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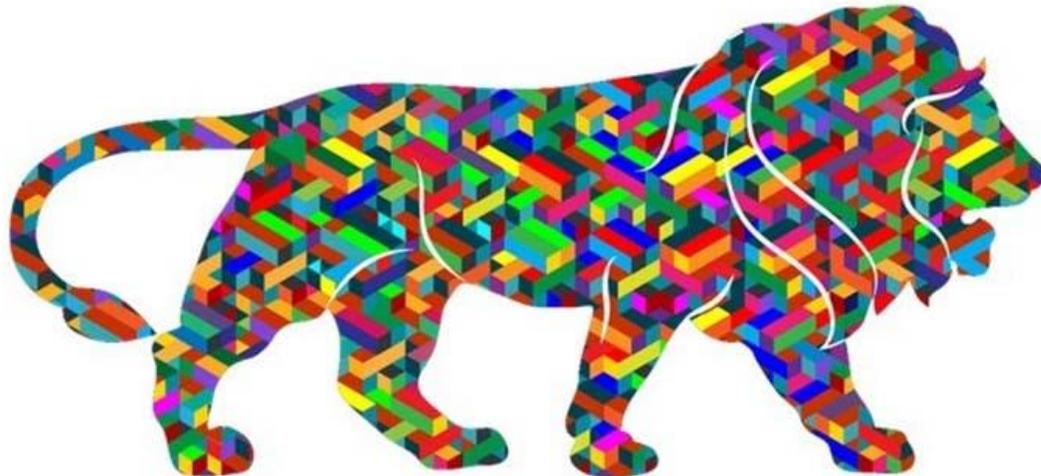


Time to Strengthen Intellectual Property in India

March 10, 2015, 11.55 AM IST || THE HANS INDIA

Where does India stand in the field of innovations and owning a substantial Intellectual Property portfolio?

First, take a look at some of the numbers related to intellectual property in the industry. In 2013, for example, 43,000 patent application were filed. Off these, only 22 percent were filed by Indian applicants, telling the untold part of India's IP journey. A country of 1.2 billion people and with largest English speaking workforce in the world can do much better. Before talking how, let's gain a perspective as to what ails Indian IP landscape and what can be done to start making a powerful impact, with what exists.



Let's attempt to understand some strong disconnects. First, a quick introspective question that needs a dispassionate answer – What ails Indian IP industry? – and more importantly "Why"? Here is one perspective - India invested 44 Billion US Dollars in R&D and is the 8th largest investor in R&D in the world. So, the obvious rationale is - India must be in top 10 innovators list in the world? Then, why is it not? It is because of lack of focus on innovations centered around Products & Services. R&D investment is being spent on research but not connected to either products or services. So, if this orientation is changed and some course correction made, then India can quickly launch itself into Innovations Superhighway.

Also, there is a need for paradigm shift in the mindset towards understanding market needs and not pure play academic research. Addressing this in holistic fashion leads to a new era of customer focused approach and hence opening the door for strong IP monetization. The mantra is very simple - If there is bang for the buck, invest & innovate and then harvest, if not move onto avenues to deliver value.

Although there are many odds, one thing that overwhelmingly works India's favor is that it has largest English speaking workforce in the planet to tap into; Tapping into the large scientific & technology manpower to churn Subject Matter Experts to accelerate in key industry verticals is another quick win. The fact that IBM and GE's of the world already hired Hundreds of PhD Scientists is a testimony for the potential to change. India's Mangalyaan – Mars Space Mission is yet another example of not only space technology prowess but also sheer brilliance in executing lowest fuel cost journey in space history, which even NASA leaders acknowledged and giving India its due credit. Multiple innovations, indigenous problem solving approaches and desire to succeed contributed for this outstanding success.

Another key factor is providing the right environment to succeed. Incentivize for delivering success - Invention compensation serves as strong motivator. Recognition amongst the peers and groups drives esteem and in turn "value". This is no rocket science and purely a common sense approach. As this framework is put into context, or the least attempts are made in this direction - Team India starts propelling in innovation pathway.

Take a look on the positive side. Modi Government has invested 400 crores in modernization of Patent offices and infrastructure. This is a silver lining in the cloud as it provides not only good infrastructure, systems and training but also enhances capacity to handle more application volumes. Another aspect that India can take pride is being ranked fifth among the intellectual property offices in the world when it came to trademark applications. As India is unleashing Digital platform, as part of Digital India campaign, BSNL is investing over 7,000 crores across 2,500 Indian cities, and would be offering free Wi-Fi to promote nurturing, sharing information. This infrastructure can be leveraged in promoting and showcasing innovations and to harness talent.

A strong cultural issue that India has to overcome for good reasons, is to rise over the fear of failure. When inventive experiments are conducted the resulting outcomes are not always guaranteed for success. One needs to learn from failures as well. As Dr. Abdul Kalam put it - FAIL means - First Attempt in Learning. This mindset is need of the hour.

Spreading IP awareness is first step in the game of innovation. Nurturing talent is next. Keeping an eye and recognizing incremental and radical innovations is a must and become a habit. Seeking IP protection and enforcing it must be made a ongoing activity. This will also serve as contributing factor in

enhancing trust in Indian Legal system internationally. As India was, is, and going to be knowledge driven nation, it needs to rejig and bring in knowledge driven technology innovations and deliver 'value'. Equally important, is to assert them to get rightful due recognition and impress the world.

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URL: <http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/2015-03-10/Time-to-Strengthen-Intellectual-Property-in-India-136490>