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Topics Covered

- India needs more women judges in the Supreme Court
- Sickle cell: The battle for disability justice
- PM Modi receives first Made in India Vikram 32-bit Chip
- India sets eyes on \$1-tn semiconductor market, PM promises faster approvals

India needs more women judges in the Supreme Court

GS Paper II – Polity & Governance

- Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary
- Appointment to various constitutional posts, role of Collegium system
- Mechanisms for transparency and accountability
- Issues relating to representation, diversity & inclusiveness in institutions

India needs more women judges in the Supreme Court

With the retirement of Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia, on August 9, 2025, there were two vacancies in the Supreme Court of India. It was an opportune time to correct the acute gender imbalance in the Court and appoint women judges, but this did not happen. Justice B.V. Nagarathna is the sole woman judge out of the full strength of 34 judges in the Court. As a member of the Collegium, when she expressed her dissent over a recent appointment to the Court (Justice Vipul Pancholi) on the ground that there were others more senior, and on the basis of regional representation, her dissent was not taken into consideration. Justice Pancholi and Justice Alok Aradhe were sworn in as judges of the Court on August 29, 2025.

This not only invites us to review the procedure of appointment of judges in India's top court but also to examine and question the severe lack of women judges, which, directly, has an impact on how women judges and their views are considered. There must be a focus on the complete exclusion of appointments of women in the Court and what that means for the country today.

Scant appointments, a lack of diversity
Historically, only 11 women have been appointed to the Court till date, which is a mere 3.8% of the 287 judges who have been appointed since its inception in 1950. The details of the women Supreme Court judges are: Justice Fathima Beevi (October 6, 1989-April 29, 1992); Justice Sujata V. Manohar (November 8, 1994-August 27, 1999); Justice Ruma Pal (January 28, 2000-June 2, 2006); Justice Gyan Sudha Mishra (April 30, 2010-April 27, 2014); Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (September 13, 2011-October 29, 2014); Justice R. Banumathi (August 13, 2014-July 19, 2020); Justice Indu Malhotra (April 27, 2018-March 13, 2021); Justice Indira Banerjee (August 7, 2018-September 23, 2022); Justice Hima Kohli (August 31, 2021-September 1, 2024); Justice Bela M. Trivedi (August 31, 2021-June 9, 2025); Justice B.V. Nagarathna (August 31, 2021-October 29, 2027).

The last appointment of women to the Court was on August 31, 2021 when the Collegium, led by then Chief Justice of India (CJI), N.V. Ramana, appointed three women judges. This was seen as unprecedented because even the appointment of three women at one go was a rarity. Along with Justice Indira Banerjee, who was already on the Bench, it was, for the first time, that there was more than 10% representation of women in the Court. There has also been a total absence of caste diversity among women judges in the Court as this has not led to the appointment of women from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Justice Fathima Beevi remains the sole woman judge in the Court from a minority faith.

There is a significant gender disparity in the



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The Supreme Court of India must correct its acute gender imbalance by appointing more women judges

number of direct appointees to the Court from the Bar, or lawyers directly elevated from practice. From 1950, nine male judges have been elevated to the Court directly from the Bar. However there has been only one woman till date, Justice Indu Malhotra; no other woman lawyer has been appointed to the Court, despite there being women Senior Advocates in the Court. In fact, there is a gap in the appointment of women lawyers as judges, both in the High Courts and the Supreme Court, which is shocking. Across the world, the Bar is viewed as the traditional route into the judiciary and appointments to the higher judiciary are often seen as the final phase of a career for a lawyer. However, this does not hold true for women lawyers in India and is a glaring area of discrimination that women in the legal profession face.

