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SUMMARY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

GS Paper 2

- India's poor performance on specific international indicators due to methodological issues: EAC-PM 2
- Iran-Saudi deal: What the gambit can mean for China, West Asia, and India 3

GS Paper 3

- Will the national champions model of infrastructure development work? 4

Content for Mains Enrichment (CME)

- Perumal Murugan's novel 'Pookkuzhi,' or 'Pyre' 5
- Religion and Environment: Sika deer (Nara, Japan) 5

Facts for Prelims (FFP)

- Indus Valley Civilisation 6
- Rameshwar Prasad case 7
- Silver jubilee celebration of 'Kudumbashree' 7
- Global Terrorism Index 7
- ICC: Arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin 7
- National Institute of Ocean Technology to set up a green, self-powered desalination plant in Lakshadweep 8
- Svaya Robotics develops 1st indigenous quadruped robot, exoskeleton in India 8
- 6G 8
- Lab-grown diamonds (LGDs) 9
- Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve 9

GS Paper 2

INDIA'S POOR PERFORMANCE ON SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL INDICATORS DUE TO METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES: EAC-PM

Syllabus: Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger

Context: According to the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), India's poor performance on specific international indicators **despite rising per capita income** is due to methodological issues.

Socio-development indicators where systematic biases exist:

- [Childhood Stunting](#),
- [Female Labour Force Participation Rate](#) and
- Life Expectancy

The impact of methodological issues:

- **Conceptual ambiguity**, flawed benchmarks and shoddy methodology → flawed estimation → over-estimating the level of deprivation.
- The growing use of Environment Social and Governance (ESG) norms in investment and trade decisions will mean that **real-world decision-making** will be increasingly impacted by biased data.

What aggravates the problem?

- The Indian statistical authorities do not publish accurate data on a regular basis.
- **For example**, the registrar general of India (RGI) publishes life expectancy estimates every year. However, the official estimates for 2019 were released in July 2022 by RGI.

Case study:

- **The global hunger index (GHI)** of FAO captures three dimensions of hunger: insufficient availability of food, shortfalls in the nutritional status of children and child mortality (which is mainly attributable to undernutrition).
- The 2022 index has ranked India at **107 among 121 countries**.
- According to the Indian government, the index is an **erroneous measure of hunger and suffers from serious methodological issues**.
- Three out of the four indicators used for the calculation of the index are related to the **health of Children and cannot be representative of the entire population**.
- The fourth and most important indicator estimate of the Proportion of the Undernourished (PoU) population is **based on an opinion poll** conducted on a very

small sample size of 3000.

Recommendations:

- To counter the global mismatches, **Indian statistical authorities** must publish their own estimates proactively.
- In order to be on time, **this can be done based even on partial data**, which can be updated later. This is done in the case of **GDP**.

Background:

- **The opening of diplomatic relations between the two** came after decades of enmity and a formal cutting of ties in 2016.
- Since 2014, the two countries had been in a **proxy war in Yemen**, where Iran is backing the Houthi rebels and the Saudis lead a coalition of Gulf states backed by the US.

About the Saudi-Iran deal brokered by China: The “joint tri-lateral statement”, signed in Beijing, includes -

- **Resumption of diplomatic relations** and reopening of embassies and missions;
- To respect for the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in the internal affairs of states;
- **To implement the Security Cooperation Agreement (2001)** and
- To implement the General Agreement for Cooperation in **Economy, Trade, Investment, Technology, Science, Culture, Sports, and Youth (1998)**.

Mutual Interests Drive Settlement Decision: Exploring Reasons Behind Agreement

- **For Saudi**, tense relations with the Biden Administration, **the absence of American security guarantees against Iran**, rapid changes in the Saudi economy (diversification) and China’s rising profile in West Asia.
- **For Iran**, the isolation that came with the nuclear sanctions; **the Abrahamic accords (2020)** - the coming together of archenemy Israel-UAE-Bahrain-Saudi; the uprising of women; normalised relations with UAE and Kuwait.

Significance of the deal:

- No one believes this deal will end all differences between the Sunni (Saudi) monarchy and Shia (Iran) republic.
- The deal may lead to **lasting peace in Yemen** and also end proxy Saudi-Iran hostilities in **Lebanon, Syria, etc.**
- May develop into a **four-way alignment (Saudi-Iran-China-Russia)**.
- **China is taking a new avatar** - peacemaker, power broker - giving the world a new alternative to the US (blamed for instability in the region - failed miserably in Iraq, and Afghanistan).

