

Current Affairs

UPSC Prelims 2024

LECTURE-07

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❖ Species in News: Leith's soft-shell turtle

➤ Context:

- In a major breakthrough, a healthy breeding population of 31 individuals of elusive Leith's soft-shell turtle (*Nilssonia leithii*), were found in the Cauvery River between Mekedatu and Hogenakkal in Tamil Nadu.
- These are large freshwater turtle species endemic to peninsular India

- **Habitat:** Thungabhadra, Ghataprabha, Bhavani, Godavari, Krishna, Chalakudy, Cauvery, and Moyar Rivers
- There has been a steady decline in soft-shell turtle sightings in recent years due to poaching, habitat fragmentation, hydropower projects and to some extent, illegal river sand mining.
- It has been poached and illegally consumed within India.
- It has also been illegally traded abroad for meat and for its calipee. The population of

*habitat
destruction*

- this turtle species is estimated to have declined by 90% over the past 30 years such that the species is now difficult to find.
- Their diet includes mosquito larvae, crabs, freshwater molluscs and fish. They grow up to 700-1000mm.
- It is highly elusive and can be seen only when it comes out for oxygen, or basking on rocks etc.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN: Critically endangered
 - WPA: Schedule I & IV ✓
 - CITES: Appendix I (2019)

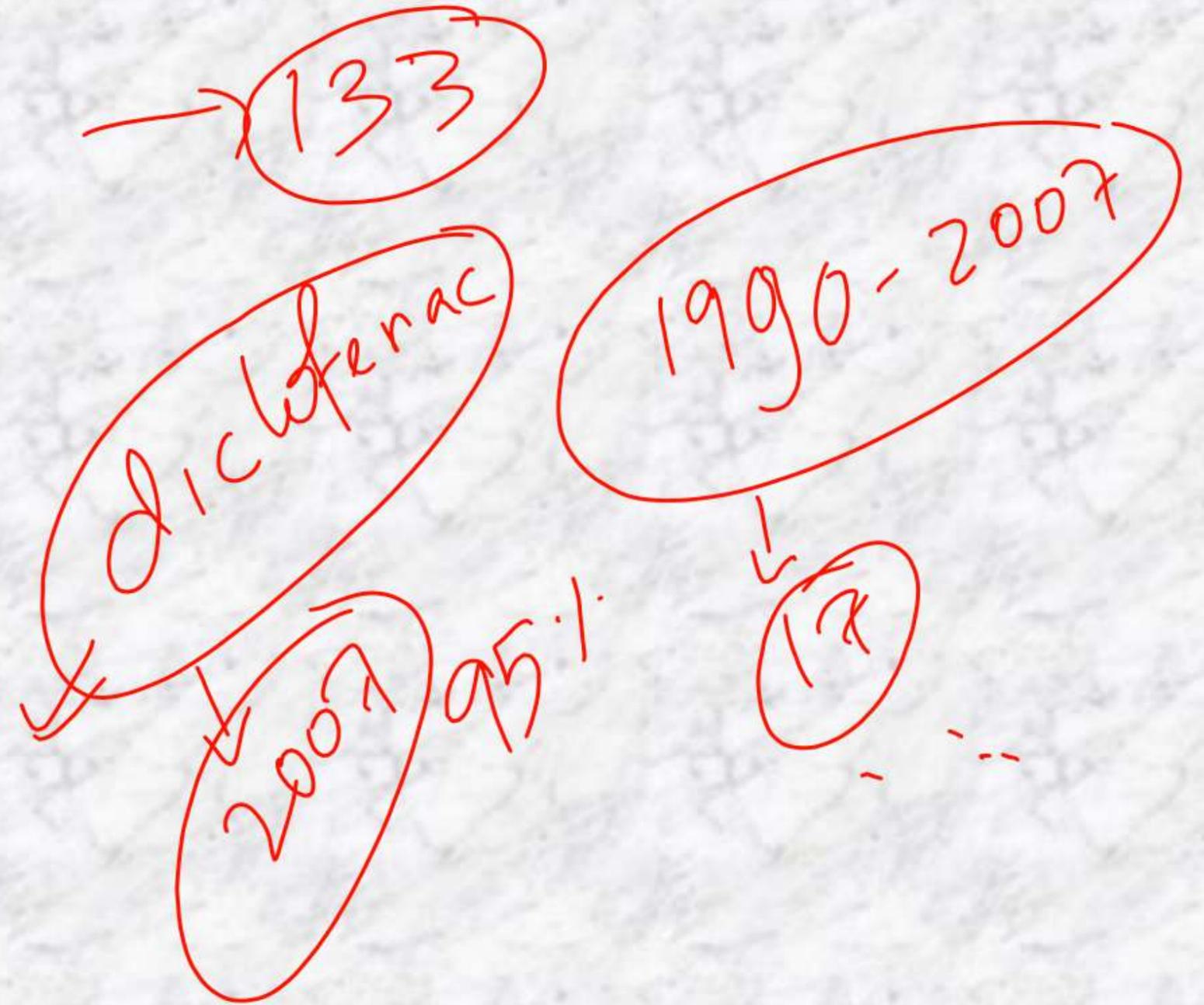
Uniqueness
↳ elusive
CITES
↳ APP I
↳ APP II



