VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

# The Analyst

## CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

**16th April 2026**

The Analyst Handout
16th April 2026

# Agricultural Growth in Volatile World

**CONTEXT:** Rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in West Asia, have exposed the vulnerability of Indian agriculture to global input shocks such as fertilisers, energy, and logistics. Focusing only on short-term disruptions is inadequate, as such volatility is structural and likely to persist.

## Agricultural Growth - Significance :

**1. Economic Role**
- ~16–18% of GDP
- ~43% of workforce (PLFS data)

**2. Food & Nutritional Security**
- **PDS (food security)**
- Nutritional schemes (ICDS, Mid-Day Meals)
- Critical for managing - **Malnutrition & food inflation**

**3. External Sector**
- Agri exports ~**$50 billion (2023–24)**

**4. Socio-Political Importance**
- Supports **small & marginal farmers (~86%)**
- Rural livelihoods
- Political economy (MSP, subsidies)

## Agricultural Growth – Key Challenges :

**1. Input Vulnerability**
- Leads to **cost-push inflation + farmer distress**

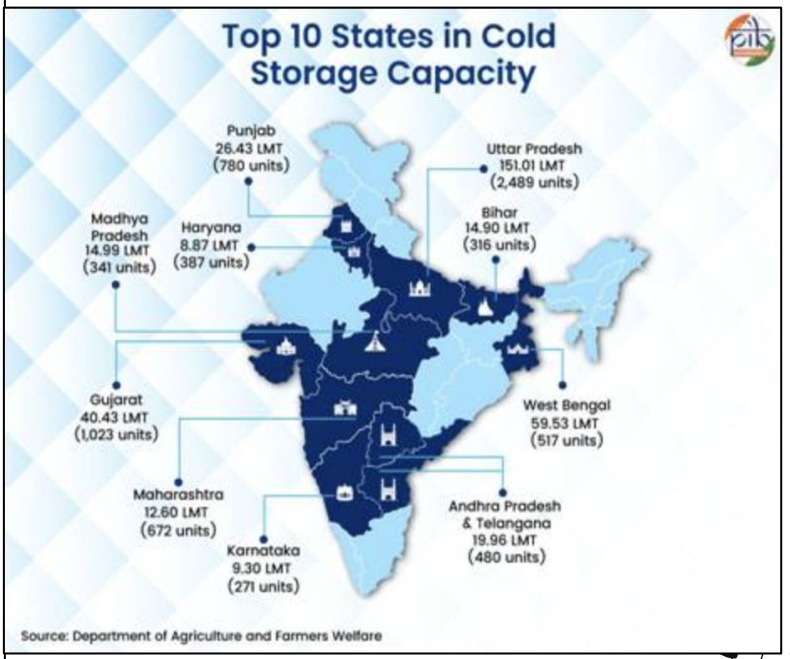
**2. Climate & Environmental Stress**
- Erratic monsoons, heatwaves
- Land degradation (~30% land affected)
- Irrational Groundwater uses

**3. Structural Issues**
- Small landholdings (avg ~1.08 ha)
- Low productivity vs global standards
- Limited mechanisation

**4. Market & Value Chain Gaps**
- Storage (post-harvest losses ~5–10%)
- Processing (only ~10 - 12% of produce processed)
- Fragmented supply chains

**5. Policy & Institutional Issues**
- Export bans / policy volatility
- Weak FPOs (capacity + governance gaps)
- Limited access to: Testing labs , Certification infrastructure

**6. Inclusion Challenge**
- Enterprise-led growth excluding small farmers



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# Agricultural Growth in Volatile World