Women in the Supreme Court are also appointed much later in age, which severely limits their time on the Bench and their opportunities to rise to positions of seniority. Out of 11 women judges in the Court till date, only five women have been a part of the Supreme Court Collegium, with only three having been involved in appointments to the Court. Justice Indu Malhotra and Justice Fathima Beevi had tenures that were shorter than three years, a fate shared by only five male Court judges historically. The delayed age of appointment for women results in women judges not making it to the Collegium or as Chief Justice of India. The first woman CJI will be Justice Nagarathna, who is scheduled to be appointed for only 36 days (September 24, 2027 to October 29, 2027).

Procedure and criteria for appointments
The manner of appointments is also a matter of concern. According to the Memorandum of Procedure of Supreme Court Judges, the appointment of a Judge of the Court is decided by the CJI, in consultation with a Collegium of the four seniormost Judges of the Court. After receipt of the final recommendation of the CJI, the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs will put up the recommendations to the Prime Minister who will advise the President of India in the matter of appointment.

There is no clarity as to on what basis appointments will be made as the criteria are not public. In 2017, the Collegium headed by then CJI Dipak Misra made public some of the resolutions of the Collegium on the Supreme Court website which included reasons for appointments. The Collegiums led by subsequent CJIs were not consistent in providing the reasons for its recommendations. What we do know is that at various times, the caste, religion or region of candidates have been considered for appointments. Reasons for appointments during the tenure of CJI D.Y. Chandrachud were more elaborately stated in the Collegium resolutions.

When caste, religion and regional representation are considered as criteria for appointments, why is gender not institutionalised as a criterion for appointment of judges to the Court? It is clear that, presently, gender is not taken into consideration at all for appointments of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts. This is a matter of serious concern.

The Collegium process is also shrouded in secrecy, without any transparency as to who is being considered and when. Appointments that are being considered to the higher judiciary should be made open and public. Candidates considered should be persons of exceptional intellectual and legal ability, with sound judgment and an excellent record of work, and must show sensitivity to the needs of different communities and groups. There must be a commitment for diversity and inclusion of gender, caste, religion and regional representation, which has to be institutionalised in the form of a written policy in the higher judiciary, so that gender representation is mandatory.

When former CJIs have been asked why women were not appointed to the Court, various palliative reasons have been given such as the non-availability of women in seniority. The present appointments show that seniority was given a go-by as several women judges of the High Courts who were more senior were not considered. Further, there is no seniority required for appointment of women lawyers directly to the Court, which has also not been done since 2018, when Justice Indu Malhotra was appointed.

The Supreme Court of India has been a pioneer on gender equality and gender inclusion. It has even directed Bar associations to mandate 30% of elected seats and office bearer posts for women. However, there is no institutionalised mandate for gender representation in the constitutional courts. It is time that this changes.

As a way to create greater trust, confidence

The presence of women judges on the Bench is vital to the Court. Women judges bring unique perspectives to the Court based on their personal and professional experiences with the law, which can have a significant impact on judicial outcomes. Bringing different perspectives and diverse forms of reasoning on the Bench creates greater public trust and confidence as it integrates varied social contexts and experiences that need to be valued. Most importantly, the presence of women judges of varying backgrounds in the Supreme Court will make it a truly representative court, for all citizens which it is intended to serve.

The Supreme Court of India is India's top court. All its elaboration of gender equality would hold meaning only if there are enough women judges in the top court.

Key highlights of the article

Current Context:

- With Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia's retirement (Aug 9, 2025), SC had 2 vacancies.
- Appointments made: Justice Vipul Pancholi & Justice Alok Aradhe.
- Justice B.V. Nagarathna is now the only woman judge in the 34-judge Supreme Court.

Gender Imbalance:

- Since 1950 → **287 SC judges** appointed; only **11 women (3.8%)**.
- Peak representation (2021) → 4 women judges (10%+ for first time).
- First woman judge: **Justice Fathima Beevi (1989)**.
- Scheduled for first woman CJI: Justice B.V. Nagarathna (2027) → only **36 days tenure**.