❖ Convention on Migratory Species:

COP14

- **Context:** The CMS COP14 is being held at Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- The 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP14) adopted an action plan for improving the conservation status of migratory landbird species in the African-Eurasian region.
- It also included the adoption of the 12-year multi-species action plan for vultures.



- The summit adopted action plans for species such as far eastern curlew, Baer's pochard and European roller.
- The CMS COP14 further urged the Parties and encouraged non-Parties to prevent poisoning of these migratory birds by agriculture pesticides and veterinary chemical treatments.
- During discussions, it expressed concerns about the conservation status of the Indian Skimmer (Rynchops albicollis)

- To address the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats among wild life, the COP14 took an initiative — **Global Partnership on Ecological Connectivity (GPEC)** — to “protect and connect natural areas” to ensure that key areas of migratory species are identified, protected and connected.
- The goal of the GPEC will be to ensure that **ecological connectivity is maintained, enhanced, and restored** in places of importance for migratory species of wild animals.

CMS

Indian Skimmer

➤ **Indian Skimmer:**

- The Indian skimmer grows to a length of 40-43 cm. It has black upper parts, white forehead, collar and lower parts, long, thick, deep orange bill with a yellow tip and longer lower mandible.
- It breeds colonially on large, exposed sand-bars and islands.
- It feeds on surface-dwelling fish, small crustaceans and insect larvae
- Mostly found in India and Pakistan

➤ **Conservation Status:**

- **IUCN: Endangered** ✓
- **CITES: Not listed**
- **WPA: Schedule I** ✓



❖ Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

- To protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on **Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)**, has been in force, under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme
- Also referred to as the Bonn Convention
- It provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and

CAF

1992, 2002

133

Ramsar site

1971

20+

1972

legally binding?

- brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- The convention complements and co-operates with a number of other international organizations, NGOs and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector
- **India has been a Party to the CMS since 1983.** The Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision-making organ of this convention

133

- **As of 1 March 2022 the Convention on Migratory Species has 133 Parties.**

❖ Fintech Companies in India

- The Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has raised concerns about the dominance of fintech apps owned by foreign entities in the Indian ecosystem and recommended that local players be promoted
- **What did the committee say?**
- It emphasised that digital payment apps must be effectively regulated as the use of digital platforms to make payments in India is on the rise.

0.22.1.

- It noted that it will be more 'feasible' for regulatory bodies such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to control local apps, as compared with foreign apps, which operate in multiple jurisdictions.
- The Committee observed that fintech companies, apps and platforms that are owned by foreign entities, such as Walmart-backed PhonePe and Google Pay, dominate the Indian fintech sector.

- PhonePe commands the leading market share in volume terms, followed by Google Pay, at 46.91% and 36.39% respectively
- On the other hand, NCPI's BHIM UPI's market share (in terms of volume) stood at a mere 0.22%
- The Committee observed that fintech companies were also being used for money laundering. It was apprised of one such example — an Abu Dhabi-based app called Pyppl. The app was being administered by Chinese investment scamsters



➤ What are Fintechs?

- FinTech is generally described as an industry that uses technology to make financial systems and the delivery of financial services more efficient.
- These services include storing, saving, borrowing, investing, moving, paying, and protecting money.
- Fintech also includes the development and use of cryptocurrencies

