

1. Plastic Parks in India

Introduction

The Department of Chemicals and Petro-Chemicals is implementing the Scheme for Setting up of Plastic Parks under the umbrella scheme of New Scheme of Petrochemicals, to support setting up need-based Plastic Parks. Under the scheme, the government of India provides grant funding up to 50% of the project cost subject to a ceiling of Rs.40 crore per project.

A plastic park is an industrial zone specifically designed for plastic-related businesses and industries. It aims to consolidate and synergize the capacities of the plastic processing industry, promoting investment, production, and exports while generating employment. These parks also focus on achieving environmentally sustainable growth through waste management and recycling initiatives.



10 Plastic Parks Approved

Plastic Parks have emerged as an integral part of India's strategy for managing plastic waste, promoting recycling, and supporting the chemical industry. 10 Plastic Parks have been approved so far in different States

Background and Objectives

India stands 12th in the world export of plastics, as per the 2022 World Bank estimates. It has grown exponentially from 2014, when it was worth just 8.2 million thousand USD, as compared to the 2022 estimates, where it reached 27 million thousand USD.

Indian Plastic Industry and Environment Sustainability

The Government of India has taken several steps to ensure that the development of the plastic industry is environmentally sustainable and aligned with global sustainability standards.

1. The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Regulations for plastic packaging mandate targets for minimum level of reuse, recycling and use of recycled content. This ensures accountability for waste collection, recycling, and reuse. Certain single-use plastics have been banned, with a focus on reducing plastic waste. The regulations also mandate to utilize minimum amount of recycled material in packaging products.

2. India engages with international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to enable compliance with global sustainability standards. Further, India actively participates in meetings of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) which formulates international standards for plastic products.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: PIB

2. What to know about renewed efforts to implement long-delayed Punjab Public Libraries Bill

Why in News?

Punjab Public Libraries Bill and recent efforts for its revival

The Punjab Library Association has renewed its efforts to revive the 'Punjab Public Library and Information Services Bill, 2011' and secure its speedy implementation.

As part of its efforts, the association met with the State Education Minister Harjot Bains. Over 75 years have passed since

the first Public Library Act was passed in Madras in 1948. Today, 19 states, including neighbouring Haryana, have passed Public Library Acts.

About the bill

The draft bill was first introduced in a 2011 cabinet meeting by then-Education Minister Sewa Singh Sekhwan and approved by then-Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. The bill was the

culmination of efforts by the Punjab Library Association since 1948 to enforce a law governing public libraries in the state.

The bill proposed a statewide library network including one State Central Library, 22 District Libraries, 141 Block Libraries, 157 Town Libraries, and 12,282 Village Libraries. This was slated to be implemented in phases over 10 years. It called for the establishment of a Punjab Public Library Governing Board, chaired by the Chief Minister, and a State Public Library Directorate to oversee operations.

A dedicated State Public Library Fund was to be created to support infrastructure, staffing, and resources. The bill also encouraged financial support from national and international agencies. Existing libraries under municipal bodies, NGOs, or cooperative institutions were to be integrated into the system.

However, the onset of the 2012 legislative election delayed the implementation of the bill. After that the draft was never taken up by successive governments.

A paucity of funds

The bill proposes the funding of public libraries in a 60:40 ratio by the centre and state. The act would also allow Punjab to secure financial support from organisations like the Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF). The RRRLF's matching scheme helps states and UTs secure grants on a matching basis, with the foundation and respective government sharing the funding typically on a 50:50 basis.

The delay in passing the act has invariably delayed the establishment of public libraries across the state.

Last year, the Central Government allocated ₹5,000 crores to establish Panchayati libraries across India. Unfortunately, Punjab did not submit any proposal to avail of these grants for setting up rural libraries in the state.

The demands

The following demands were presented by the Punjab Libraries Association to the Education Minister:

Speedy enactment: The Punjab Public Library and Information Services Bill 2011 should be presented and passed in the Punjab Legislative Assembly at the earliest. Following this, securing the government's assent to speedily issue its notification.

Permanent Committee on Public Libraries: The formation of a permanent Library Committee in the meantime to secure grants from RRRLF in Kolkata. The committee would be tasked with establishing and developing public libraries in towns and villages of Punjab.

Securing funding: The committee would also have to ensure the state does not miss on grants for Panchayati or rural libraries from the centre or RRRLF. Through this initiative, public libraries can be developed with the support of the National Mission on Libraries (NML) and the Raja

Rammohun Roy Library Foundation, ensuring that Punjab's rural and urban populations benefit from information services and modern technology.

The status of Punjab's libraries

Punjab currently has one state library in Patiala, 14 district libraries, 104 municipal libraries, and around 1200 rural libraries.

The state library and the district libraries are managed by the Directorate of Public Instructions (DPI Colleges), Punjab.

104 municipal libraries are administered by Urban Local Bodies, Punjab Government. Around 200 rural libraries are run by panchayats, NGOs, NRIs, and volunteers, while the remaining rural libraries serve merely as reading rooms.

These libraries have not been well-maintained owing to the shortage of funds. However, the Punjab government has utilised Panchayati Raj funding under the 15th Finance Commission to renovate over 180 libraries, with another 200 in the pipeline.

But Punjab could have got funds from the centre, had the library act been passed. The Finance Commission funds could have been used for other development works, or the library renovations could have been more elaborate with more funds.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. Semiconductor Manufacturing base

Why Now?

