

15th September 2021 Current Affairs Analysis

By IASToppers | 2021-09-15 17:00:00



Polity & Governance

Foreigners' Tribunals

The Assam government has directed the Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) to stick to giving “opinion” on a person’s nationality, and refrain from passing any “consequential orders.”



[Ref: The Financial Express]

- The government says that, the FT members were passing “consequential orders/directions”, while giving opinion. **“This may not be a correct approach.”**
- Apart from NRC drop-outs, FTs have been adjudicating **cases of ‘doubtful voters’** and other references **made by the Border Police in Assam.**

About Foreigners’ Tribunals:

- Set up by the **Ministry of Home Affairs in 1964**, FTs are **quasi-judicial bodies** that adjudicate **citizenship in Assam.**
- As per the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, FTs were constituted to give an **“opinion” on whether a person is a foreigner or not**, as per Foreigners Act, 1946.
 - Earlier, the powers to constitute tribunals were vested only with the Centre.
- The Act is unique to Assam, in other parts, once a ‘foreigner’ has been apprehended by the police for staying illegally, he or she is produced before a local court under the **Passport Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946.**
- The FTs get **two kinds of cases:**
 - Those against whom a “reference” has been made by border police, and
 - Those whose names in the electoral rolls have a D (Doubtful) against them.
- **Section 9 of the Foreigners Act** says that “the onus of proving that such person is not a

foreigner or is not a foreigner of such particular class or description, as the case may be, shall, notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, lie upon such person”.

◦ Thus, the **accused has to prove he or she is an Indian.**

- The amended Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019 empowers **individuals to approach the Tribunals.**
- Earlier, only the **State administration could move the Tribunal against a suspect**, but with the final NRC, if a person doesn't find his or her name in the final list, they could move the Tribunal.

Forest Rights Act, 2006

Jammu and Kashmir government has decided to **implement the Forest Rights Act, 2006.**

- This will **elevate the socio-economic status of a sizeable section** of the population of tribals and nomadic communities in the Union Territory.



[Ref: India Today]

About Forest Rights Act, 2006:

- The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act** (or the Forest Rights Act or FRA) was enacted in 2006 and **came into force in 2008.**
- The Act was enacted to protect the marginalised socio-economic class of citizens and balance the right to environment with their right to life and livelihood.

- It **confers individuals' title to habitat**, and also aims to **protect their tradition and culture** by recognising their collective ownership over a larger landscape within or outside their traditional village territories.
- It provides for **two kinds of rights to tribals and other forest dwellers**.
 1. Individual rights over the dwelling and cultivation lands under their occupation.
 2. The community tenure/ rights over 'community forest resources' on common forest land within the traditional and customary boundaries of the village.
- However, the implementation of the Act in general and especially **in Protected Areas (PAs) has been negligible**.

Objectives:

- To undo the historical injustice occurred to the forest dwelling communities.
- To ensure land tenure, livelihood and food security of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- To strengthen the **conservation regime of the forests** by including the responsibilities and authority on Forest Rights holders for sustainable use, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance.

Features:

- The Act **encompasses Rights of Self-cultivation and Habitation** which are usually regarded as Individual rights; and Community Rights.
- It also provides rights to allocation of forest land for developmental purposes to fulfil basic infrastructural needs of the community.
- In conjunction with the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Settlement Act, 2013 **FRA protects the tribal population from eviction without rehabilitation and settlement**.
- Under FRA, the **rights of forest dwellers can recognised in protected areas** including: national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation and community reserves.

Bakarwals:

- The Bakarwals are known to be **part of the larger ethnic group known as Gujjars** who dominate large parts of Northern India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- In 1991, the Jammu and Kashmir government added the community to the list of Scheduled Tribes. **In 2001**, the Indian government officially declared them as a **Scheduled Tribe**.
- The Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir are predominantly **Muslims** and their way of life, language and customs are strikingly different as compared to their counterparts settled mostly in the plains of the state.
- A nomadic tribe, the Bakarwals are a migratory group, often recognised by the **hundreds of kilometers long journey** they take with their cattle every summer to Kashmir and Ladakh and back to Jammu in the winters.
- They rear sheep and goats.

