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India Assumes Kimberley Process Chairmanship 2026 — The Conflict Diamond Certification Regime

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WHY IN NEWS

India assumed the 2026 chairmanship of the Kimberley Process (KP), the international certification scheme preventing trade in conflict diamonds — a role that places the world's largest diamond processing nation at the helm of the global ethical diamond trade framework.

WHAT IS THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS?

The **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** is a multilateral trade regime established in **2000** to prevent the sale of **rough diamonds** used to finance armed conflicts against legitimate governments — commonly called **blood diamonds** or **conflict diamonds**.

The name derives from the **Kimberley Conference** held in **Kimberley, South Africa** (May 2000), which brought together governments, industry, and NGOs to address the problem of conflict diamonds financing brutal civil wars in **Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo** in the 1990s.

Key parameters:

60 participants representing **86 countries** (some EU member states participate as a bloc)

Established: **January 2003** (formal KPCS operations began)

Mandate: Certify that rough diamond exports are from conflict-free sources

The KP requires participating countries to implement controls on diamond exports and imports — a **KPCS Certificate** must accompany every parcel of rough diamonds traded between participants

WHY INDIA CHAIRS THE KP

India's chairmanship is not coincidental. India is the **global epicentre of diamond processing**:

Processes approximately **90% of the world's rough diamonds** by volume

Accounts for **75% of global diamond turnover by value**

The city of **Surat, Gujarat** is the world's diamond cutting and polishing capital — handling the vast majority of rough diamonds imported from Africa, Russia, and Australia

This dominance means India has an enormous stake in the integrity of the KP certification system. Any leakage of conflict diamonds into the supply chain — improperly certified parcels entering India’s processing sector — would create reputational and legal risks for India’s diamond industry.

India’s only active diamond mine: The **Majhgawan mine** in **Panna district, Madhya Pradesh**, operated by the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC). However, India’s domestic diamond production is negligible compared to its processing volume.

THE RISE OF LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS — A KP CHALLENGE

The Kimberley Process was designed for **natural rough diamonds**. The explosive growth of **Lab-Grown Diamonds (LGDs)** creates a new challenge: LGDs are chemically and physically identical to natural diamonds but have no supply chain traceability concern (they are grown in factories, not mined in conflict zones).

India’s LGD position:

India produced over **3 million lab-grown diamonds** in 2023, representing approximately **15% of global LGD output**

India is rapidly scaling LGD production, leveraging its diamond polishing expertise

Union Budget 2025-26 removed customs duty on **carbon seeds** (the seed crystals used to initiate LGD growth in CVD — Chemical Vapour Deposition — and HPHT — High Pressure High Temperature — processes) to boost domestic LGD production

The KP is now grappling with whether LGDs should be regulated under a separate framework or brought within the KP’s disclosure requirements. India’s 2026 chairmanship is expected to advance discussions on this regulatory question.

UPSC RELEVANCE

KP founding year (2000), formal operations start (2003), 60 participants/86 countries, conflict/blood diamonds, Kimberley Conference (South Africa), India’s processing share (90% volume, 75% value), Majhgawan mine (Panna district, MP, NMDC), LGD output (3 million+, 2023), carbon seeds duty removal (Budget 2025-26), Surat (diamond capital).

*Mineral resources of India; diamond trade geography. **GS-2:** India’s role in international certification bodies; multilateral trade governance. **GS-3:** Gems and jewellery export sector; lab-grown diamond policy; technology disruption in traditional industries.*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA
KIMBERLEY PROCESS (KP):

Full name: **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)**

Founded: **2000** (Kimberley Conference, South Africa)

Formal operations: **January 2003**

Participants: **60** representing **86 countries**

Purpose: Certify rough diamonds are from conflict-free sources

Target: Blood diamonds/conflict diamonds financing armed conflicts

Historical context: Civil wars in Angola, Sierra Leone, DRC (1990s)

INDIA'S DIAMOND INDUSTRY:

Processing share: **~90%** of world's rough diamonds by volume

Trade share: **~75%** of global diamond turnover by value

Diamond capital: **Surat, Gujarat**

Domestic mine: **Majhgawan mine**, Panna district, Madhya Pradesh (NMDC)

LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS (LGD):

India LGD output (2023): **3 million+** (~15% global share)

Production methods: **CVD** (Chemical Vapour Deposition), **HPHT** (High Pressure High Temperature)

Budget 2025-26: Customs duty removed on **carbon seeds** for LGD production

LGD properties: Chemically and physically identical to natural diamonds

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's gems & jewellery exports: ~USD 30–35 billion annually (one of India's top export categories)

KP does not currently regulate lab-grown diamonds (designed only for natural rough)

NMDC = National Mineral Development Corporation (under Ministry of Steel)

De Beers (South Africa/Anglo American) and ALROSA (Russia) are the world's largest natural diamond miners

Sources: Drishti IAS, Next IAS

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