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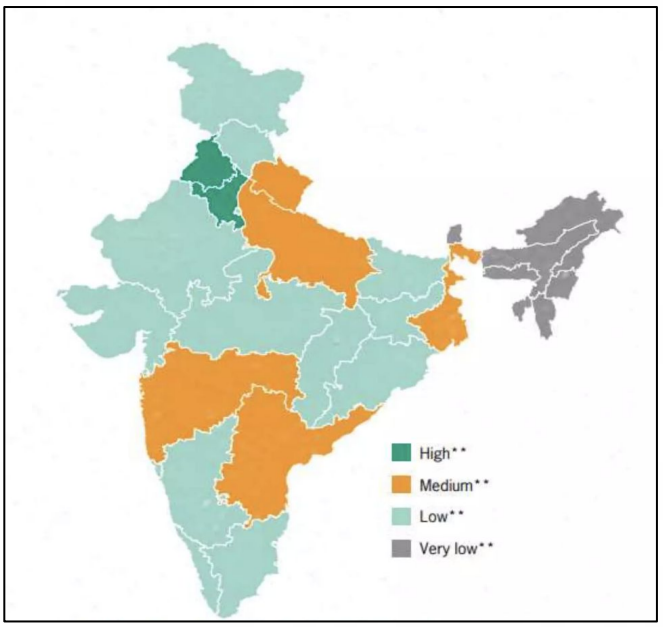
| Year | Share of GVA of agriculture and allied sectors in total economy (%) at current prices | Growth of GVA of agriculture and allied sectors (%) (at 2011-12 prices) |
|---|---|---|
| 2020-21 | 20.3 | 4.1 |
| 2021-22 | 19.0 | 3.5 |
| 2022-23 | 18.3 | 3.3 |




## Agricultural Growth – Key Suggestions :

**. Invest Beyond Farm Gate**
- Production-centric → Value chain-centric

**2. Integrate into Global Value Chains**
- Stable export linkages - Input-side vulnerabilities - Diversifies risk

**3. Leverage Trade Agreements**
- Not tariff-driven - Regulation-driven market access

**4. Focus on Value Addition**
- Driven by: Processing , Branding , Compliance

**5. Build Capability, Not Just Production**
- Successful sectors: Tea, coffee Spices, seafood
- **Quality + compliance + consistency**

**1. Infrastructure Push**
- Invest in: Cold chains, Warehousing, Testing labs

**2. Quality & Compliance Ecosystem**
- Expand: Food testing labs, Certification support

**3. Policy Stability**
- Sudden export bans - Predictable trade policy

**4. Strengthen Institutions**
- Reform FPOs: Governance, Capital access

**5. Trade & Market Integration**
- Diversify export markets: Middle East, Africa , Southeast Asia

**6. Inclusive Value Chains**
- Smallholder participation - Contract farming, Digital platforms , Direct market linkages

**7. Sustainable Agriculture Transition**
- Promote- Millets, Organic farming
- Reduce: Input dependence

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# Agricultural Growth in Volatile World

**CONTEXT:** Rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in West Asia, have exposed the vulnerability of Indian agriculture to global input shocks such as fertilisers, energy, and logistics. Focusing only on short-term disruptions is inadequate, as such volatility is structural and likely to persist.

## Mains PracticQuestion

***Q. Discuss the key structural challenges facing Indian agriculture. How can integration into global Agri-value chains enhance resilience and farmer incomes? (250 word / 15 Marks)***

**Q4.** भारत में कृषि वस्तुओं की आपूर्ति श्रृंखला प्रबंधन के क्षेत्र तथा महत्त्व की विस्तार से व्याख्या कीजिए।
(उत्तर 150 शब्दों में दीजिए)

Elaborate the scope and significance of supply chain management of agricultural commodities in India. *10*
(Answer in 150 words)

**Q13.** भारत में कृषि उत्पादों के विपणन की ऊर्ध्वमुखी और अधोमुखी प्रक्रिया में मुख्य बाधाएँ क्या हैं ? (250 शब्दों में उत्तर दीजिए)

What are the main bottlenecks in upstream and downstream process of marketing of agricultural products in India ? (Answer in 250 words) *15*

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# Millets in India

**CONTEXT:** Prime minister made an appeal to the younger generation, that they should also include millets in their diet.

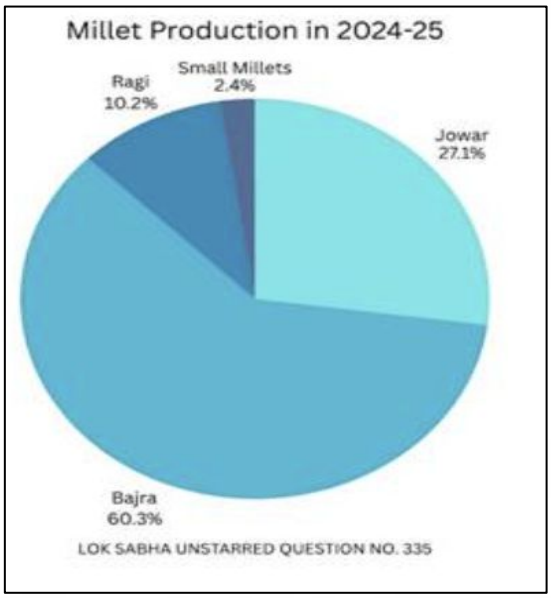
## Millets in India – Status :

**Millets**

- **Small-grained, drought resistant, seeded** grasses.