Gaddis:

- The Gaddis tribes is mainly found on **both sides of the Dhauladhar Range** of the state of **Himachal Pradesh**.
- It's also dwell mainly in the **Brahmaur region of Chamba District**, in the higher regions of the Ravi River and also the valleys of the Budhil River.
- The main occupation of Gaddi tribes is **shepherding** and they make their livelihood by rearing and selling **sheeps, goats, mules and horses**.
- **Semi-nomadic**, the Gaddi migrate with their livestock during summers and wait out winters in their homes.
- They are considered to have **descended from the persecuted escapees of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's reign**.
- Both Hindu and Islam religions customs are practiced by huge population of Gaddi Tribal Community.
- The most important thing for any Gaddi Tribe is the **25 yards long strand** that is tied to their wrist worn by both men and women which serves as the **symbol of the Tribe**.

Economy

UPI-PayNow linkage

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) announced a project to **link their respective fast payment systems** which is expected to be **operationalised by July, 2022**.

**PAY
NOW**

UPI
UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE

[Ref: The Mobile Indian]

Background:

- This initiative is in line with the central bank's vision of reviewing corridors and charges for inbound cross-border remittances outlined in the **Payment Systems Vision Document 2019-21**.
- The linkage builds upon the **earlier efforts of NPCI International Private Limited (NIPL) and Network for Electronic Transfers (NETS)** to foster cross-border interoperability of payments using cards and QR codes, between India and Singapore.

Major highlights:

- While **India uses Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** as a fast payment method, **Singapore uses the PayNow system**.
- The UPI-PayNow linkage will enable users of each system to make instant, low-cost fund transfers on a reciprocal basis without a need to get onboarded onto the other payment system.
- The linkage will be a **significant milestone in the development of infrastructure** for cross-border payments between India and Singapore.
- It will also closely **align with the G20's** financial inclusion priorities of driving faster, cheaper and more transparent cross-border payments.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI):

- UPI is India's mobile based, 'fast payment' system that facilitates customers to make round the clock payments instantly **using a Virtual Payment Address (VPA)** created by the customer.
- This **eliminates the risk of sharing bank account details** by the remitter.
- UPI supports both **Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M) payments** as also it enables a user to send or receive money.

PayNow:

- PayNow is also an **electronic fund transfer service** that allows a user to transfer funds instantly to a payee, using his/her mobile number or **NRIC/FIN or UEN number** instead of his/her bank account number.
- PayNow supports nine participating banks and three Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NFIs).

Richest 10% in India own over 50% of assets: NSS

National Sample Survey has released the findings of **All-India Debt & Investment Survey, 2019**.



[Ref: Finshots]

Major Highlights:

About the survey:

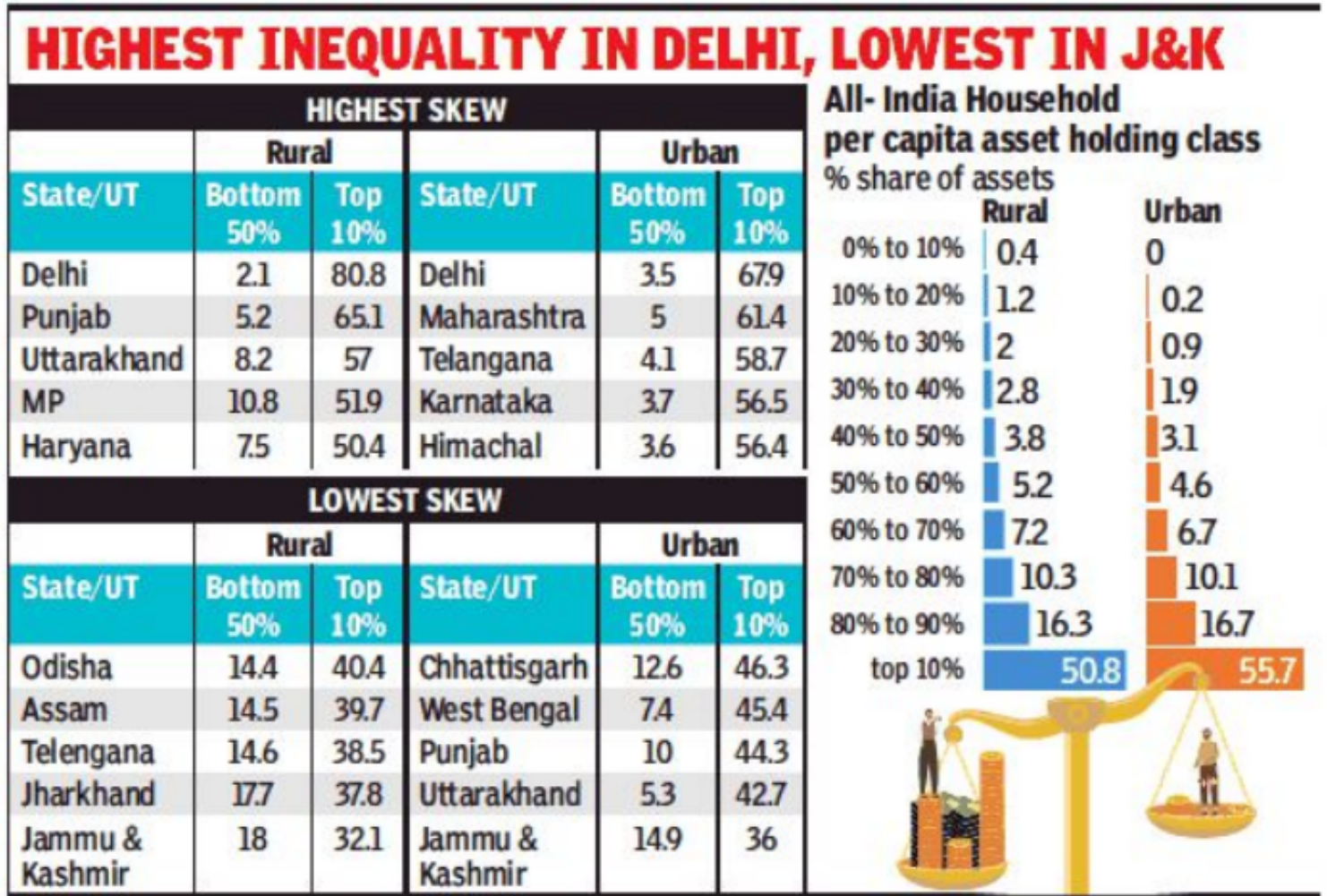
- The survey was conducted from January to December 2019.
- **Objective:** To collect basic quantitative information on the **assets and liabilities** of the households as on 30.6.2018.
- The survey gathered information on the **amount of capital expenditure** incurred by the households during the Agricultural Year 2018-19.
- Assets were calculated by putting a **monetary value** on everything owned by households, including:
 - **Physical assets** like land, buildings, livestock and vehicles
 - **Financial assets** like shares in companies, deposits in bank, and post offices, etc.

Findings of the survey:

- The **richest 10%** of Indians own over half of the country's physical and financial assets while the **bottom 50%** own less than **10%**.
 - The richest 10% own **55.7%** of the total assets in urban areas and **50.8%** in rural areas.
- The **total physical and financial assets** owned by people living in the rural areas was Rs 274.6 lakh crore.
 - Out of which **Rs 139.6 lakh crore** was owned by the richest **10%**.
- The **bottom 50%** owned 10.2% of assets in rural areas and an even smaller 6.2% in urban areas.

Inequality in distribution of assets:

- Within rural areas, where close to **two-thirds** of India lives, the skew was the highest in **Delhi**.
 - In Delhi the top 10% owned **80.8% of assets** and the **bottom 50%** just 2.1%.