Diversity Concerns:

- No women SC judge from Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.
- Only 1 woman judge from a minority faith (Justice Fathima Beevi).
- No woman judge directly elevated from the Bar except **Justice Indu Malhotra (2018)**.

Structural Issues in Appointments:

- **Collegium process opaque:** Criteria not public, inconsistency in publishing reasons.
- **Seniority argument selectively applied:** Women senior judges overlooked.
- **Caste, region, religion sometimes considered; gender rarely institutionalized** as a criterion.
- Women often appointed late in career → short tenure, no scope for CJI or Collegium role.

Global & Institutional Contrast:

- In many countries, higher judiciary appointments from the Bar is common → in India, women are excluded in this pathway.
- SC itself mandated **30% women in Bar associations**, but no such mandate for itself.

Why Women Judges Matter ?:

- Bring diverse perspectives, enrich judicial reasoning.
- Increase **public trust & confidence** in judiciary.
- Make SC more representative of all citizens.
- Strengthen jurisprudence on equality and social justice.

Way Forward

Institutionalise Gender Diversity:

- Amend **Memorandum of Procedure (MoP)** to include gender representation as a mandatory criterion in SC/HC appointments.

Transparent Collegium Process:

- Publish objective criteria & reasons for selections and rejections.
- Introduce external oversight/review mechanism for inclusivity.

Promote Women from Bar & High Courts:

- Actively consider senior women advocates and judges.
- Create a pipeline of women judges at lower & high courts for elevation.

Early Appointment & Tenure Balance:

- Appoint women judges at younger ages to ensure longer tenure, scope for Collegium/CJI.

Affirmative Action in Judiciary:

- Mandated representation for women, SC/STs, minorities in higher judiciary → to reflect India's social diversity.

Sickle cell: The battle for disability justice

GS 3- Science and Technology

Sickle cell: The battle for disability justice

In March 2024, the Indian government issued revised guidelines under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016. These guidelines provide a framework for assessing the extent of disability of people with two copies of the sickle cell gene, or with both sickle cell and beta thalassaemia, or Hb D.

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a painful, progressive, and disabling blood disorder, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. Recognition under the Act was expected to provide reservations in the allotment of agricultural land and housing, poverty alleviation and development schemes, and education, work, and healthcare for those with the disease. The RPWD Act, 2016 extends reservations in public sector employment under the 4% quota for persons with vision and hearing loss, locomotor disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. However, individuals with SCD and other blood disorders are not included in the quota. This decision has sparked disappointment and criticism.

The narrow lens of disability
 The RPWD Act, 2016, marked a step towards protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, and promoting their full inclusion in society. The law, which aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, promises dignity, equality, and non-discrimination. It expanded the legal definition of disability and introduced rights-based protections for persons with 'benchmark disabilities'. Section 2(r) of the Act states that the term 'benchmark' is used to identify individuals with disabilities who meet a certain threshold of impairment, specifically 40% or more. Persons with benchmark disabilities are entitled to free school education as well as reservations in higher educational institutions, development assistance programmes, and

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The continual reliance on biomedical scoring and exclusion of people with sickle cell disease from full protections undermines the very purpose of recognising the condition under the Act

government employment.

However, this 40% threshold excludes many individuals with disabilities whose assessed impairment falls below this mark. Community experiences show that the disability percentage is far from an objective measure. Different hospitals, medical boards, and doctors can assign different percentages to the same person, depending on their personal judgment. As a result, disabling conditions that significantly impact an individual's life may still fail to qualify as a benchmark disability.

SCD is not always visibly disabling, but it is debilitating. Individuals with SCD experience recurrent episodes of intense pain, fatigue, anaemia, organ damage, and frequent hospitalisations, often starting in early childhood. These episodes can disrupt schooling, diminish employment and livelihood opportunities, and drastically reduce life expectancy. Stigma and discrimination compound these barriers, particularly for Adivasi and Dalit communities.