➤ Advantages of FinTech in India

1. Financial Inclusion ✓
2. Convenience and Accessibility ✓

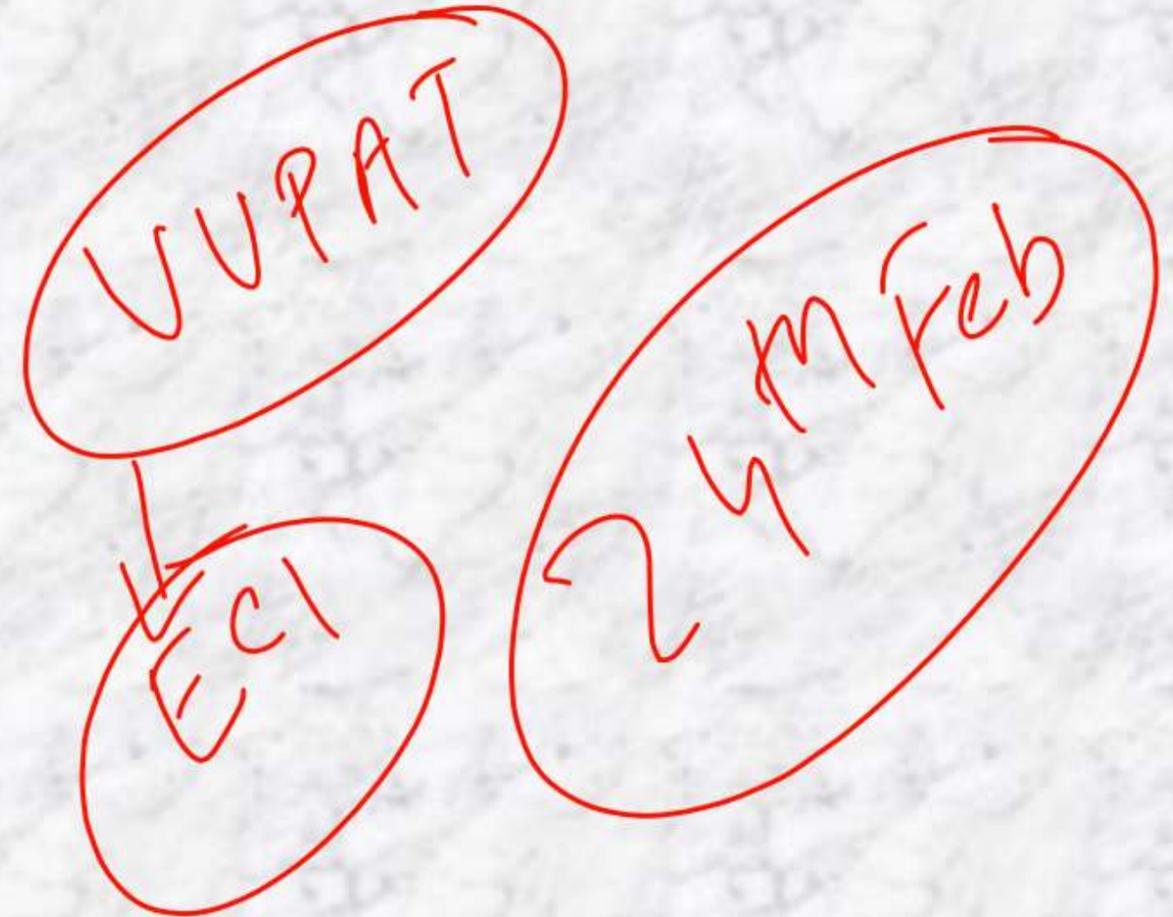
60,000

Blockchain
1-1.5 lakh

3. Cost Efficiency ✓
4. Innovative Products and Services
5. Credit Access for the Underserved
6. Personalized Financial Planning
7. Global Accessibility ✓✓
8. Real-Time Financial Insights
9. Easier Cross-Border Transactions