[Ref: Hindustan Times]

- **Among large states**, after **Delhi**, asset inequality in rural areas was highest in **Punjab** where the richest 10% own over 65% of assets and the bottom 50% just over 5%.
- **Uttarakhand**, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana had high inequality in **asset ownership** in the villages.
- **Among large states** (and UTs), the **rural skew** was the least in Jammu and Kashmir with the top 10% owning 32% and the bottom half 18%.

Govt. curbs funding for 10 NGOs

The **Ministry of Home Affairs** has limited the funding of **ten** non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to climate and child labour.



[Ref: Indian Express]

Major Highlights:

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has sent an internal note to all the banks directing them to put a specific number of foreign organizations in the PRC list (**Prior Reference Category**) under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) 2010.
- These NGOs include-
 - NGOs from USA named Omidyar Network International, Humanity United and Stardust foundation.
 - NGOs from Australia named Walk Free Foundation and Minderoo Foundation.
 - NGOs from the UK named Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Freedom fund and Laudes foundation etc.
- The RBI has instructed that **any fund flow** from the (specified) donor agencies to any NGO/Voluntary organization/ persons in India should be brought to the **Ministry of Home Affairs** so that the funds are allowed to be credited to the recipients only after clearance/ prior permission from the MHA's Foreigners Division of the FCRA wing.

Key facts:

- The FCRA approval of foreign funded NGOs including the **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative** was suspended in June 2021.
- More than **6600** NGOs' FCRA licenses were cancelled with around 260 of them suspended by the government during the period 2016-2020.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):

- Foreign Contribution (regulation) Act, 2010 is a consolidating act whose scope is to regulate the acceptance and **utilisation of foreign contribution** or foreign hospitality by individuals or associations or companies.
- The act **regulates foreign donations** and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
- It is implemented by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

Salient Features:

- FCRA is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations.
- It is mandatory for all such NGOs to **register themselves** under the FCRA.
- The registration is **initially valid for five years** and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
- **Registered associations** can receive foreign contribution for social, educational, religious, economic and cultural purposes.
- Filing of annual returns, on the lines of Income Tax, is **compulsory**.
- The NGOs must give an undertaking that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the **sovereignty and integrity of India** or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.
- All such NGOs would have to operate accounts in either **nationalised or private banks** which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.
- The Act makes **Aadhaar number mandatory** for all office bearers, directors or key functionaries of a person receiving foreign contribution, as an identification document.

Restriction on use of foreign funding:

- All funds received by an NGO must be **used only for the purpose for which they were received**. No funds other than foreign contribution is deposited in the Foreign Contribution account.
- Such funds must **not use** in **speculative activities** identified under the Act.
- Except with the prior approval of the Authority, such funds **must not be given or transferred to any entity** not registered under the Act.
- Every asset purchased with such fund must be in the **name of the NGO** and not its office bearers or members.
- Any **organisation of a political nature** and any association engaged in the production and broadcast of audio- or audio-visual news have been placed in the category prohibited to accept foreign contribution.

A Multi-billion-dollar Opportunity: Report

A report titled “**A Multi-billion-dollar Opportunity**” was released recently, ahead of the first ever **UN**

Food Systems Summit 2021.

[Ref: DNA India]

About the report:

- The **report** was released by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The report has demanded **reforming and repurposing agricultural support systems** across the world.

Highlights of the Report:

- It focuses on the **countries' support** to farmers that distort prices, encourage emission-intensive agriculture resulting in global warming and make the global agriculture trade an unequal one for the vast smallholder farmers.
- It has **analysed countries** support to farmers and their **impacts** on each of the above aspects.
- Annually, countries support agriculture up to **\$540 billion**. More than half of this support is **price-distorting** and is largely harmful to the environment.
 - Developed countries offer the **best deal to their farmers** to make them compete in world trade.
 - Developing and emerging economies **also offer support** to farmers.
 - Support to farmers in low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is **negligible**.

- This is due to lack of financial resources and government's focus on curbing prices to keep food prices low.