**Major types in India:**

- **Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl millet (Bajra), Finger millet (Ragi)**
- Small millets: Foxtail, Kodo, Little, Barnyard, Proso, Browntop
- Mostly **kharif crops**, cultivated in **rainfed, marginal areas**




- India produced **180.15 lakh tonnes** of millets in **2024–25**, marking a steady rise compared to the previous year with an **increase of 4.43 lakh tonnes**. **Rajasthan** led in production, followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- India exported **89,164.96 tonnes** of millets worth **$37 million** in **2024–25**.
- As of May 2025, Cabinet approved MSP for Ragi for Marketing Season 2025-26 with the second highest absolute increase (₹596/quintal).
- Among all millet types, **bajra (60.3%)** was produced **the most** in the country.

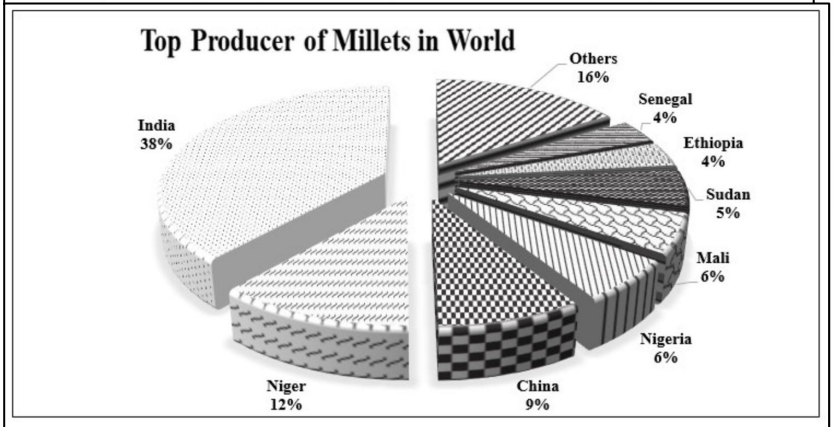
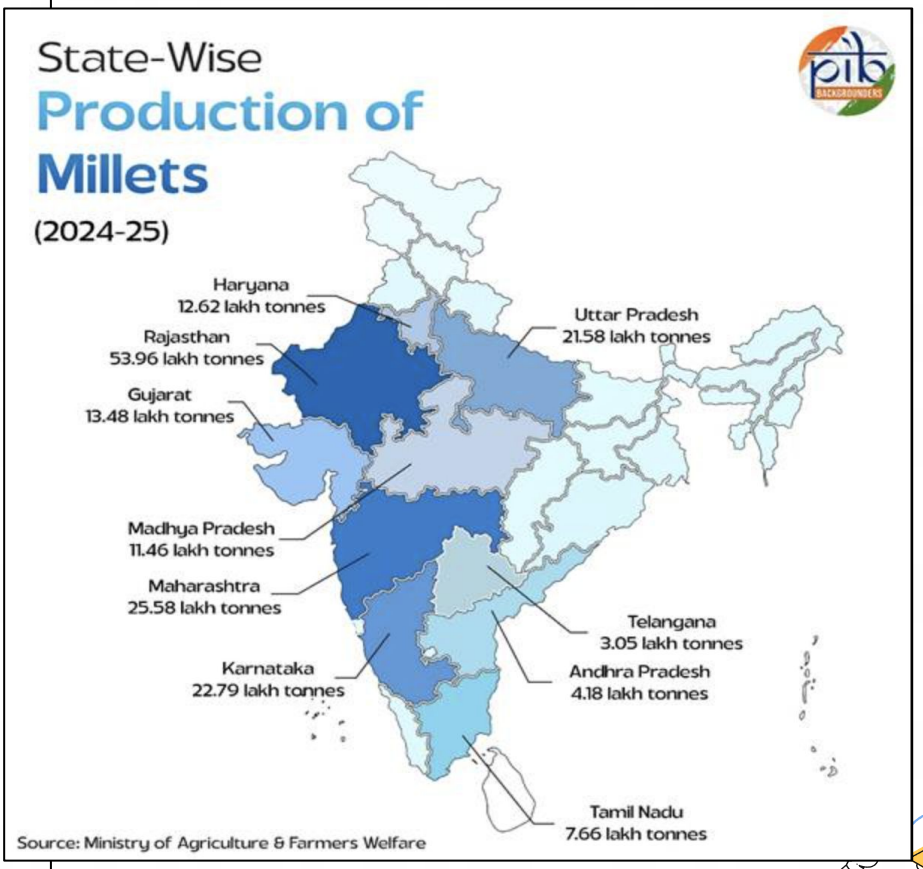