➤ Disadvantages of FinTech in India

1. Cybersecurity Risks ✓
2. Technological Barriers ✓
3. Privacy Concerns
4. Algorithmic Bias ✓

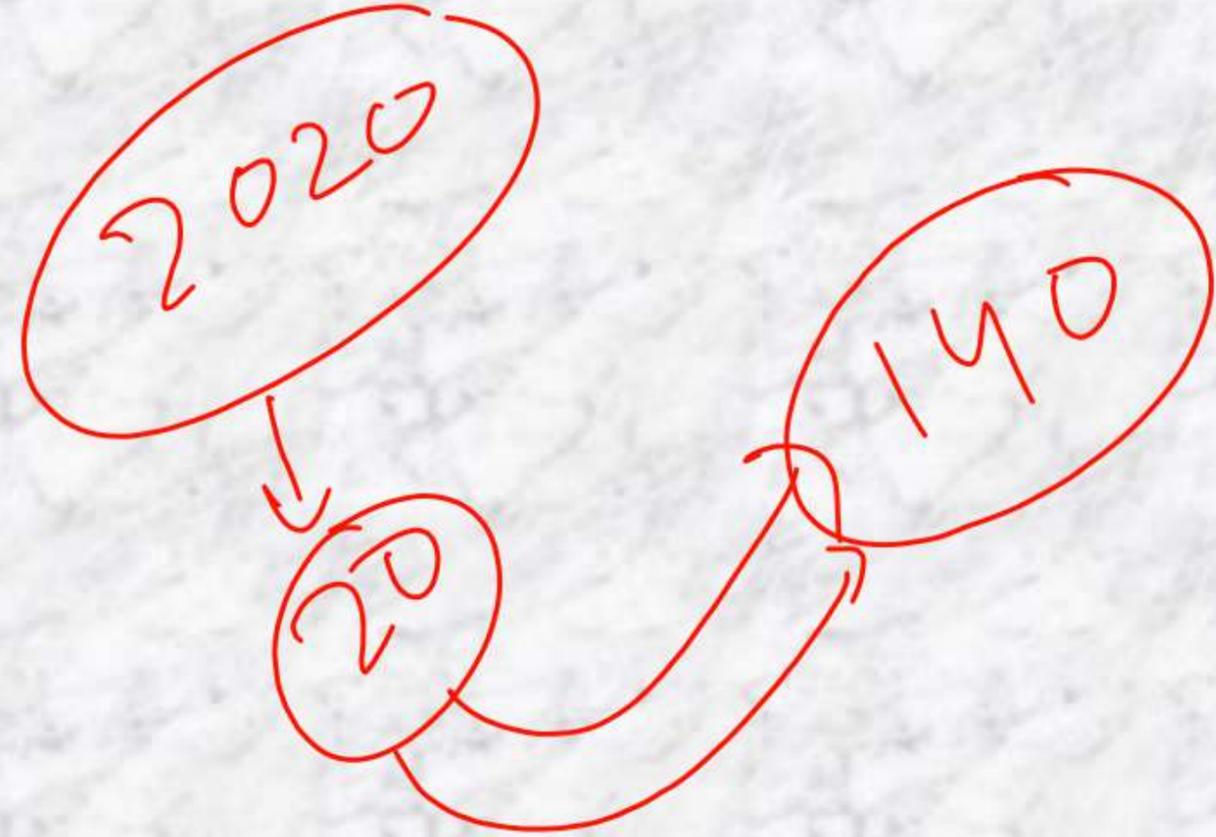


5. Lack of Physical Presence

6. Potential for Overindebtedness

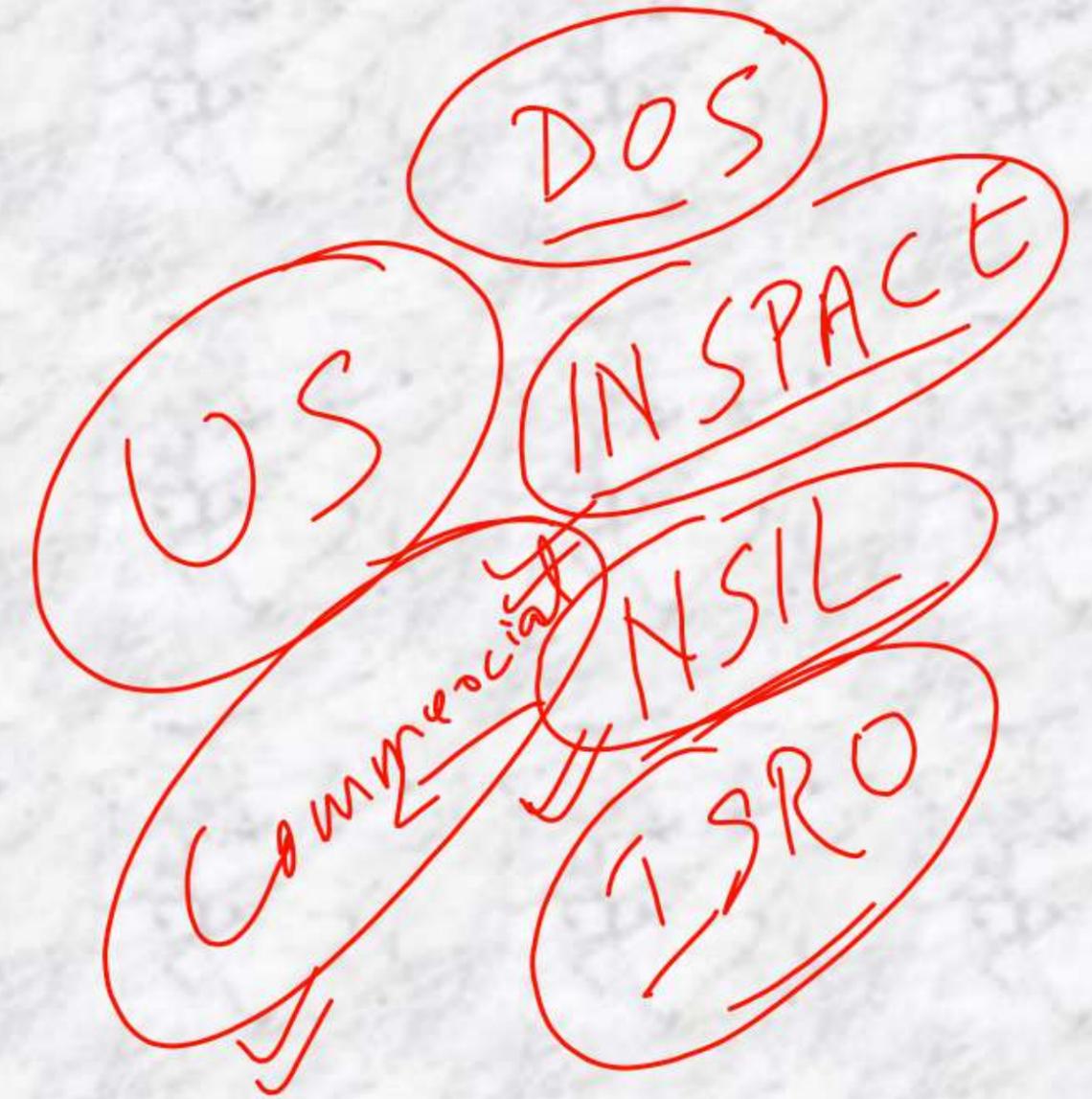
❖ Govt eases FDI norms in Space

- Under the amended FDI policy, 100% FDI is allowed in space sector.
- The liberalised entry routes under the amended policy are aimed to attract potential investors to invest in Indian companies in space,
- The amended policy extends the facility of up to 74% FDI under the automatic route for satellite manufacturing and operation, satellite data products and ground/user segment.



- **Beyond 74%, these activities are under government route.**
- **Up to 49% FDI under the automatic route will be allowed for launch vehicles and associated systems or subsystems, and creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecraft.**
- **Beyond 49%, these activities will be under government route.**
- **This increased private sector participation would help to generate employment, enable modern technology absorption and make the sector self-reliant.**

- It is expected to integrate Indian companies into global value chains
- **Private Sector in Space – Present state**
- **India is the sixth-largest player in the industry internationally having 3.6% of the world's space-tech companies. US – 56.4%**
- **Indian Space Industry was valued at \$7 billion in 2019 and aspires to grow to \$50 billion by 2024.**
- **Global space economy - \$360 bn**



- In June 2020, the Union government announced reforms in the space sector **enabling more private players to provide end-to-end services.**
- India's private space companies had limited **role as vendors and suppliers to government** till recently
- **Why private participation is required in Space sector?**
- **Growing demand for space based application:**

- **To bolster connectivity and combat climate related implications**
- **To increase India's share in global share market**
- **To allow ISRO focus on core strategic activities**
- **Adequate Human Resource**
- **Other factors: Attracting innovation and cutting edge technologies in space sector, enhanced competition, creation of jobs, realising vision of ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT**

