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ICRIER Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE)

NEWSLETTER

September 2025– April 2026



Message from the Director & CE

Greetings from the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)! I am pleased to share the first newsletter from the ICRIER Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE).

Established in 2022, IPCIDE brings together ICRIER and Prosus to generate policy evidence to support India's digital transformation. The Centre has emerged as a hub of thought leadership across the digital economy, producing the State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) reports alongside research on startups, competition, digital public infrastructure (DPI), platforms, and emerging technologies. These insights are shared through policy briefs, working papers, and multi-stakeholder engagements spanning government, industry, academia and civil society.

Since July 2025, IPCIDE has advanced policy discussions on AI's impact on labour markets, ethics and governance, innovation in startups, and the role of DPI in sectors such as health. We thank our Advisory Board, including new members Dr. R.S. Sharma, Dr. Arvind Gupta, and Prof. Pankaj Jalote, for their guidance.

India's digital future will shape the livelihoods and economic choices of millions of citizens, and carry ramifications far beyond the borders of our country. Evidence-based research to guide public policy is therefore crucial. We are proud to contribute to that effort.

Dr. Shekhar Aiyar

Director and CE, ICRIER



Research Themes

State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE)

Digitalisation has made dramatic progress, but the way it is being measured has not. Therefore, the flagship State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) report has been designed to be a living document, that continues to evolve, be improved, tweaked and renewed every year. The SIDE report provides a comprehensive assessment of India's digital economy using relevant indicators that enable both international and sub-national comparisons of the digital economy.

Digital Public Infrastructure and Platforms (DPIP)

This research appraises India's Digital Public Infrastructure, evaluating their benefits and risks through the lens of scale, inclusion, efficiency, and innovation. The goal is to inform and strengthen the government's DPIP program by identifying gaps and opportunities in building a secure, trusted digital environment.

Startups & Competition

Our research on Startups and Competition examines how India's digital economy can stay competitive while sustaining innovation. We explore the startup ecosystem, the industry-academia-government relationship, and the enablers driving startup growth. We focus on deep tech startups and their policy needs, and study the interface between startups and Big Tech, examining data control, platform dependence, and competition concerns to inform policy that fosters innovation, fairness, and consumer welfare in digital markets.

Emerging Technology

This research theme examines the economic, social, and governance dimensions of technologies reshaping India's digital landscape. The centre's work to date spans artificial intelligence including its interactions with labour markets, school education, and questions of ethics and governance; as well as digital assets such as cryptocurrencies and central bank digital currencies. Going forward, the theme aims to deepen its analytical focus on AI adoption across sectors, regulatory frameworks for nascent technologies, and the broader challenge of ensuring that technological change translates into equitable outcomes for citizens and the economy.

Thematic Deep Dives

Annual Flagship Report

SIDE Subnational Report

State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) 2025: A Subnational Perspective

Authors: Deepak Mishra, Aarti Reddy, Shailly Gupta, and Jiya Bharti

SIDE 2025 is the most comprehensive assessment of how India's states and union territories are progressing on digitalisation.

Key Findings:

- India is undergoing a multi-speed digital transformation at the subnational level.
- Connectivity remains the foundation of digital progress—but gains are slowing.
- Digital adoption is converging across states, driven as much by DPIs as by private platforms.
- Most digitalised states face high risk of cyberattacks without commensurate protection. ([Press Release](#))



Data Governance Policy Brief

Economics of Data-Driven Markets Mitigating Market Power: Options and Trade-Offs

Authors: Payal Malik, Gaurav Jakhu



AI and Sectoral Transformation - Labour Policy Brief

Interactions of Artificial Intelligence with India's Labour Market

Authors: Payal Malik, Nikita Jain



Learnings from the Webinar series on Ethics and Governance of AI

Ethics and Governance of AI: A Synthesis Report

Author: Shiva Kanwar



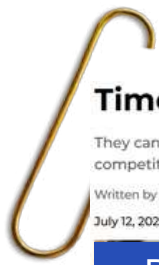
DPIP- Policy Brief

Economics of DPI in Healthcare: Catalysing Digital Health Innovation Through ABDM

Authors: Bhargavee Das, Maria Khan



Thought Leadership: Key Policy Debates



Time is ripe for private damage actions

They can complement CCI's work, both to promote fair markets and to benefit competition and consumers in India's rapidly developing economy.

Written by **Guest**

July 12, 2025 04:30 IST



DPIP

Time is ripe for private damage actions

Authors: Payal Malik, Luke Streatfeild, Demica Kaur Nettleford & Ram Tamarappoo | Financial Express
12 July, 2025

By Payal Malik, Luke Streatfeild, Demica Kaur Nettleford & Ram Tamarappoo

EXPRESS OPINION

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EDITORIALS | COLUMNS

Emerging Technology

...come a driver

With right policy choices, AI can become a driver for inclusive growth

Authors: Payal Malik, Nikita Jain and Shailly Gupta | Indian Express
23 Aug, 2025

Also by Nikita Jain and Shailly Gupta

Beyond the headlines of layoffs, attributed partly to the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI), there is a more fundamental question: How will India shape the trajectory of AI in ways that its impact on jobs, productivity, and economy is

How should India shape digital sovereignty?