The RPWD Act was intended to move away from a medicalised, narrow understanding of disability that prioritises visible, physical impairment over the chronic, fluctuating, and invisible ones. The continual reliance on biomedical scoring and exclusion of people with SCD from full protections undermines the very purpose of recognising the condition under the Act.

The burden of proof

In India, several schemes provide special benefits to individuals with a certified degree of disability. For instance, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh offer enhanced pension schemes for individuals with severe disabilities. Under Section 80U of the Income Tax Act, 1961, those certified by the authorised medical authority as having a disability are eligible for a flat deduction of ₹75,000 from their total income, increased to ₹1.25 lakh in cases of severe disability.

To claim this benefit and many other government schemes, individuals must obtain a disability certificate, issued under Section 58 of the Act.

The major barrier lies in the certification process. A medical authority, including the chief medical officer, evaluates and certifies disability. Diagnosis reports of confirmatory tests must be from a government or standard lab. Further grading of disability beyond the baseline of 40% is based on a scoring system that assigns points to a range of complications, such as pain, blood transfusion requirements, and neurological complications. This system often fails to capture the full extent of the condition's impact, especially when the symptoms are invisible or episodic. This approach misses the socioeconomic and emotional toll on people with SCD. A young person may miss school due to hospitalisation or lose jobs due to debilitating pain – all without qualifying for a 'higher' score. Worse still, the certification process is largely inaccessible for the people who need it most. For Adivasi and Dalit patients in rural or remote areas, arranging diagnostic tests or travelling distances to district hospitals for evaluation can be impossible.

Several reforms are required to ensure the Act lives up to its promise. Extending job reservations to individuals with SCD and related blood disorders would acknowledge their condition as a significant, lifelong disability. Reforming the certification process to account for fluctuating and invisible disabilities would reflect a rights-based lens rather than a purely biomedical one.

Disability is a lived experience, not only shaped by physical health, but also by social exclusion, structural barriers, and policy gaps, and unless India's recognition of SCD brings real rights and protections, it risks becoming exclusion disguised as inclusion.

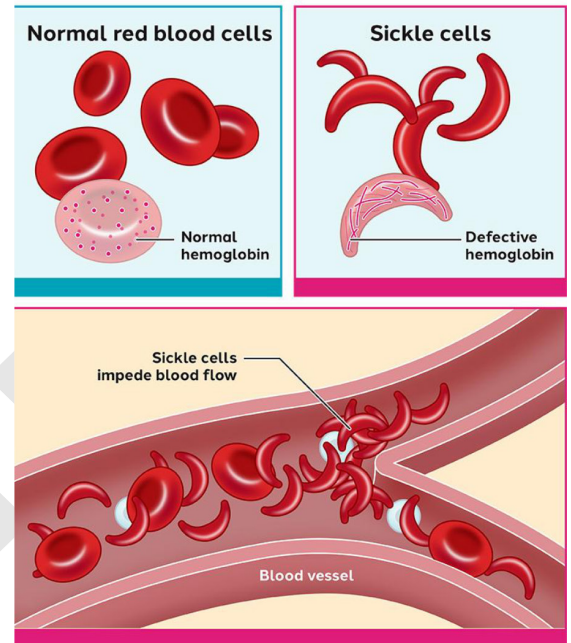
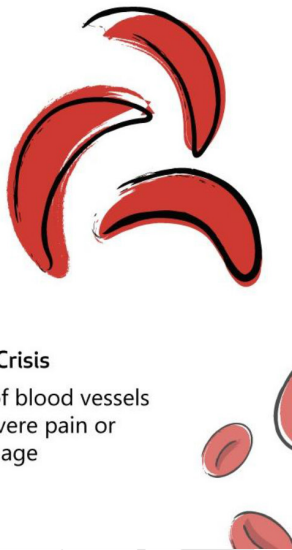
Key highlights of the article

Policy Update (2024):

- Govt issued revised **disability assessment guidelines** under the **RPWD Act, 2016**.
- Covered sickle cell disease (SCD), betathalassaemia, Hb D.
- However, **SCD not included under 4% reservation quota** in jobs and education.

