Not Just Made in India – Designed in India The Budget's Most Strategic Move

News & Updates • March 10, 2026

'First published on BW Legal World'

By: Safir Anand, Mudit Kaushik and Sehr Anand

India has strong design talent, ranging from local craftspeople to digital product creators, but talent alone is not sufficient. There is a need for a structured environment that helps designers access commercial pathways, secure legal protection for their work, and build meaningful connections with industry, say authors Safir Anand, Senior Partner & Head of Department (Trademarks, Contractual & Commercial IP), Anand and Anand, Mudit Kaushik Managing Associate, Anand and Anand, Sehr Anand, Associate, Anand and Anand.



When we talk about India's economic future, we often focus on manufacturing numbers or export statistics. But there is a broader, equally transformative idea emerging that India must own not just how products are made, but how they are imagined, shaped, and recognised around the world.

It's no accident that nations with strong brands tend to command not just higher revenues but lasting cultural influence. Look at how Italian or Japanese design language instantly conjures quality and

style and how that built industries that go far beyond factories into global identity and desirability. India's industrial and creative sectors are starting to understand this shift, and the latest Union Budget initiative to establish a design institute in the eastern region comes at precisely the right time.

The Economic Value of Design

Design matters because people feel products before they use them. A beautifully shaped smartphone or a distinctive silhouette on a pair of sneakers are the things customers remember and are willing to pay a premium for. That emotional connection is closely linked to intellectual property and brand value.

Industrial design applications in India have increased significantly in recent years, rising from 10,594 in FY 2020–21 to 38,804 in FY 2024–25, representing a 266 percent increase. This growth has outpaced other forms of intellectual property filings during the same period, indicating that creators and companies are placing greater importance on protecting visual identity rather than treating it as secondary styling. However, increased filings alone are not sufficient. Without effective tools and institutional support to secure and enforce these rights, commercially valuable designs remain vulnerable to copying and market dilution.

Protecting the Look of Things Isn't Optional

Businesses often pour their heart into crafting something new, only to see competition imitate the shape or look and undercut them in price. This creates a direct commercial risk. Good design protection gives a company the right to say "this shape, this visual identity, this product look belongs to us". That translates into pricing power, customer loyalty, and ultimately stronger balance sheets.

Investors also look for this kind of tangible uniqueness. A startup that can demonstrate clear ownership of its visual identity, rather than offering a generic product, becomes a more attractive partner or acquisition target.

NID-East Could Be India's New Innovation Hub

India has strong design talent, ranging from local craftspeople to digital product creators, but talent alone is not sufficient. There is a need for a structured environment that helps designers access commercial pathways, secure legal protection for their work, and build meaningful connections with industry.

A well-resourced institute could help fill that gap. Think of it not just as a teaching campus, but as a

place where legal insights, business mentorship, market research, and collaboration with industry all come together. That combination is what turns a great idea into a *global brand*, and a law school into a license-granting, market-building force.

Traditional Crafts and Modern Markets

Eastern India has a rich cultural heritage, including Madhubani painting and Pattachitra art. These traditions have long been admired for their distinctive visual style. However, many of these art forms struggle to access global markets. Intellectual property protection processes are often unclear to grassroots creators, and opportunities for commercialization remain limited.

Bridging this gap could have real impact, local artisans protected by design rights, supported by modern product thinking, and connected to wider supply chains would add both economic value and preserve cultural practices. A single effective design institute could become a hub for that work.

Law and Policy Must Keep Pace with Aspirations

Legal frameworks can function either as enablers or as bottlenecks. Faster, clearer, and more predictable processes for registering and defending design rights would boost confidence among creators and companies. Awareness campaigns and accessible legal support would also help integrate design protection more effectively into business strategy.

Beyond protection, policy should also encourage commercialisation. Access to markets, export incentives for design-led products, and collaborations with global partners all amplify the value of homegrown design.

From Factories to Brands

India's engineering muscle and scale of production are rightly celebrated. But the future belongs to those who can embed distinctive identity into what they make. A product that's merely functional is one thing; a product that tells a story, invites recognition, and commands loyalty is another. This shift from manufacturing to owning product design gives India an opportunity to compete in global markets on stronger commercial terms. It allows companies to move beyond production volume and focus on long-term value creation.

KEY CONTACT



Safir Anand

Senior Partner

View Bio of Safir Anand

RELATED INDUSTRIES

ADVERTISING AND PRODUCT LIABILITY

RELATED PRACTICES

COPYRIGHT