Sovereignty multiplies innovation, and India should be a follow-on innovator rather than a follower.

Written by **Guest**

October 19, 2025 09:30 IST

DPIP



How should India shape digital sovereignty?

Authors: Payal Malik, Nikita Jain
Financial Express | 19 Oct, 2025

Towards a rupee-pegged stablecoin

Genius Act aftermath: Besides revenue reasons, control over crypto assets is critical for India to get a share in the digital asset infra involving decentralized finance.

Written by **Guest**

October 27, 2025 22:33 IST

Prefer FE



Emerging Technology

Towards a rupee-pegged stablecoin

Authors: A Damodaran
Financial Express | 27 Oct, 2025

What is perhaps the most significant outcome of the USAI system is the dollarisation of crypto digital assets.

By A Damodaran

State should reclaim its role, shape digital markets

This public infrastructure ethos is reflected in the RBI's recent reaffirmation that CPI will remain a zero-cost rail for users, committed to keeping digital infrastructure open and accessible

DPIP

State should reclaim its role, shape digital markets

Authors: Payal Malik, Nikita Jain
Indian Express | 10 Dec, 2025

These ecosystems, comprising infrastructure, data, software, and consumer-facing services, have not evolved organically; rather, they are strategically curated by dominant orchestrators. By controlling foundational layers such as operating systems, app stores and data flows, these firms shape how value flows across markets.

CCI vs WhatsApp is a pivotal battle for India's digital space

DPIP

CCI vs WhatsApp is a pivotal battle for India's digital space

Authors: Gaurav Jakhu, Payal Malik, Maria Khan | Indian Express | 19 Feb, 2026

Digitalisation of markets has resulted in consumer data being continuously extracted from individuals' online activities. Cross-market data use generates privacy harms and may also reinforce data-driven market power through targeted advertising, and reduction of consumer surplus by employing personalised pricing.

Events and Engagement

Webinar series on Ethics and Governance of AI to precede the AI Impact Summit

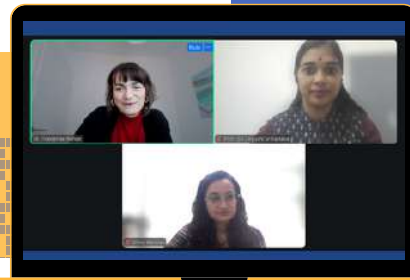
[*\(Read the full report\)*](#)



Regulating the AI Value Chain in the EU and Beyond: Upstream, Downstream, or In Between (28 Oct, 2025).

This session examined how the EU's AI Act distributes responsibility across the AI value chain, highlighting gaps between where risks emerge and where regulation is concentrated.

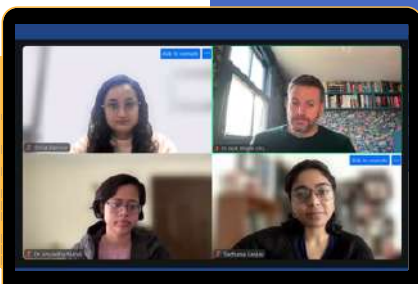
Speaker: Dr Martin Ebers; Discussants: Isha Suri and Dr Abha Yadav; Moderator: Shiva Kanwar.



Navigating sustainability within the AI-Lifecycle: Sustainability criteria and current challenges of AI and related infrastructures (21 Nov, 2025).

This webinar investigated sustainability considerations across the AI lifecycle, exploring the environmental and resource implications of AI infrastructures.

Keynote: Friederike Rohde; Discussant: Ayushi Srivastava; Moderator: Shiva Kanwar.



Visions, values, voices: A Survey of Artificial Intelligence Researchers (19 Dec, 2025).

This session examined how AI researchers perceive risks, benefits, and responsibility in shaping AI systems.

Speakers: Dr Jack Stilgoe, Discussants: Dr Anulekha Nandi and Ms Sadhana Sanjay; Moderator: Shiva Kanwar.



From Digital Sovereignty to AI Sovereignty: Lessons from the BRICS Countries (28 Jan, 2026).

This session explored how BRICS countries are advancing digital and AI sovereignty to reduce external dependence and strengthen strategic autonomy.

Speaker: Prof. Luca Belli; Discussants: Smriti Parsheera and Payal Malik; Moderator: Shiva Kanwar.

Pre-India-AI Impact Summit 2026 Virtual Events



Artificial Intelligence and Policy Choices for Enabling Inclusive and Sustainable Job Creation and Productivity Growth (04 Nov, 2025).

This session examined how current AI trajectories risk prioritising automation over augmentation, with implications for inequality and job displacement.

Speakers: Nobel Laureate Daron Acemoglu and Chief Economic Advisor to GOI Dr V. Anantha Nageswaran.



Democratizing Artificial Intelligence through Digital Public Infrastructure (29 Jan, 2026).