**Figure 2: (a) Top producer of millets in world (%) (FAOSTAT, 2022)**



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# Millets in India

**CONTEXT:** Prime minister made an appeal to the younger generation, that they should also include millets in their diet.

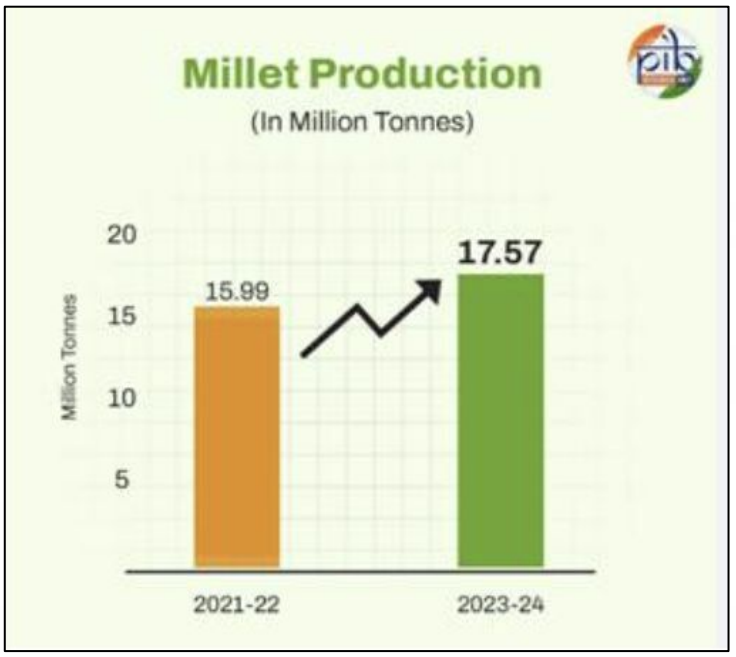
## Millets in India – Significance

**1. Climatic / Environmental Significance**
- **Low water requirement**: ~300–400 mm rainfall vs rice (~1200 mm)
- **Climate-resilient**: Tolerant to **drought, heat, poor soils**
- **Suitable for: Dryland agriculture (≈55% of India's net sown area)**

**2. Health & Nutritional Significance**
- **Low Glycaemic Index (GI)** → helpful in diabetes control
- **Fibre** → gut health
- **Iron & Zinc** → combats anaemia
- **Calcium (especially Ragi)**
- **Gluten-free** → suitable for gluten intolerance
- **Triple burden of malnutrition** (undernutrition + micronutrient deficiency + lifestyle diseases)

**3. Socio-Economic Significance**
- Grown in **rainfed, tribal, and marginal areas**
- **Income stability for small farmers**
- Lower input cost → **higher net returns in risk-prone areas**
- **Nutritional security + livelihood security**

**4. Political / Strategic Significance**
- Staple for **~60 crore people globally (Asia + Africa)**
- **International Year of Millets 2023**: **Global leadership in sustainable agriculture**
- India's **soft power in food systems**



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# Millets in India

**CONTEXT:** Prime minister made an appeal to the younger generation, that they should also include millets in their diet.

