

Centre moves to protect right to 'repair' home appliances

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In a move to protect customers' rights to repair and maintain home appliances, the Centre has asked top consumer durables firms to share data towards creation of a common repository of information on their service centres and repair policy. The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs has reached out to LG, Samsung, Havells, Philips, Sony, Bluestar, Panasonic, among others on the issue, two senior government officials said.

The move is expected to empower consumers' right to access such data with ease and enable them to have "full ownership" of these products, including the right to repair products at affordable prices, the officials said. The development comes in the backdrop of the ministry working towards creating a centralised "maintenance and repair portal", keeping in mind day-to-day challenges faced by consumers with respect to getting such products repaired.

"We are going to develop a unified convergent portal for repair and maintenance of basic home appliances, including ROs, gas stoves, and refrigerators. Later, we will expand it to other consumer durable products, too," Rohit Kumar Singh, consumer affairs secretary, told *Business Standard*.

EMPOWERING CONSUMERS

► **The government has sent letter to 23 home appliance companies**, including LG, Samsung, Havells, Philips, Sony, and Bluestar

► **Companies have been asked to provide repair policy information**, including repair charges, via a link in one place

► **A unified 'repair & maintenance' portal will be created** to empower consumers with easy access to information

► **Step taken towards strengthening the 'Right to Repair' in India**



Appliances...

The intention is not to interfere, Singh said, adding that the government wanted companies to make public basic information, including places and price range for repairing of products, for consumers' convenience. The ministry sent the letters to 23 firms on Friday.

The idea is to have uniformity of information available, so that a consumer doesn't have to get hassled, even if the warranty card of a home appliance is lost. Timely repairs and the best use of a product will also help in reducing the amount of e-waste that is generated when such products are discarded, another government official said.

Currently, most consumer durable products face problems in getting their defective products repaired or exchanged. Besides, the process is cumbersome and eventually consumers end up shelling out more for the basic services. "Our idea behind this

portal is based on the convergence model, which we experimented on our national consumer helpline and almost 654 companies have been converged so far with our helpline," Singh said.

In the past, the ministry asked consumer durable companies, including Apple, Sony, and LG, to converge with the helpline set up by the consumer affairs ministry for time-bound complaints redress. According to government officials, not just large companies, but even small ones were also asked to comply with the initiative as complaints received were not resolved on time due to non-uniform complex procedures. With the convergence of companies with the helpline, most consumer complaints are directly connected to the company concerned.

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He recalled a time when the dominant thought was to focus on the service sector as manufacturing was considered to be beyond reach. "Today, we