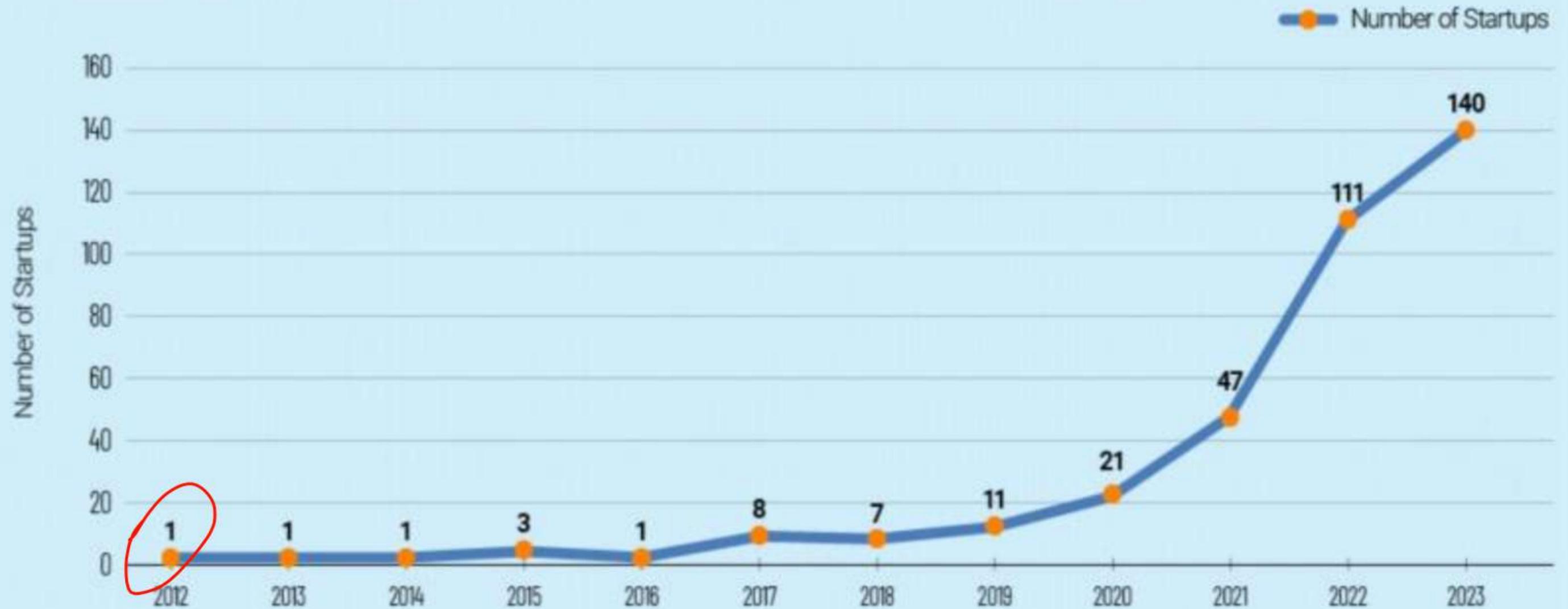
➤ **Advantages**

- **Efficiency & Reduction in cost**
- **Technology and innovation**
- **Investment and capacity development**
- **Harvesting talent pool**
- **Transparency and accountability**
- **Competitiveness**

➤ **Challenges**

- **Procedural hurdles**
- **Limited technological advancements**
- **Monopolistic trends**
- **Social welfare may take a backseat**

START-UPS IN SPACE SECTOR



Source: Government Data

❖ Indian farmers: Some key facts

➤ Uneven Change

- At the time of Independence, around 70% of India's total workforce was involved in agriculture. Together, this sector accounted for 54% of India's economic output.
- In the present times, its contribution has fallen from 54% to less than 18% of India's GDP. And yet, over the same period, the proportion of India's workforce involved in the farm sector has only declined from 70% to around 55%.



➤ **Farm Labourers vs Cultivators:**

- The relative proportion of cultivators (highlighted in green) has fallen from 72% (of all farm workers) in 1951 to 45% in 2011 while the proportion of labourers has risen from 28% (of all farm workers) in 1951 to almost 55% in 2011.

72
↓
45%

➤ **Small & marginal land holdings**

- Around 70% of all agricultural households have a land holding size of less than 1 hectare and around 88% have a land holding size of less than 2 hectares

5.11: Indebtedness of Agricultural Households(all-India) in Different Size Classes of Land Possessed

Land Possessed (hectare)	Estimated Number of Agricultural Households (lakh)	% to Total in each Class	Estimated Number of Indebted Agricultural Households (lakh)	% distribution of indebted Agricultural Households	% of Indebted Agricultural Households	Average Outstanding Loan Amount (₹)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
< 0.01	5.70	0.61	2.20	0.5	38.5	26883
0.01-0.40	318.61	34.22	130.03	27.8	40.8	33220
0.41-1.00	331.48	35.61	160.57	34.4	48.4	51933
1.01-2.00	164.83	17.71	94.56	20.2	57.4	94498
2.01-4.00	80.37	8.63	56.01	12.0	69.7	175009
4.01-10.00	26.46	2.84	20.97	4.5	79.3	326766
10 & above	3.49	0.37	2.84	0.6	81.4	791132
All India	930.94	100.00	467.20	100.0	50.2	74121

