well-structured support mechanisms already exist for MSMEs; the key challenge lies in how effectively MSMEs can access and leverage these facilities.**
- Q: What role can IPR play in building brand value, market access, and long-term business sustainability for MSMEs?**
- IPR play a pivotal role in enhancing brand value, market access, and long-term sustainability for MSMEs. By safeguarding innovation and creativity, IPR enables MSMEs to build strong brand identities, gain consumer trust, and stay competitive.
- Ultimately, MSMEs should view Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) as a strategic business asset, not just a legal formality. Effectively managing IP can drive innovation, attract investment, and strengthen brand value.
- This approach supports sustainable growth and aligns with the goal of building a developed and competitive India – "Viksit Bharat". ♦

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S BLUE ECONOMY

ni-msme's Model for Aquaculture Enterprise Creation



India's fisheries and aquaculture sector plays a vital role in food security, livelihood generation, and economic growth. With a long coastline of over 7,500 km, abundant inland water resources, and a thriving aquaculture industry, India is the third-largest fish-producing country in the world.

The sector contributes about 1.07% to the national GDP and over 7% to the agricultural GDP, offering vast potential for entrepreneurship. Opportunities span across the value chain from hatchery management, fish farming, feed production, ornamental fish breeding, processing, cold chain logistics, and export businesses to innovative models like cage culture and integrated fish farming. With rising domestic demand and global export potential, there is significant scope for first-generation entrepreneurs, women, youth, and marginalized communities to enter and thrive in the sector through enterprise creation and value addition.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector in India holds immense potential for socio-economic development, particularly among coastal and inland communities.

Recognizing its transformative impact, the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (ni-msme) has undertaken a significant initiative to promote entrepreneurship and skill development in this sector through targeted training programmes.

Supported by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India, these interventions primarily focus on empowering Scheduled Caste (SC) unemployed youth, fostering inclusion, and creating sustainable livelihoods.

In the financial year 2023–24, ni-msme successfully conducted 20 Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes (ESDPs) across 10 Indian states, reaching 500 SC youth.

These programmes were designed not merely as skill transfer sessions but as transformative experiences aiming to instil entrepreneurial mindset, sector-specific technical competencies, and awareness about government schemes.

The strategic intervention aligns with the Government of India's focus on inclusive growth, employment generation, and rural entrepreneurship, especially in the Blue Economy sectors.

The initiative aims to offer a model for leveraging training as a tool for empowerment, especially among marginalized groups in resource-rich yet underutilized sectors like aquaculture and fisheries.

Programme Structure, Reach, and Methodology

Each of the 20 training programmes, held in regions with high fisheries potential including Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh lasted five to six days. The programmes were designed and coordinated by Dr. Shreekanth Sharma, Director and Mr. Vivek Kumar, faculty member from ni-msme's School of Entrepreneurship and Extension (SEE).

The core objectives of the programmes were to:

- Inculcate entrepreneurial motivation and build self-confidence.
- Impart technical knowledge on aquaculture practices, fish hatchery, disease management, and value chain.
- Guide participants in preparing business plans, feasibility analysis, and accessing institutional finance.
- Create awareness about NFDB schemes, government support systems, and market linkages.

Expert guest speakers from the fisheries industry, government departments, and successful entrepreneurs were invited to enhance the training quality. Moreover, exposure visits to local fish farms, processing units, hatcheries, and cooperatives provided a practical learning environment for participants.

The success of these interventions is reflected in the wide geographic and demographic coverage:

- Locations included key fisheries clusters such as Nellore, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Madurai, Gopalpur, Baripada, Solapur, and Purba Medinipur.
- Approximately 25 SC youth participated in each training, achieving a balance of gender inclusion, with a significant number of female participants.
- Valedictory sessions featured interactions with eminent personalities from the Fisheries Department, Industries Department, and entrepreneurship promotion bodies.

Impact and Strategic Role of ni-msme in Fisheries Entrepreneurship

The proactive role of ni-msme in fisheries and aquaculture entrepreneurship development extends beyond training delivery. As a pioneer national institution under the Ministry of MSME, ni-msme has built strong frameworks to integrate technical skills, business acumen, and financial literacy among aspiring entrepreneurs. Through initiatives like the NFDB-sponsored programme, ni-msme has showcased its capacity to:

- Act as a knowledge and training hub for sector-specific enterprise creation.
- Mobilize and mainstream underrepresented communities like SC youth into the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

- Promote self-employment, micro-enterprise development, and value chain integration in fisheries.

The feedback from participants highlights enhanced understanding of hatchery operations, fish feed management, and market dynamics, which has inspired many to initiate their own enterprises or enhance their family businesses. The programme has also strengthened collaborations between ni-msme, NFDB, and State Fisheries Departments, forming a replicable model for similar interventions in other regions.

Going forward, ni-msme envisions expanding its focus in the aquaculture sector by:

- Enhanced training and capacity-building initiatives tailored to region-specific aquaculture practices and emerging technologies.
- Developing training-of-trainers (ToT) modules to scale outreach through local resource persons.
- Leveraging digital platforms for market access, helping small fishers and aquapreneurs connect to e-commerce, traceability systems, and online B2B marketplaces.

In conclusion, the NFDB-ni-msme training initiative serves as a compelling example of how targeted capacity-building can empower fisheries communities, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to national development goals. ♦



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ni-msme is an autonomous institution of the Ministry of MSME, GoI. It is ISO 9001:2015-certified, holds a 3-Star Utkrisht accreditation from the Capacity Building Commission, and is certified under the ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship (WE)-Check programme.

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