India specific highlights:

- Farming sector in India has been largely **penalised**, due to the strong focus of Indian agricultural policy **on protecting consumers** by ensuring affordable food prices.
 - This led to implicitly taxing the farming sector.
- India along with Argentina and Ghana are exceptions in terms of:
 - Taxing the producers to protect the consumers.
 - Keep food inflation low and affordable for the general population.
- India's **Producer Support Estimate (PSE)** is negative 5.7% for Indian farmers, which led to the loss of \$23 billion for them in 2019.
- However, farmers enjoy support like **cash transfer** in India (PM-KISAN, scheme that transfers Rs 6,000/year to farmers).

Suggestions towards repurposing agricultural support:

Short Term:

- Pursue global efforts to **repurpose agricultural support** as key catalyst for food systems transformation in order to achieve the SDGs.
- Develop **country-specific data** and analysis to inform the design and implementation of effective repurposing strategies that put sustainable development as centerpiece.
- Foster greater cooperation across government, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector at country level.

Medium Term:

- **Close data, research**, and knowledge gaps on the status, characteristics and impacts of agricultural support, in collaboration with relevant international organizations.
- Advance commitments within **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and other trade agreements and promote further reduction of trade distorting measures and coupled subsidies.
- Develop **standard monitoring systems** to be adopted by countries to track the outcomes of agricultural policies and their repurposing and reform.

Bilateral & International Relations

QUAD Alliance

The US President will host the **first in-person meeting** of the **Quad countries** on September 24, which would be joined by the Prime Ministers of India, Australia, and Japan.

- The Quad will focus on issues related to the Covid-19 crisis, climate change, cyberspace, and

security in the Indo-Pacific.



[Ref: Amaruja]

Formation of the QUAD:

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is a **strategic dialogue** between the United States, Japan, Australia and India.
- It was formed after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 to collaborate on **disaster relief efforts**, which was formalised in 2007.
- In 2017, with the **rising threat of China**, Quad was revived broadening its objectives and creating a mechanism that aimed to slowly establish a rules-based international order.
- It has focused on **expanding existing agreements** between member countries and highlighting their shared values.
- QUAD conduct **joint military exercises** as a show of unity and diplomatic cohesion.
- In 2020, the trilateral India-US-Japan **Malabar naval exercises** including Australia was the **first joint military exercises** among the four countries.

Objectives of QUAD:

- **Primary objectives** of the QUAD are to secure **rules-based global order**, liberal trading system,

maritime security, freedom of navigation and seeks to **contain China**.

- Willingness to expand the partnership through **Quad Plus** that would include South Korea, New Zealand, and Vietnam amongst others.

Importance of QUAD for India:

India as a Net Security provider:

- India must be a Net Security Provider in the Indian Ocean Region, its dominance in the IOR needs to be maintained and sustained.
- QUAD provides India a platform to **enhance security** through partnership in the region as well as emphasize that its idea of Indo-Pacific stands for a free, open, and inclusive region.

Countering China:

- The Quad provides a platform to India to **seek cooperation from countries** on various issues such as **ensuring respect** for territorial integrity and sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- It also demonstrates a united front to check the unceremonious activities of China against India.
 - It is crucial in present times as relations between India and China have deteriorated due to border incursions along Tibet India border at more than one place.

Defence & Security Issues

Israeli firm unveils armed robot to patrol borders

An Israeli defense contractor unveiled a **remote-controlled armed robot** that can patrol battle zones, track infiltrators and open fire.



[Ref: TIME]

Major Highlights:

- The four-wheel-drive robot was developed by the state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries-**REX MKII**.
- It is operated by **an electronic tablet** and can be equipped with two machine guns, cameras and sensors.
- The robot can **gather intelligence** for ground troops, carry injured soldiers and supplies in and out of battle, and strike nearby targets.
- With every mission, the **device collects more data** which it then learns for future missions.

Arguments in favour of using robots in warfare:

- Proponents say such semi-autonomous machines **allow armies to protect their soldiers**.
 - **Unmanned ground vehicles** are being increasingly used by other armies, including those of the United States, Britain and Russia.
 - Their **tasks include** logistical support, the removal of mines and firing weapons.
- Autonomous weapons systems act as a **force multiplier**, i.e., fewer war fighters are needed for a given mission, and the efficiency of each war fighter is greater.
- The weapons systems can **reduce casualties** by removing/ replacing human war fighters from

dangerous missions.