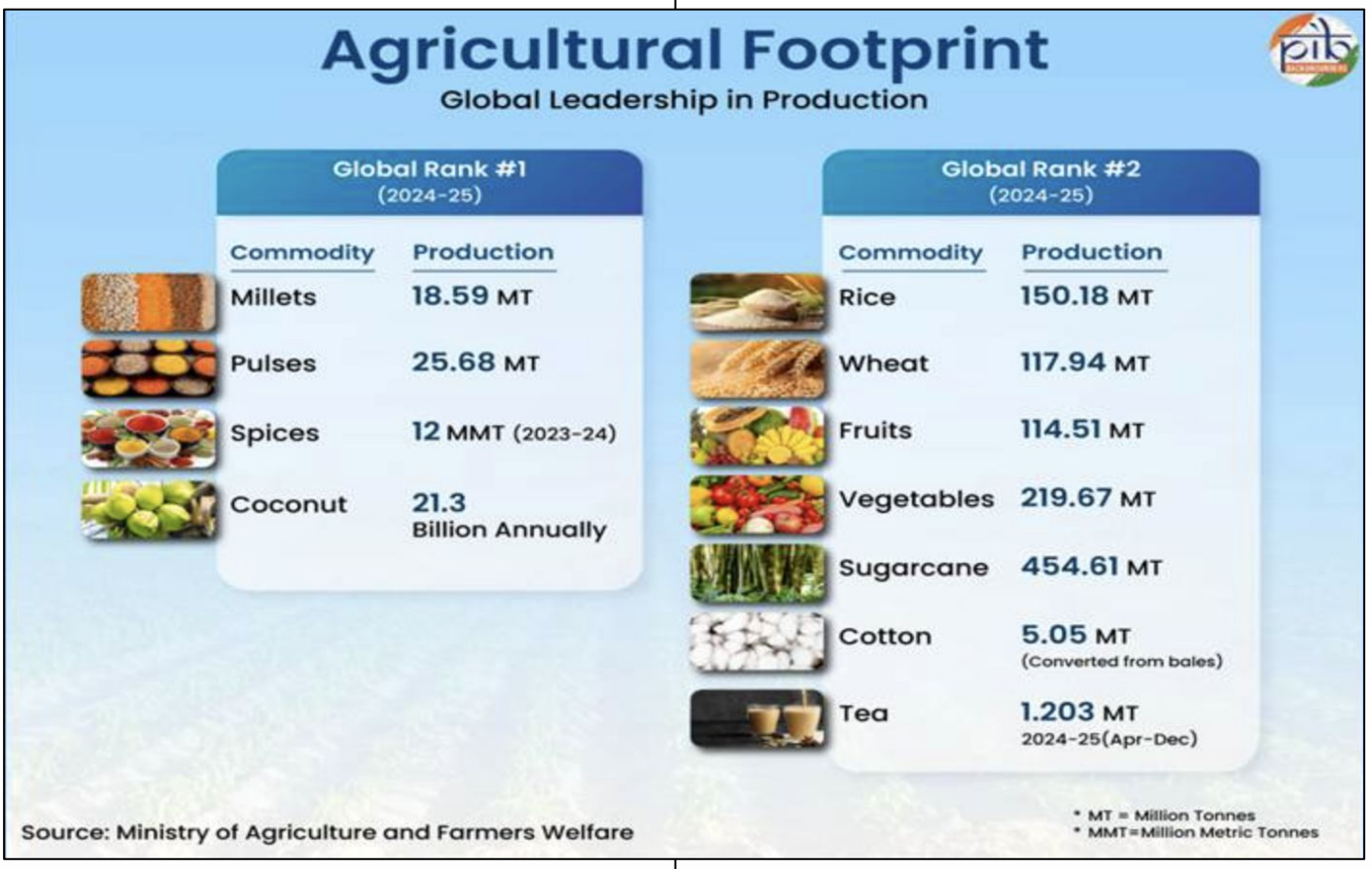
## Millets in India – Challenges

**1. Production Constraints**
- **Low productivity** vs rice/wheat → farmer disincentive
- Limited **irrigation & R&D focus**
- **Narrow MSP coverage** (mainly jowar, bajra, ragi)
- Weak **procurement & PDS integration**

**2. Consumption Constraints**
- **Dietary transition**:
- **Perception issue**: Considered "poor man's food"

**3. Processing challenges**:
- No gluten → difficult dough handling (unlike wheat)
- Lack of: Awareness, branding, urban demand
- Lipase enzyme – Poor shelf life

**4. Policy Bias**
**National Food Security Act 2013**:
- Heavy subsidy on rice & wheat
- Millets largely excluded → demand distortion



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# Millets in India

**CONTEXT:** Prime minister made an appeal to the younger generation, that they should also include millets in their diet.