This session examined how concentration in AI infrastructure—compute, data, and platforms—is reinforcing inequalities in innovation capacity, and how DPI can expand access through open, interoperable systems.

Speaker: Shankar Maruwada;
Moderator: Payal Malik.



In-person Engagement & Convening Workshop

Sectoral case study on DPIs in Health - **"Transformation of Health Systems through Digital Public Infrastructure"**, in partnership with ICRIER & University of Queensland, supported by the Gates Foundation. (09 Jan, 2026). [\(Outcome Document\)](#)

Takeaways

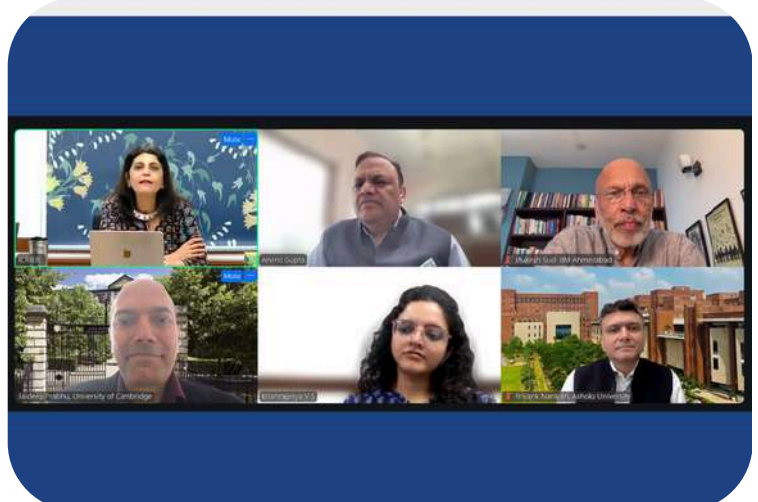
- Inclusive, interoperable digital health systems are key to scaling impact and improving patient journeys.
- Technology alone isn't enough, trust, workflows, and alignment are essential.
- The focus must shift from digitisation to real, inclusive health outcomes.

Discussion on the book

Navigating India's Startup Innovation Landscape
The session featured insights from Jaideep Prabhu, Priyank Narayan, and Mukesh Sud, authors of **LeanSpark: Frugal by Design, Global in Impact**, with discussion led by Arvind Gupta and moderated by Payal Malik.



The world needs this kind of frugal, flexible, and inclusive innovation. I believe that India can engage and gain by doing this in partnership with counterparts in developed countries.



Podcast

The economic significance of Supreme Court's observations about WhatsApp's data policies

16 Feb, 2026



It is all about data extractivism. Even a well-intentioned consent-based architecture can lead to a dominant firm collecting data greater than what is socially acceptable, it is overutilization, over-exploitation of resources, and they use it to entrench their dominance.



India-AI Impact Summit 2026 Engagements



Competing to Innovate: How Competition Accelerates AI Innovation
Organised by Mozilla

16 Feb, 2026

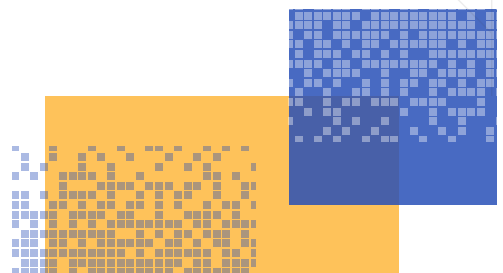


AI governance in the EU and India: aligning approaches in law, inclusion and digital competition.
Co-organised with the EU-India Digital Policy Dialogue, a Working Breakfast Roundtable with EU-India think tanks on the sidelines of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026.

18 Feb, 2026

Assessing India's AI moment - Governance trajectories and geopolitical aspirations.
Organised by MacArthur Foundation and IT for Change

17 Feb, 2026



Upcoming Milestones

Exciting work is underway at IPCIDE. A preview at what's ahead:

- The State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) Report 2026 will be launched at our flagship SIDE Annual Conference 2026 (details to follow). The report benchmarks India's digital economy against other nations across connectivity, harnessing of technologies, innovation, protection, and sustainability.
- The Startups Report traces a decade of evolution in India's startup ecosystem, offering a comprehensive analysis of cluster-wise and sector-wise performance across dimensions such as funding access, business metrics, and investor exit pathways. It also assesses the triple helix of 'government-industry-academia' in India and spotlights the key enablers driving innovative startup growth.

Three Defining Research Ideas

- **AI will reshape labour unevenly, policy must be anticipatory**
- **Data-driven market power raises privacy and competition concerns, requiring a multipronged regulatory approach**
- **India has a credible opportunity to shape global AI governance**

Upcoming Event

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

ICRIER Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy

IPCIDE ANNUAL Conference 2026

SAVE THE DATE

29 MAY 2026

Details Coming Soon

How does India's digital economy really stack up against the world? How are Indian Startups contributing to India's digital economy? What is AI's interface with the Indian economy, the state, and society, along with many exciting discussions on the digital economy?

Find out at the **ICRIER Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE) Annual Conference 2026.**

Follow us on  

Website: <https://icrier.org/ipcide/>