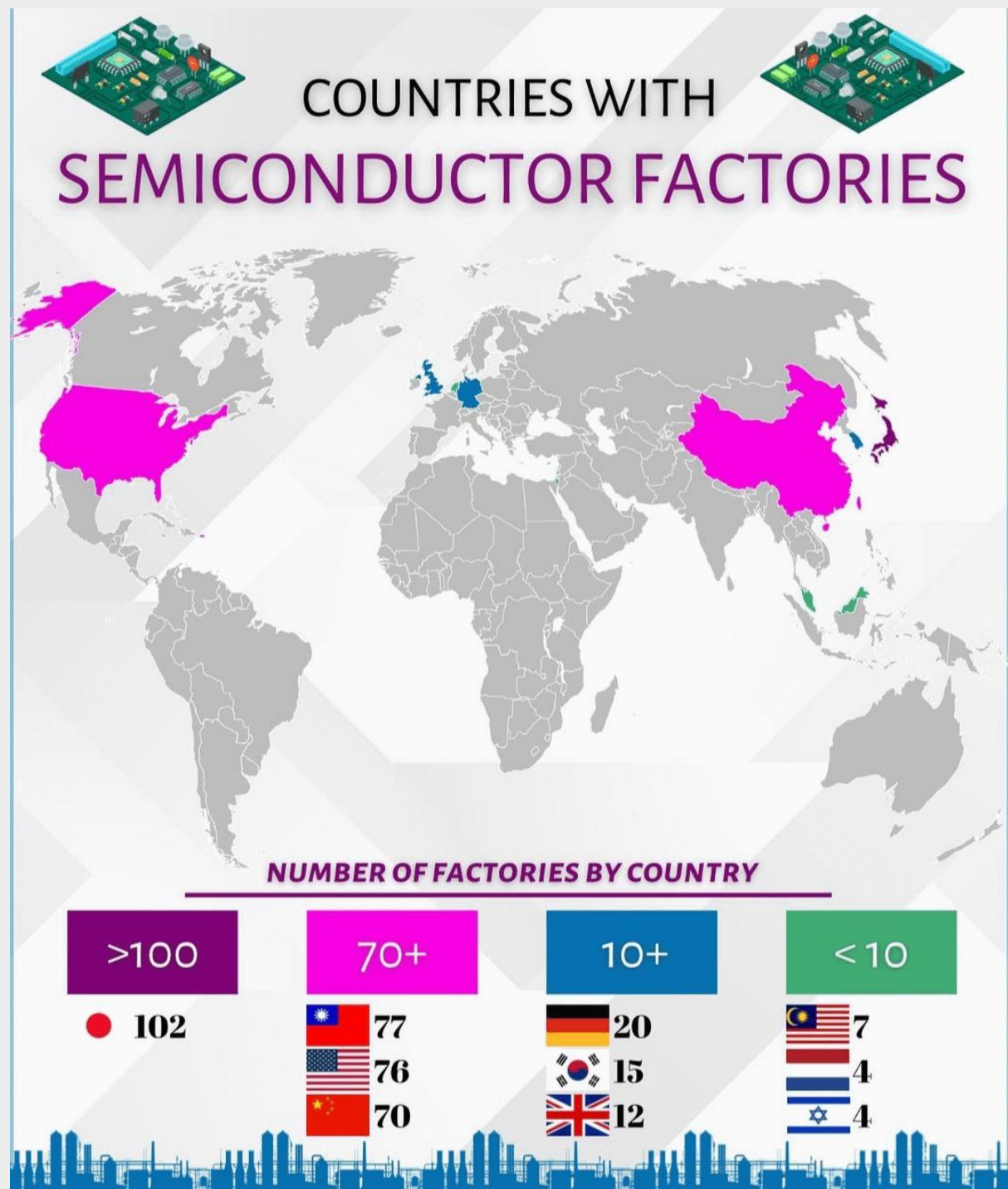
Amid the ongoing "tariff war" between the United States and China, the Trump administration announced recently that smartphones, computers, and certain other electronic devices would not be covered under the 125% reciprocal tariffs on China. It comes as a relief to companies like Apple that have a large-scale manufacturing base in China.

Trump added, "We are taking a look at Semiconductors and the Whole Electronics Supply Chain in the upcoming National Security Tariff Investigations. What has been exposed is that we need to make products in the United States, and that we will not be held hostage by other Countries, especially hostile trading Nations like China, which will do everything within its power to disrespect the American People."

What Are Semiconductors?

As the name suggests, a semiconductor can periodically conduct electricity or block its flow. The semiconductors in use today are made of materials such as silicon and comprise millions of transistors that act like miniature electrical switches, flipping on and off to process data such as images, radio waves, and sounds.

Semiconductors are found in most modern technology, from household appliances to sophisticated defence systems, mobile phones to cars, toys to high-end luxury products. They are also called microchips or integrated circuits.



Why Do Semiconductors Matter to the US?

It's not only the United States which wants to become self-reliant in the production of semiconductors. As technology proliferates rapidly worldwide, semiconductors have become key to ensuring high-end manufacturing domestically and fulfilling the growing demand for smartphones, laptops and other electronic devices. The growing integration of artificial

intelligence (AI) in modern devices also matters in this context because AI systems are trained using specialised chips known as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs).

What became obvious during the Covid-19 pandemic, which dealt a blow to global supply chains for some time, was the dominance of a few players in semiconductor manufacturing (mostly in Taiwan). The manufacturing process is also costly and requires a constant electricity supply and “ultrapure” water to remove residue from silicon chips, making it difficult for many countries to replicate Taiwan’s success.

A 2020 report by the Semiconductor Industry Association and the Boston Consulting Group estimated that the US only accounted for 12% of the world’s semiconductor manufacturing, a decline from 37% in 1990.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

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