## Millets in India – Govt Initiatives

| Initiative / Scheme | Year / Ministry | Key Features / Objective |
|---|---|---|
| **Shree Anna Initiative** | 2023 | - Popularise millets ("Shree Anna" branding) - Increase domestic consumption - Promote **Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR), Hyderabad** as Centre of Excellence |
| **PLI Scheme for Food Processing (Millets)** | 2022–27 Ministry of Food Processing Industries | - Incentivises **millet-based value-added products** - Boosts processing, branding & exports |
| **Nutri-Cereals Initiative** | 2018 | - Millets rebranded as **"Nutri-Cereals"** - Focus on nutritional awareness |
| **National Year of Millets** | 2018 | - Awareness generation - Policy push for millet revival |
| **Sub-Mission on Millets (under NFSM)** | 2018 Ministry of Agriculture | - Area expansion & productivity enhancement - Improved seeds & agronomic practices |
| **POSHAN Abhiyaan Integration** | Ministry of Women & Child Development | - Inclusion of millets in **nutrition programmes** - Tackles malnutrition & anaemia |
| **Mid-Day Meal & ICDS Inclusion** | Various ministries | - Incorporation of millets in **school meals & Anganwadi nutrition** |
| **International Year of Millets** | 2023 (UN, led by India) | - Global recognition - Boost to exports & India's leadership in sustainable agriculture |

## Millets in India – Way Ahead

**1. Seed technology & R&D push**
- Expand MSP to **all millets**
- Develop **Special Agribusiness Zones (SABZ)**:
- Region-specific clusters (e.g., Ragi–Karnataka)
- Promote **Organic millet farming**

**2. Market & Value Chain**
- Strengthen: **Procurement + PDS inclusion**
- Develop: **Processing infrastructure**
- Encourage: Startups in **millet-based food products**

**3. Demand Creation**
- Awareness campaigns: Health benefits, lifestyle diseases
- Urban integration: Ready-to-cook / ready-to-eat millet foods

**4. Trade & Global Positioning**
- Improve quality standards for export
- Tap global demand health-conscious markets (US, EU)

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# Millets in India

**CONTEXT:** Prime minister made an appeal to the younger generation, that they should also include millets in their diet.

## Mains Practice Question

*Q. "Millets are central to India's transition towards climate-resilient and nutrition-secure agriculture." Discuss. (15 Marks / 250 Words)*

**14.** गत वर्षों में कुछ विशेष फसलों पर जोर ने सस्यन पैटर्नों में किस प्रकार परिवर्तन ला दिए हैं? मोटे अनाजों (मिलटों) के उत्पादन और उपभोग पर बल को विस्तारपूर्वक स्पष्ट कीजिए। (उत्तर 250 शब्दों में दीजिए)

How has the emphasis on certain crops brought about changes in cropping patterns in recent past? Elaborate the emphasis on millets production and consumption. (Answer in 250 words) 15

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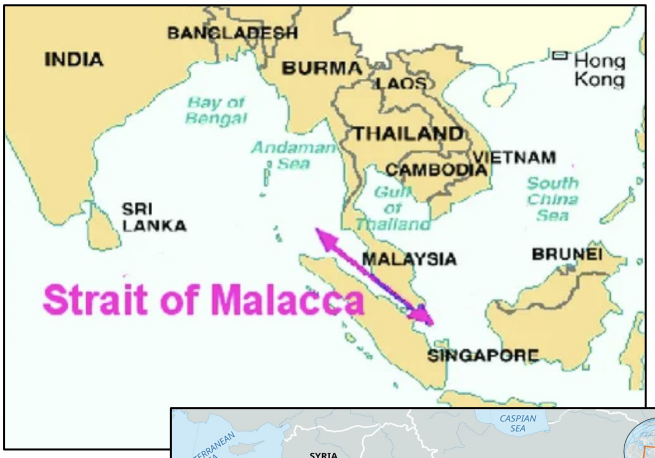
# Maritime Chokepoint

**PRELIMS**: ***Places in News***
**Newspaper:** *The Hindu* **Page Number: 10**

### What is a maritime chokepoint?

A maritime chokepoint is a narrow stretch of sea through which a large share of global trade must pass, with no easy alternative route. These are natural geographic bottlenecks created by coastlines, islands, or narrow channels that concentrate shipping into tight corridors. Because ships cannot easily reroute, these chokepoints become critical nodes in the global trading system. Today, between 70 and 80% of the world's oil moves by sea, and much of it passes through such chokepoints. Even a single incident can disrupt traffic almost immediately. The consequences can be far-reaching. Energy prices tend to rise sharply, shipping costs increase and supply chains can be disrupted. This can lead to shortages of critical commodities, contributing to inflation and slowing economic growth.



### What are the other key global chokepoints?

Beyond Hormuz, the global trading system relies on a small set of equally critical maritime chokepoints. These include the Strait of Malacca, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal.