What are Sickle Cell Disorders?

- A group of disorders that cause red blood cells to become misshapen and break down.
- The cells die early, leaving a short age of healthy red blood cells and can block blood flow causing pain.



Types:

Sickle Cell Anaemia

Dysfunctional red cells due to abnormal haemoglobin

Sickle Cell Crisis

Blockage of blood vessels causing severe pain or organ damage

Significance of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD):

- Progressive, painful, and disabling genetic blood disorder.
- Disproportionately affects **marginalised groups** (Adivasis, Dalits).
- Symptoms: recurrent pain crises, anaemia, organ damage, fatigue, hospitalisation.
- Impacts education, livelihood, and reduces life expectancy.

Gaps in Disability Recognition:

- **Benchmark disability = 40% threshold** (Sec. 2(r) RPWD Act).
- Many SCD patients excluded since symptoms fluctuate and are often “invisible.”
- Assessment process varies across hospitals/medical boards → subjective outcomes.
- **Certification barriers:** requires government lab tests, travel to district hospitals → difficult for rural/tribal patients.

Socioeconomic Impact:

- Discrimination, stigma, loss of jobs/education opportunities.
- Community experiences ignored by biomedical scoring system.
- Current recognition risks being “tokenistic inclusion without substantive rights.”

National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission (NSCAEM)

- Launched in **Union Budget 2023-24**, with the goal to **eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047** (India's 100 years of independence).
- **Target Group:** Focused on **population aged 0–40 years**, with special attention to tribal and high-prevalence areas.
- **Geographic Focus:** Primarily covers the tribal belt of India – Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra (where prevalence is highest).
- **Key Components:**
 - ♦ **Mass Awareness:** Spreading knowledge about prevention, genetic inheritance, and management.
 - ♦ **Screening & Counselling:** Universal screening for children, adolescents, and reproductive-age groups to detect carriers early.
 - ♦ **Treatment Access:** Ensuring wider availability of medicines like hydroxyurea (now in the National List of Essential Medicines).
 - ♦ **Research & Data:** Building a robust database for disease mapping, monitoring, and evidence-based interventions.



National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission
TO eliminate sickle cell disease by 2047



Key highlights of the article

Way Forward

Inclusion in Reservation Quota:

- Recognise SCD & related blood disorders under the 4% job/education quota in RPWD Act.

Reform Certification System:

- Move beyond rigid biomedical scoring → consider fluctuating, invisible, and socioeconomic impacts.
- Train medical boards for consistency and rights-based evaluation.

Improve Accessibility:

- Decentralised certification at primary/community health centres.
- Mobile diagnostic camps in tribal/remote regions.

Rights-Based Approach:

- Treat disability as a lived experience (social, economic, psychological), not just medical impairment.
- Ensure policies align with UNCRPD principles of dignity, equality, non-discrimination.

Awareness & Support Mechanisms:

- Reduce stigma via education campaigns in affected communities.
- Provide counselling, livelihood support, and school/job accommodations for SCD patients.

PM Modi receives first Made in India Vikram 32- bit Chip

GS 3- Science and Technology

PM Modi receives first Made in India Vikram 32-bit chip

Utilised for space flights, it is an advanced, refurbished version of the indigenously designed 16-bit VIKRAM1601 microprocessor, used in the Avionics system of ISRO's launch vehicles

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw presented Prime Minister Narendra Modi a memento containing the 'Made in India' Vikram 32-bit Processor Launch Vehicle Grade chip at the Semicon India 2025 on Tuesday.

The microprocessor chips were designed and developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh.

Utilised for space flights, it is an advanced refurbished version of the indigenously designed 16-bit VIKRAM1601 microprocessor, which has been used



Moment of pride: Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw presenting the memento to the PM at the Semicon India 2025 on Tuesday. PTI

in the Avionics system of ISRO's launch vehicles since 2009.