World’s response

- **US:** Welcomed the agreement and declined the assessment of diminished US influence in the region. **For example**, Saudi recently concluded a deal for 121 Boeing aircraft with the US.
- **Israel:** A clear setback for PM Binyamin Netanyahu’s foreign policy - claiming to be the only country that could bring together an Arab-Israeli coalition against Iran.
 - **The Abrahamic Accords**/the Arab-Israeli al-

FROM ALARMING TO SERIOUS: GHI; MISINFORMATION: GOVT



This change caused a major shift in GHI scores, and the GHI Severity Scale was modified to reflect this shift. In GHI reports published since 2015, almost all countries have had much higher GHI scores compared with their scores in reports published in 2014 and earlier. This does not necessarily mean their hunger levels rose in 2015 – the higher scores merely reflect the revision of the methodology.”

GHI REPORT

Index suffers from serious methodological issues: ministry

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Sri Lanka	64
Nepal	81
Bangladesh	84
Pakistan	99
Afghanistan	108

94 India in 2020

101 India in 2021

2015 GHI methodology changed to include data on child stunting/wasting, and to standardise the values.

GOVT HITS BACK

“Three out of four indicators used for calculation of the index are related to health of children and cannot be

representative of the entire population. The fourth and most important indicator estimate of Proportion of

Undernourished population is based on an opinion poll conducted on a very small sample size of 3000.”

Insta Links: Global Hunger Index

Mains Links:

Q. Despite the Consistent experience of High growth, India still goes with the lowest indicators of human development. Examine the issues that make balanced and inclusive development elusive. (UPSC 2019)

GS Paper 2

IRAN-SAUDI DEAL: WHAT THE GAMBIT CAN MEAN FOR CHINA, WEST ASIA, AND INDIA

Syllabus: International Relations

Context: The Saudi-Iran detente/truce is China’s major geopolitical manoeuvre in West Asia and sets the stage for political influence in the region that was formerly dominated by the US.

liance, mediated by the Trump Administration, are **shaken up by the Saudi-Iran agreement**.

- **India: Shocked** by China's (its principal adversary in a region where it has invested much diplomatic energy over the last decade) new avatar.
 - India has always advocated dialogue and diplomacy to resolve differences.

Options available for India:

- **Cooperation** rather than confrontation with China in West Asia.
- Considering **both countries have a wide range of shared interests** in terms of energy security, open and free sea lanes, logistical connectivity, and most importantly, regional stability.

Conclusion:

- China's big-ticket diplomacy in the region is sure to impact the [I2U2 \(Israel-India-UAE-US\)](#) grouping.
- It calls for India **to work on its ties to the region independently of the US** (for instance with Iran), and in ways that project its civilisational and cultural links and the positive contributions of the Indian diaspora.

Insta Links:

[In Saudi-Iranian normalization, new challenges emerge in West Asia](#)

Mains Links:

Q. In what ways would the ongoing US-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to its situation? (UPSC 2018)

GS Paper 3

WILL THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONS MODEL OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT WORK?

Syllabus: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc./Investment models

Context: Infrastructure in emerging economies like India has seemingly become both **a demonstration of good and a necessity**.

Importance of Infrastructure in emerging economies:

- Simultaneously works as a national aspiration good,
- A barometer of national progress,
- A mechanism for job creation,
- A vehicle for crowding in private investment, etc.

Constraints on infrastructure provision are:

- **Expensive**, because it needs to be built to a minimum scale.
- **Often has a public good component**, which makes the social value of infrastructure higher than its private value to individual users → **making it relatively unprofitable for private investors**.
- **The traditional approach to financing infrastructure** → tax revenues or government borrowing.
- **Vicious trap** → poorer economies generate less tax revenue → increasing public borrowing domestically → crowd out private investment → limits infrastructure investment, growth of the economy → keep the country poor.

Indian government's efforts to come out of this vicious trap?