### How does international law apply to these waterways?

The movement of ships through international chokepoints is governed primarily by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Under its provisions, straits used for international navigation are subject to the principle of "transit passage", which allows ships and aircraft of all nations to pass continuously and without obstruction. However, countries along the strait can regulate shipping for safety and environmental reasons, but they cannot stop ships from passing through or impose selective restrictions. This right of passage is broadly recognised under international law, though in practice, enforcement depends on naval strength and coordination between countries.

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# Keytruda Drug

**PRELIMS** : ***Science and Technology & Health***
**Newspaper:** *Indian Express* **Page Number: 1**

## About Keytruda

- It is the **brand name of pembrolizumab,** an immunotherapy drug used for treating several cancers.
- It was manufactured by US-based global **pharma major Merck & Co (MSD)**
- It belongs to a class **called "checkpoint inhibitors"** — drugs that **remove the brakes preventing the body's T cells**, which are a crucial weapon in the body's immune system, from attacking cancerous cells.
- In other words, it uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer.
- It belongs to the **category of monoclonal antibodies**.
  - **Monoclonal antibodies** are **laboratory-made molecules** designed to bind with specific targets, enabling the immune system to identify and destroy cancerous cells.
- **Working**
  - Pembrolizumab works by **attaching to receptors called PD-1 on T cells**.
  - This prevents T cells from binding with corresponding PD-L1 receptors on cancer cells, letting them **identify the abnormal cells** and triggering an immune response.
- It was first approved by the US FDA in 2014 for advanced skin cancer,
- Keytruda is now **used globally for certain lung cancers**, **cervical cancer**, renal cell cancer and aggressive breast cancer, among others.

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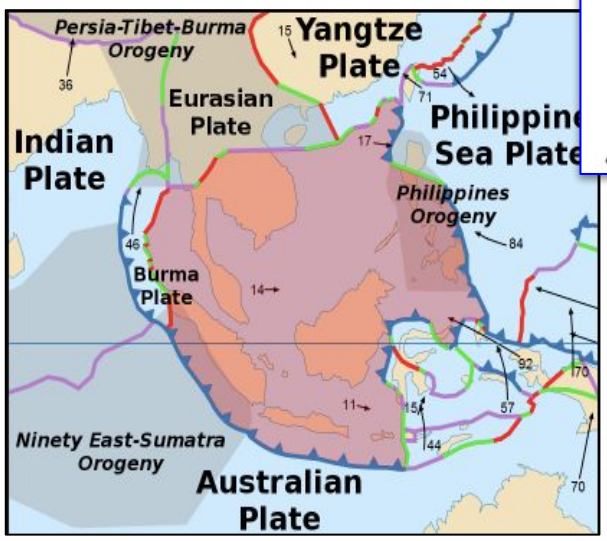
# Andaman Sea

**PRELIMS : *Places in News* & *International Organisation***
**Newspaper:** *Indian Express* **Page Number: 18**

## Andaman Sea

- **Location**: Semi-enclosed marginal sea in the northeastern Indian Ocean
- **Boundaries**:
- West → Bay of Bengal
- East → Strait of Malacca
- North → Myanmar
- South → Sumatra
- Lies between east coast of India and Malay Peninsula
- **Tectonic Setting**:
- Part of **Sunda Plate system**
- Bounded by:
  - Indian Plate (NW)
  - Australian Plate (SE)
- Active **plate convergence zone**
- **Major Geological Features**:
- **Andaman Basin** → undersea ridges, faults, trenches
- **Andaman Trench** → formed by subduction of Indian Plate beneath Eurasian Plate
- **Islands**:
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands (India)
- Coco Islands & Preparis Island (Myanmar)



## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- It is a **UN Refugee Agency** which **protects refugees worldwide** and facilitates their return home or resettlement.
- **History:** It **was established by** the General Assembly of the **United Nations in 1950** in the aftermath of the Second World War to help the millions of people who had lost their homes.
- It is a **global organization dedicated to saving lives**, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.
- **Funding:** It is funded voluntarily, contributed by governments, private donors, and organisations.
- It was awarded **Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981.**
- It started the **Nansen Refugee Award in 1954** for recognition of outstanding service to the cause of refugees, displaced or stateless people.
- **Governance structure**
  - It is governed by the **UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council** (ECOSOC).
  - The UNHCR Executive Committee approves the agency's biennial programmes and the corresponding budget.
  - These are presented by the **High Commissioner**, who is appointed by the UN General Assembly.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland

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# Enforcement Directorate

**PRELIMS :** ***Government Agencies***
**Newspaper:** *The Hindu* **Page Number: 04**

## ***The Enforcement Directorate***

- Specialized financial law enforcement and economic intelligence agency
- **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**
- It primarily focuses on the enforcement of economic laws and combatting financial crimes:

a. ***Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA, 1999),***
b. ***Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA, 2002),***
c. ***Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA, 2018)***
d. ***Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA), 1974***: (Grants powers for preventive detention related to FEMA violations)

- **Director of ED: A**ppointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of a high-level committee including the ***Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC), Vigilance Commissioners, and Secretaries of the Ministries of Home, Personnel, and Finance.***
- **Tenure:** Initially fixed at two years, the Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Act, 2021 allows extensions up to a maximum of five years, in one-year increments, in the public interest

### Enforcement Directorate Functions

The ED's functions are multi-faceted, encompassing investigation, enforcement, and prosecution within its statutory framework:

1. Enforcement of Economic Laws:
   Implements FEMA (1999), PMLA (2002), and FEOA (2018).
2. Investigation of Financial Crimes:
   - Probes money laundering, bank fraud, foreign exchange violations, and other financial misconduct.
3. Prosecution and Adjudication:
   - Powers include arrests, searches, seizures, and summoning individuals or records for investigation.
4. Collaboration with Other Agencies:
   - Works alongside CBI, Income Tax Department, and Customs, ensuring coordinated enforcement.
5. Financial Regulation and Monitoring:
   - Enhances the integrity of India's financial system and deters economic offences.

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# BRICS – Foreign Ministers Meeting

**PRELIMS : *International Groupings***
**Newspaper:** *Indian Express* **Page Number: 09**

## *Evolution of BRICS :*

- **Term :** British Economist Jim O'Neill ( 2001)
- **Formalised** : Meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in 2006.
- **The inaugural BRIC Summit** was convened in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009.
- **2010: South Africa was accepted as a full member**, and the group became BRICS.
- **2014: The Fortaleza Declaration** was adopted at the 6th BRICS Summit, and it marked the establishment of the **New Development Bank (NDB).**
- **2015: The Ufa Declaration of BRICS** was adopted at the 7th BRICS Summit. It covers a range of topics, including global governance, international security, and economic cooperation.
- **2021:** The 13th BRICS Summit was held under India's Chair ship (virtual summit).

**Evolution of BRICS**

- **2022: The Beijing Declaration** was adopted at the 14th BRICS Summit, where it was declared that the BRICS countries support talks between Russia and Ukraine.
- Also, cooperation in the fight against COVID-19, digital transformation, resilience and stability of industrial and supply chains, and low-carbon development
- **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE** became full member of BRICS from January 2024
- **Indonesia** joined in January 2025.
- *Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam joined BRICS as Partner Countries in 2025.*

BRICS
INDIA 2026

Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability

49.5% Population | 40% GDP | 26% Trade

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# Daily Quiz

**Q1. Regarding the BRICS Grouping, consider the following statements:**

1. The inaugural BRIC Summit was convened in New York in 2006.
2. The Fortaleza Declaration adopted at the 6th BRICS Summit marked the establishment of the New Development Bank.
3. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE became full members of BRICS in January 2024.

**How many of the statements given above is/are correct?**

a) Only One
b) Only Two
c) All Three
d) None

**Answer: b**

**Q2. Regarding the Enforcement Directorate, consider the following statements:**

1. It functions under the Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance.
2. The Director of the Enforcement Directorate is appointed by the Central Government.
3. It is responsible for the enforcement of the Foreign Exchange Management Act & Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

a) 1 and 3 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) All of the above

**Answer: d**

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) :**

1. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950.
2. It is funded entirely through mandatory contributions of member states.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) None of the above

**Answer: a**

**Q4. Which of the following statements best describes the term "Pembrolizumab" recently seen in the news?**

a) It is a newly discovered drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's.
b) It is an immunotherapy drug used for treating several cancers.
c) It is a plastic-eating bacterium.
d) It is a newly developed Gene editing technology.

**Answer: b**

**Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the initiatives related to millets in India:**

1. The Shree Anna Initiative was launched in 2023.
2. The PLI Scheme for Food Processing (Millets) is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture.
3. The International Year of Millets was declared by the United Nations in 2023.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1 only

**Answer: c**

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