- Long-term **savings in military expenditure** could be achieved through fielding an army of military robots.
- Robot pilots are not subjected to physiological and mental constraints of warfare.

Argument against using robots in warfare:

- Critics fear this marks another dangerous step toward **robots making life-or-death decisions**.
- Robotic weapons could decide on their own, perhaps **erroneously**, to shoot targets.
- Such weapons cannot be trusted to **distinguish between combatants and civilians** or make proper calls about the harm attacks may do to nearby civilians.
- Missile defense using Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be extremely destabilizing if it allows one nation to launch a **nuclear strike** against another without the fear of retaliation.
- Machines **cannot understand value of human life**, which undermines human dignity and violates human rights laws.
- There would be a major concern is the **problem of accountability** when autonomous weapons systems are deployed.

Indian History

National Engineers' Day 2021

National Engineer's Day is celebrated on September 15 to recognize and honor the achievements of the great engineer of India **Moksha Gundam Visvesvaraya**.



[Ref: Economic Times]

- Engineers' day is celebrated in India, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania on September 15.
- The day is observed to commemorate the great work of engineers and encourage them for improvement and innovation.

Key Facts:

- He was born on 15th September 1861, in **Muddenahalli** Bengaluru.
- He was called the **Father of Modern Mysore State**.
- He completed his engineering from the Poona College of Science.
- In November 1909, he joined the Mysore service as Chief Engineer, assuming the position of the 19th **Dewan of Mysore**.
- He was instrumental in developing a system to protect **Visakhapatnam port** from sea erosion.
- He took voluntary retirement in 1918, did not agree with the proposal to set aside state jobs for "non-brahmin" community.
- After his retirement, he presided as chairman or became a member of various committees.

Contributions:

- **Institute** - He established the Sir Jayachamarajendra Occupational Institute in Bangalore in 1943.
 - It was later renamed to Sir Jayachamarajendra Polytechnic.
 - It was meant to impart special training to technicians keeping in mind the impending industrial development of India.
- **Books** - Reconstructing India; Planned Economy of India; Memoirs of Working Life.

Awards and honors:

- Received the **Bharat Ratna**, in 1955.
- Awarded with several honorary doctoral degrees including D.Sc., LL.D., D.Litt. from eight universities in India.

Death:

- He died on 14 April 1962 in Bangalore, Karnataka.

Key Facts for Prelims

BRICS Young Scientists Forum

BRICS Young Scientists Forum This year the four-day conclave from 13 September to 16 September, 2021.



[Ref: BRICS-YSF]

- Young innovator prize has been one of the focuses of the BRICS-YSF and the award is supported by the DST, Government of India.

About the forum:

- The BRICS Young Scientist Forum has created a network to **harness knowledge for solving common societal challenges** through research and innovation.
- The BRICS Young Scientist Conclave created a pool of creative youth in Science & Technology.

Summits:

- The BRICS-YSF summits were **first hosted by India in 2016**, followed by China in 2017, South Africa in 2018, Brazil in 2019, and Russia in 2020.
- The next conclave would be organized by China in 2022.

Paradip Port

Paradip Port is a **natural, deep-water port** on the East coast of India in Jagatsinghpur district of **Odisha**.



[Ref: KYA]

- It is situated at confluence of the **Mahanadi River** and the **Bay of Bengal**.
- The Major Port is administered under Major Port Trusts Act, 1963, under the Ministry of Shipping.

Why in News?

- A **Mobile X-Ray Container Scanning System (MXCS)** has been installed by **Paradip Port** at a cost of Rs 30 crore under **Ease of Doing Business** initiative.
- It is installed for the purpose of **reducing physical examination** and dwell time of containers at the Port.
- The Scanner can scan **up to 25 containers per hour**, enabling the Trade to directly move out their containers with upgrade security and zero hassle.