- **Incentivise private sector participation** by providing targeted subsidies for infrastructure investments.
 - In the early 2000s, the **Public-Private-Partnership (PPP)** model was introduced.
 - While the program **did result in the construction of a lot of infrastructure**, it ended in an avalanche of non-performing assets with public sector banks → widespread corruption → change in government in 2014.
- **The "national champions" model:** It modified the [PPP approach](#) by assigning the bulk of the infrastructure provisioning for roads, ports, airports, energy, and communications to a few chosen industrial houses.

How does this model overcome the difficulty of financing infrastructure?

- **Incentivising national champions** to build the projects identified by the government.
- **New aspects of the national champions model:**
 - Champions given control over existing projects with strong cash flows → helps them to achieve **targeted returns and borrow** from external credit markets → lowers the cost of finance, freeing up domestic savings for private investment
 - The public association of the champions with the government's national development policy → **generates a competitive advantage** in getting domestic and foreign contracts.

Issues with the national champions model:

- The **direct association of conglomerates with government policies** → markets, regulators treat them as too big to fail → **delayed discovery of problems, spillovers.**
- The longer it takes for projects to generate large cash flows, the greater will be the need for the state to provide **access to additional cash flows.**
- This risks turning the country into an **industrial oligarchy.**
- **An uneven playing field** in terms of market access, regulatory relaxations → a significant deterrent for foreign investors → bad for **efficiency and productivity at the economy-wide level**

Dilemma India is facing:

- Can infrastructure provision be the solution to India's growth aspirations?
- India is at an inflection point in its development path.

Way ahead: A development model based on a domestic demand-driven production structure, powered by soft and hard infrastructure.

Insta Links:

[Investment models](#)

Mains Links:

Explain how private-public partnership agreements, in longer gestation infrastructure projects, can transfer unsuitable liabilities to the future. What arrangements need to be put in place to ensure that successive generations' capacities are not compromised? (UPSC 2014)

Content for Mains Enrichment (CME)

PERUMAL MURUGAN'S NOVEL 'POOKKUZHI,' OR 'PYRE'

Tamil writer Perumal Murugan's novel 'Pookkuzhi,' or 'Pyre' in English translation, has been nominated for the International Booker Prize 2023 longlist, making it the **first Tamil novel** to be nominated for the award.

- **Story of the Novel:** The book tells the story of a young inter-caste couple who elope, exploring caste-based violence in rural Tamil Nadu during the 1980s.

About his social work:

- **Murugan is a professor of Tamil literature,** and his

works primarily critique the caste system and its use of oppression and violence.

- **Literature can be a powerful tool for change:** The judges of the International Booker Prize have praised his work for its examination of power and the rot of caste hatred and violence.
- Murugan collaborated with Carnatic musician T M Krishna on a **poem about manual scavengers**

Usage: The example can be used Essay, Social Justice paper to show the fight against social discrimination.

About IBP

The International Booker Prize (est. 2004; Presented by: Booker Prize Foundation) is awarded annually for a novel or short story collection written in any language, translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland.

RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENT: SIKA DEER (NARA, JAPAN)

A recent study in Japan found that the **Sika deer living near the Kasuga Taisha Shrine and Todaiji Buddhist Temple** in the city of Nara have unique mitochondrial DNA due to a ban on their **hunting for almost 1,500 years**, given their status in **Shintoism**, Japan's national religion.

- Sika deer are revered in Nara as the messengers of the Shinto gods.

Usage: Similar to Indian religious values of conservation of cultural heritage, this example can be used to show how religion can help in the conservation of flora and fauna.



INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

Context: A recent book has highlighted how climate and geography influenced early civilizations

Indus Valley Civilisation differs from other ancient civilizations because inequality levels were far lower than in other civilizations.

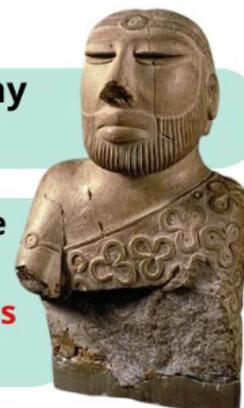
- **Reason:** This was because the Indus, unlike the other rivers, changed its course often. This changed the structure of the society of the Indus Valley Civilization.