Other than the 'Made in India' chip, the memento also contained 31 more prototype chips created by academic institutions including IIT Jammu, IIT Roorkee, IIT Dhanbad, NIT

Durgapur, NIT Calicut and IIT Ropar, among others.

In his address at the annual semiconductor conference, the Union Minister overseeing technology observed that in the three-and-a-half years since the inauguration of the Indian Semiconductor Mission

"the world is looking at India with confidence".

Elaborating on India's progress in the realm, Mr. Vaishnaw said construction of five semi-conductor units was going on at a rapid pace, with the pilot line of one unit completed.

Two more units are expected to start production "in a few months from now", he said. "Overall, foundation of the foundational industry is laid very well," he observed.

Pitching India as a potential manufacturing hub to the participants from the semiconductor ecosystem on Tuesday, Mr. Vaishnaw said, "In these uncertain times, you should come to India because our policies are stable, we have attempted to cover all important aspects of the manufacturing sector."

India sets eyes on \$1-trn semiconductor market, PM promises faster approvals

GS -3 Science and Technology

India sets eyes on \$1-trn semiconductor market; PM promises faster approvals

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

India will soon hold a significant share in the global semiconductor market, which is set to reach \$1 trillion in size, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday, adding that the government is working to ensure faster approvals to reduce the time it takes to start manufacturing semiconductors in India.

He added that work was "under way" on the next phase of the India Semiconductor Mission.

Speaking at the 2025 edition of Semicon India, the annual semiconductor



Focus area: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the gathering at the Semicon India 2025 in New Delhi. PTI

conference, the Prime Minister noted that India had achieved a GDP growth rate of 7.8% even as the rest of the world was mired in

"self-interest", adding that this growth had come from across sectors.

"In 2025, we gave clearance to five more projects

to bring the cumulative count to 10 projects," Mr. Modi said. "These projects have drawn a combined investment of \$18 billion or ₹1.5 lakh crore. This is reflective of the world's confidence in India."

'Key economic drivers'

Semiconductor chips are the "digital diamonds" and the most important economic drivers of the 21st century, the Prime Minister said, in much the same way as crude oil drove growth in the previous century.

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Key highlights of the article

SEMICONDUCTORS ?



BACKGROUNDERS
Press Information Bureau
Government of India

SEMICON 2025: Building the Next Semiconductor Powerhouse *India's Biggest Semiconductor & Electronics Show*

1st September, 2025

"Today's India inspires confidence in the world... When the chips are down, you can bet on India." ~Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Key Takeaways

- PM Modi to inaugurate **SEMICON India 2025**: India's biggest Semiconductor & Electronics show to be held in Yashobhoomi, New Delhi from 2-4 September 2025.
- Theme for SEMICON 2025 is- **"Building the Next Semiconductor Powerhouse"**
- Bharat to welcome **33 nations, 50+ global CXOs, 350 exhibitors and 50+ visionary global speakers** at SEMICON India 2025.
- Event to highlight **robust local semiconductor ecosystem expansion** and industry trends.
- SEMICON India to address complex challenges of tomorrow while fostering collaboration across the semiconductor ecosystem towards Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- **India's chip market is booming**, set to hit \$100-110 Bn by 2030.
- **India Semiconductor Mission (₹76,000 Cr outlay)** boosts local manufacturing, design, and talent.
- Total approved projects under ISM reaches to **10** with cumulative investments of around **Rs.1.60 lakh crore in 6 states**.
- On 28th August, CG-Semi launched India's first OSAT Pilot Line in Gujarat to produce the country's first 'Made in India' chip.