Source: Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households (Jan-Dec 2019), National Statistical Office(NSO)

1 Reference period for land possession and Indebtedness is "as on the date of survey"

2 Indebtedness relates to all kind of outstanding loans irrespective of the purpose for which taken

Data pertains to visit 1

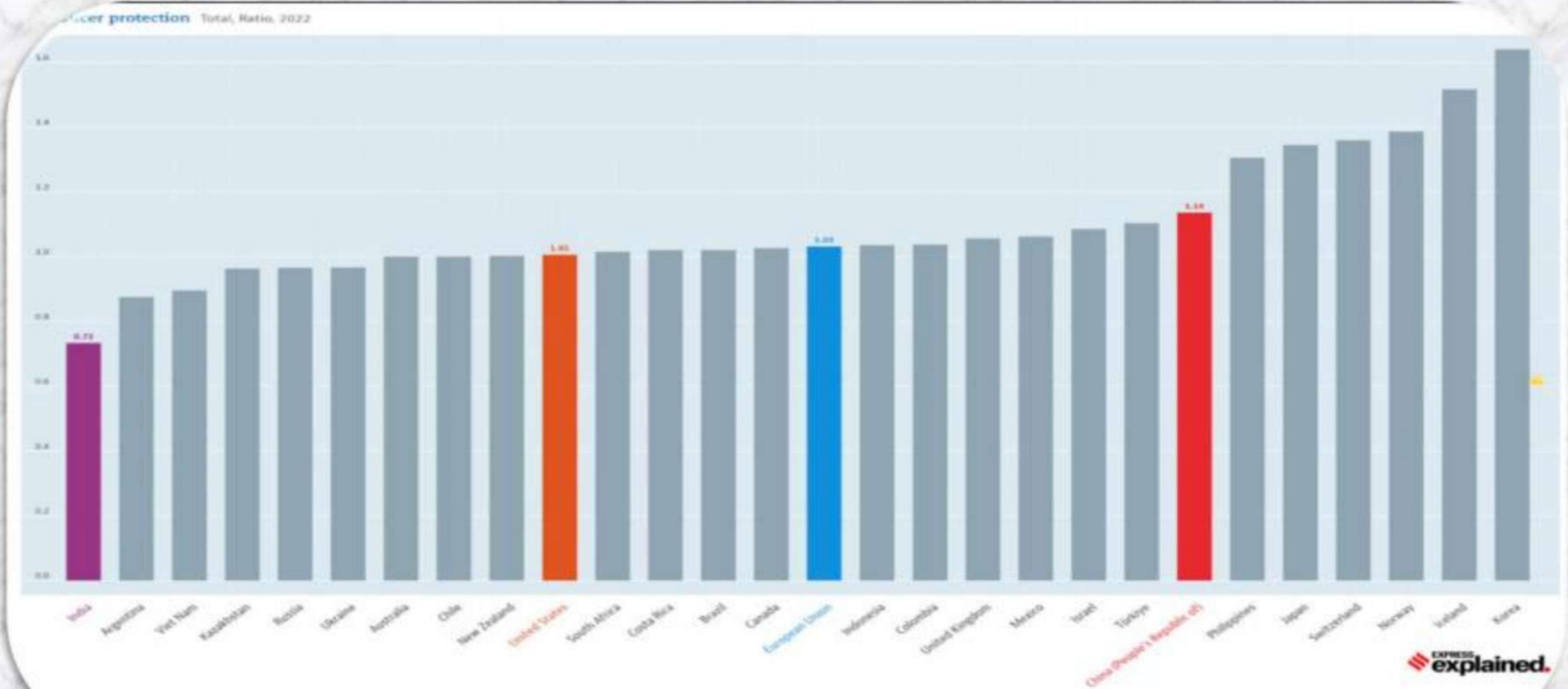
- According to a 2015 study by Ramesh Chand, now a member of Niti Aayog, a plot smaller than 0.63 ha does not provide enough income to stay above the poverty line.
- **Low incomes and high incidence of debt**
- Country-wide, as of 2019, the average monthly income per household — a household typically has five members — was Rs 10, 218 and 50% of all farm households were indebted.