Indus Valley Civilization

Context: A recent book has highlighted how climate and geography influenced early civilizations

Indus Valley Civilisation differs from other ancient civilizations because inequality levels were far lower than in other civilizations. This was because the Indus, unlike the other rivers, changed its course often. **This changed the structure of the society of the Indus Valley Civilization**



Civilization	Indus Valley	Nile	Mesopotamia	Yellow River
Period	2600-1900 BCE	3100-1070 BCE	4000-2500 BCE	5000-3000 BCE
Location	South Asia (Pakistan and northwest India)	Northeast Africa (Egypt)	Middle East (Iraq and surrounding areas)	East Asia (China)
Key Cities	Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro	Memphis, Thebes	Ur, Uruk, Babylon	Anyang
Writing System	Undeciphered script	Hieroglyphics, hieratic script	Cuneiform	Oracle bone script
Religion	Polytheistic (mother goddess)	Polytheistic (emphasis on pharaoh as divine)	Polytheistic (emphasis on city-state patron deities)	Ancestor worship, with some evidence of shamanism and totemism
Architecture	Large, planned cities with brick buildings, public baths, and sewage systems	Pyramids , temples, and monumental tombs	Ziggurats , palaces, and monumental gates	Large walled cities with ceremonial architecture and burials of elite
Trade	Likely traded with Mesopotamia and Gulf region for luxury goods	Traded with Nubia, Levant, and Mesopotamia for luxury goods	Traded with Indus Valley and Persian Gulf region for luxury goods	Traded with Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan for luxury goods
Decline	Unknown, potentially due to environmental factors or invasion	Conquered by foreign invaders and assimilated into larger empires	Declined due to political instability and invasion	Conquered and assimilated into larger empires

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RAMESHWAR PRASAD CASE

Context: Solicitor General drew attention to a 2005 ruling of the Supreme Court in Rameshwar Prasad v Union of India when asked whether the [Governor can call for a floor test in case of internal dissatisfaction within a party](#).

- The recent Shiv Sena crisis in Maharashtra, where the Governor was criticized for using his powers to order a floor test, brought back attention to this landmark ruling.

About Rameshwar Prasad v Union of India:

- In 2005, Bihar saw a hung Legislative Assembly with no party or alliance able to reach a majority, leading to the Governor recommending [President's Rule under Article 365](#).
- Later, the Governor recommended the dissolution of the Assembly, and fresh elections were announced by the [Election Commission of India](#), leading to petitions challenging the constitutionality of the dissolution of the Assembly.
- The Supreme Court struck down the President's Proclamation dissolving the state Assembly as unconstitutional, and though it did not restore the Assembly, it defined the contours of the Governor's powers to dissolve the Assembly.

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF 'KUDUMBASHREE'

Context: On a recent visit to the state, The President of India applauded Kerala's Progress in Empowering Women and the Poor, Citing the Positive Impact on Human Development Indices

- Inaugurated Kudumbashree and Unnathi

About Unnathi:

- Unnathi' or 'Kerala Empowerment Society' seeks to create opportunities for employment and self-employment, among the youth belonging to SC and ST communities.

About Kudumbashree:

- The 'Kudumbashree' SHG was started in 1998.
- It was envisioned as a part of the People's Plan Campaign and local self-governance, with women at the centre of it.
- Thrift and credit activities at the grassroots level through the formation of saving groups are a common feature.

GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX

Context: The tenth Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report was published by Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) showing global trends and patterns in terrorism.

Key findings

- **Global**
 - Afghanistan remains the country most impacted by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year though violence has declined
 - The report excluded acts of state repression by the Taliban
 - South Asia remains the region with the worst average GTI score
 - Deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2022: Islamic State (IS); Al-Shabaab; Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM)
 - Climate change is helping terrorist groups to raise funds, propagandize and recruit people
- **India:**
 - India remained at 13th while Pakistan ranked 6th (more terror-prone)

About IEP:

The Institute for Economics and Peace (est. 2008; HQ: Sydney, Australia) is a global think tank. It studies the relationship between peace, business, and prosperity, and seeks to promote an understanding of the cultural, economic, and political factors that drive peacefulness.

ICC: ARREST WARRANT FOR VLADIMIR PUTIN

Context: The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for war crimes for President Vladimir Putin and a second Russian official.

Why did the International Criminal Court issued the warrants?

- The court says Putin bears individual criminal responsibility for the abduction and deportation of Ukrainian children since Russia's full-scale invasion.
- The court also issued a warrant for Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's commissioner for children's rights, who has been the public face of a Kremlin-sponsored program in which Ukrainian children and teenagers have been taken to Russia.