- A key high point of SEMICON India 2025 is the significantly higher level of stakeholder participation compared to previous editions.
- First-Ever Global Pavilions, Country Roundtables, Skilling Initiatives, and Design Startup Pavilion to Witness Record Stakeholder Participation
- To feature nearly 350 exhibitors from across the global semiconductor value chain including 6 country Round Tables, 4 country pavilions, 9 states participations and over 15000 expected visitors.

Why Semiconductors are important ?



- Cheaper Electronics: Phones, TVs, Laptops made in India.
- Manufacturing in India leading to Stronger Economy (less import, more Exports).
- More Jobs and new Opportunities.



- Opens the door to strengthen global electronics value chains.
- National Security: Chips are used in Defence, Space and Communication.
- Innovation Hub: Indian Startups and students can now design world-class technology at home.

Key highlights of the article

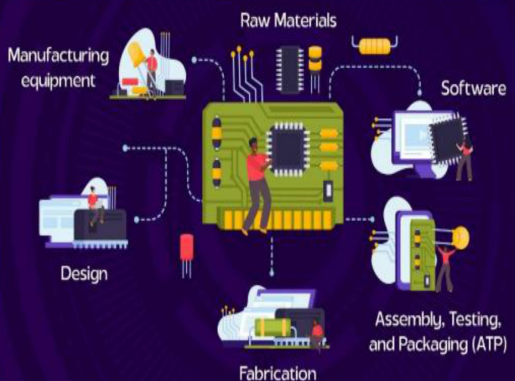
Making A Semiconductor Chip

The process of making a semiconductor chip is complex and involves three main steps:

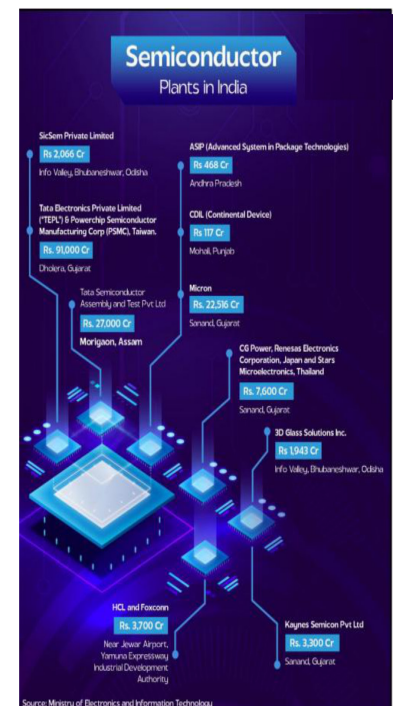
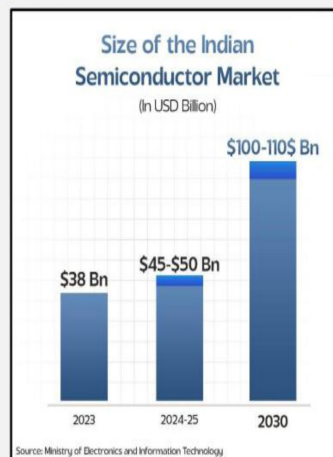
- **Design:** The idea for the chip is created and planned.
- **Fabrication:** The chip is physically built in a clean room environment.
- **Assembly, Testing, and Packaging (ATP):** The final chip is assembled, tested and packaged for use.

The chip-making process requires specialized tools and raw materials. These include

- **Manufacturing equipment:** Machines that build the chips.
- **Raw materials:** Wafers, chemicals and gases.
- **Software:** Helps in the design and planning of chips.



As per industry estimates, the size of the Indian semiconductor market was about \$38 Bn in 2023, \$45-\$50 billion in 2024-25 and is expected to reach \$ 100-110\$ Bn by 2030.



PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Which of the following statements about doping in semiconductors is correct?

- A. Doping increases the intrinsic resistivity of a semiconductor.
- B. Doping involves adding impurities with a different number of valence electrons to a pure semiconductor.
- C. Doping converts a semiconductor into an insulator.
- D. Doping does not affect the conductivity of a semiconductor.

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