➤ **Input-Output Ratio**

- **The Terms of Trade is the ratio between the prices paid by the farmers for their inputs and the prices received by the farmers for their output. If the ToT is less than 100, it means farmers are worse off**
- **The ToT were negative in 2004-05 but they steadily improved for the next 6-7 years to hit a high of 102.95 in 2010-11. Since then, however, the ToT have turned negative yet again and remained stagnant.**

100
2011-12

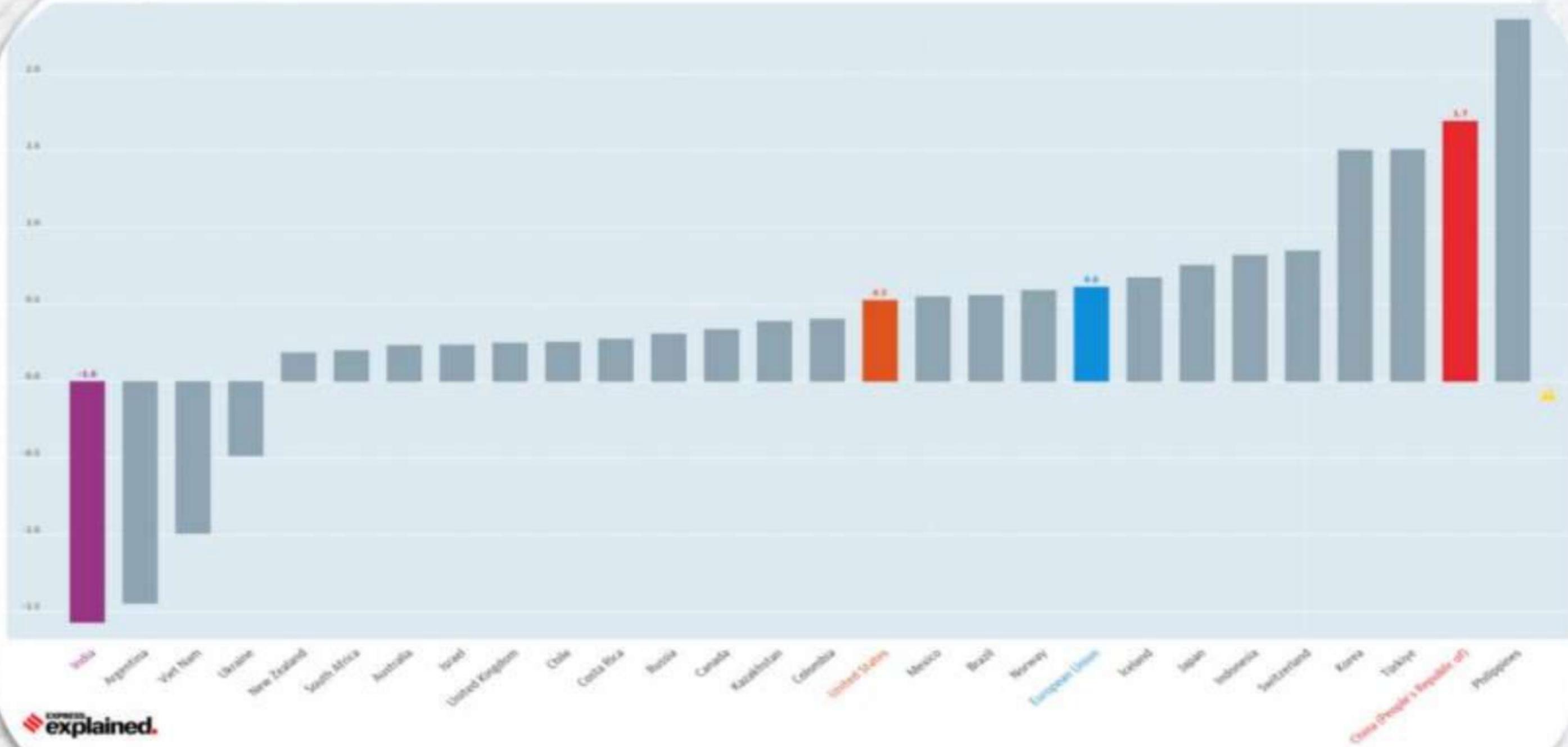
➤ Global Comparison / वैश्विक तुलना



Part 5: Countries ranked on producer protection

➤ Global Comparison / वैश्विक तुलना

Agricultural support Total support (TSE), % of GDP, 2022



express explained.

Part 6: Countries ranked on 'total support estimates'

➤ **Lake Victoria**

- **Lake Victoria, the largest freshwater lake in Africa and world's second-largest, faces numerous environmental challenges that demand collective efforts for restoration and conservation.**
- **India-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and National Environment Management Council (NEMC), **Tanzania** conducted a multination stakeholder consultation in Dar es Salaam on January 23, 2024 to decide on strategies to restore the lake..**

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