About International Criminal Court:

- The [International Criminal Court](#) was created as a standing body to **investigate war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity under a 1998 treaty known as the Rome Statute.**
- Previously, the United Nations Security Council had **established ad hoc tribunals to address atrocities in places such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.**
- Based in *The Hague, a Dutch city* that has long been a centre for international law and justice.

What does the warrant mean for Putin?

- The court **cannot try defendants in absentia** and **Russia has said it will not surrender its own officials.**
- Russia's Foreign Ministry quickly **dismissed the warrants, noting that it is not a party to the court.**
- Still, the warrant for **Putin's arrest deepens his isolation in the West** and could limit his movements overseas.
- If he **travels to a state that is a party to the ICC**, that country must arrest him, according to its **obligations under international law.**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEAN TECHNOLOGY TO SET UP A GREEN, SELF-POWERED DESALINATION PLANT IN LAKSHADWEEP

Context: For the first time in the world the **Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)** is working at making **Low-Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology** process free of emissions.

- An initiative of providing **potable water in six islands of Lakshadweep.**

Current Situation:

- Currently, the desalination plants, each of which provides at least **100,000 litres of potable water every day**, are powered by diesel generator sets.

How LTTD works:

- LTTD **exploits the difference in temperature (nearly 15°C) in the ocean water at the surface and at depths of about 600 feet.**
- This cold water **condenses water at the surface, which is warmer but whose pressure has been lowered using vacuum pumps.**
- Such de-pressurised water can evaporate even at ambient temperatures and this resulting **vapour when condensed is free of salts and contaminants and fit to consume.**

National Institute of Ocean Technology:

- The NIOT, an institute under the **aegis of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, has worked for years on har-

nessing energy from the ocean.

SVAYA ROBOTICS DEVELOPS 1ST INDIGENOUS QUADRUPED ROBOT, EXOSKELETON IN INDIA

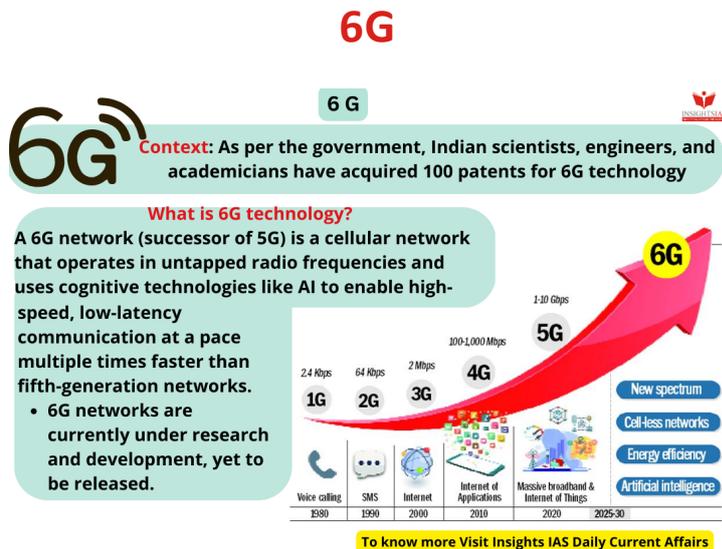
Context: As part of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative, **Hyderabad-based Svaya Robotics** has developed **India's first indigenous quadruped (four-legged) robot and exoskeleton for the defence sector.**

- India currently **imports these robots from the US and Switzerland.**

About these robots:

- Quadruped robots are **four-legged robots** which can walk or run on **uneven and rough terrains.**
- **Active exoskeletons**, when worn by soldiers, can **carry such heavy loads** without expending much effort. Even if they are carrying 25 kg, soldiers feel as if they are carrying six or seven kg, thus **they are not fatigued easily.**

Both are dual-use robots and **have multiple use cases in industry and healthcare as well.**



Parameter	5G	6G
Spectrum (Major Frequency Bands)	24 GHz to 100 GHz	95 GHz to 3 THz (Terahertz) (Can operate on higher frequency than 5G)
Latency (End to End Delay)	5 milliseconds	1 millisecond
Peak Data Rates	Up to 20 Gbps	Up to 1,000 Gbps
Significance	Accelerate adoption of cloud gaming, AR/VR technology, Internet of Things etc.	Support high-performance computing, edge computing, Technology Convergence etc.

Other announcements:

- **Rollout of 5G networks** has far exceeded the government's target of 200 cities by March 31, 2023 (coverage in 397 cities at present)
- **India has started exporting telecom products**, including radio equipment, to the US
- **99% of mobile phones** used in India are now made locally

NAMDAPHA NATIONAL PARK AND TIGER RESERVE



Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve

Context: A rare sighting of a tiger in India's Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve led officials to uncover several timber depots in the core area of the reserve.

Namdapha flying squirrel (CR)

About the park

- **Namdapha National Park (est. 1983)** is nearly 2000 km² large protected area in Arunachal Pradesh (in the biodiversity hotspot in the Eastern Himalayas)
- **Name:** From the name of a river originating in the park and it meets Noa-Dehing river (tributary of the Brahmaputra)
- Lies between the **Dapha bum range of the Mishmi Hills and the Patkai range.**



The park lies in close proximity to Indo-Myanmar-China trijunction.



Hoolock Gibbons (the only 'ape' species found in India)

- **Namdapha is the Fourth largest national park in India** (Hemis NP (Ladakh) > Desert NP (Rajasthan) > Gangotri NP (Uttarakhand))
- On the **Tentative Lists of UNESCO World Heritage Sites** in India.
- Only Park in the World to have the four Feline species: **Tiger, Leopard, Snow Leopard and Clouded Leopard**

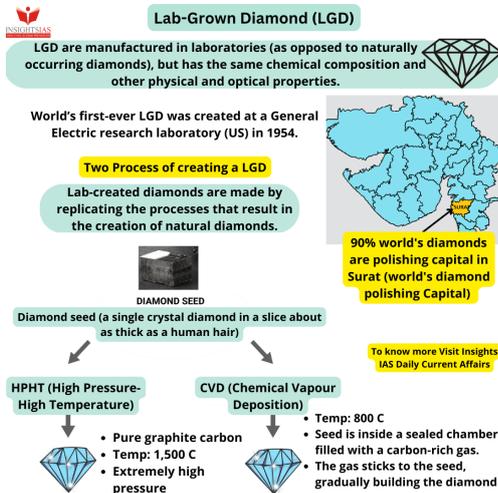
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Hoolock Gibbon: IUCN: Endangered

LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS (LGDS)

Context: The government has abolished a **5% tax** on imported diamond seeds and is putting a special focus on Laboratory-Grown Diamonds (LGD) (Budget 2023-24)

Aim: To make India a major player in the lab-grown diamond industry.



Diamond Industry in India:

- India, currently, **contributes 15% of the world's lab-grown diamonds**
- **India is the world's largest cutting and polishing centre for diamonds**, accounting for over 90% of polished diamond manufacturing globally.
- **India contributes 19% of the total diamond exports** in the world.

Features of LGD:

- **Cheaper alternative:** Lab-grown diamonds can be made for around 20% less than natural diamonds.
- **Environmental footprint:** Lower than naturally occurring diamond.
- **Potential:** LGD sector has seen explosive growth in the last 10 years, and experts say the cost of producing lab-grown diamonds has halved every four years since the early 2000s.

Use:

- Industrial purposes in machines and tools
- In electronics as a heat spreader for high-power laser diodes
- For making designer jewellery

Q. Which one of the following National Parks has a climate that varies from tropical to subtropical, temperate and arctic? (UPSC 2015)

- (a) Khangchendzonga National Park
- (b) Nandadevi National Park
- (c) Neora Valley National Park
- (d) Namdapha National Park

Ans: D

Q. Consider the following pairs: (UPSC 2013)

1. Nokrek Biosphere Reserve: Garo Hills
2. Loktak (Loktak) Lake: Barail Range
3. Namdapha National Park: Dafla Hills

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None

Ans: A

Nokrek Biosphere Reserve (West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya). **Loktak Lake** (located near Moirang in Manipur State). **Barail** is the highest hill range in Assam and it separates the State of Manipur from the State of Nagaland. **Namdapha National Park** (located between the Dapha Bum range of the Mishmi Hills and the Patkai range)

Optional

Economy

- **LM:** [The end of hyper-globalization should yield a better alternative](#)
- **BS:** [Non-essential curbs – Policy focus must shift from imports to exports](#)
- **IE:** [Will the national champion's model of infrastructure development work?](#)