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Skills Report 2025: Unlocking Employability and Bridging the Skills Gap

"Self confidence
is a super power.
Once you start to
believe in
yourself, magic
starts happening."

~UNKNOWN

SC upholds homebuyers' right to protest peacefully against their builders

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has upheld the right of homebuyers to peacefully protest against builders, saying portraying their right to free speech as a criminal offence is a clear abuse of the law.

"A right to protest peacefully without falling foul of the law is a corresponding right, which the consumers ought to possess just as the seller enjoys his right to commercial speech. Any attempt to portray them as criminal offences, when the necessary ingredients are not made out, would be a clear abuse of process and should be nipped in the bud," a Bench headed by Justice K.V. Viswanathan observed in a recent case.

The case stemmed from a unique manner of protest employed by unhappy homebuyers against a builder,



der, A. Surti Developers. They erected a banner visible to the public at large, setting out in English and Hindi their grievances against the builder.

The builder company took the homebuyers to court on the charge of damaging its reputation. The Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Borivali, Mumbai, summoned the homebuyers, who appealed to the Bombay High Court to quash the builder's case. The High Court, however, turned down the plea, compelling them to move the apex court.

"Homebuyers and developers have not always been the best of friends. Instances are innumerable where the two have been at daggers drawn. This case presents one such instance," said Justice Viswanathan, who authored the April 17 judgment for the Bench also comprising Justice N. Kotiswar Singh.

The court concluded that the manner of protest resorted to by the homebuyers was peaceful and orderly and without using, in any manner, offensive or abusive language. "It could not be said that the appellants [homebuyers] crossed the Lakshman Rekha and transgressed into the offending zone," he observed.

The court found the protest of the homebuyers dwelt within the scope of one of the exceptions to criminal defamation and was protected under the right to free speech.

Justice for Homebuyers



Peaceful Protests

Peaceful protests are a legitimate form of expression.



Abuse of Law

Misusing law to suppress protests is unacceptable.

Judicial Collaboration



**Justice K.V.
Viswanathan**

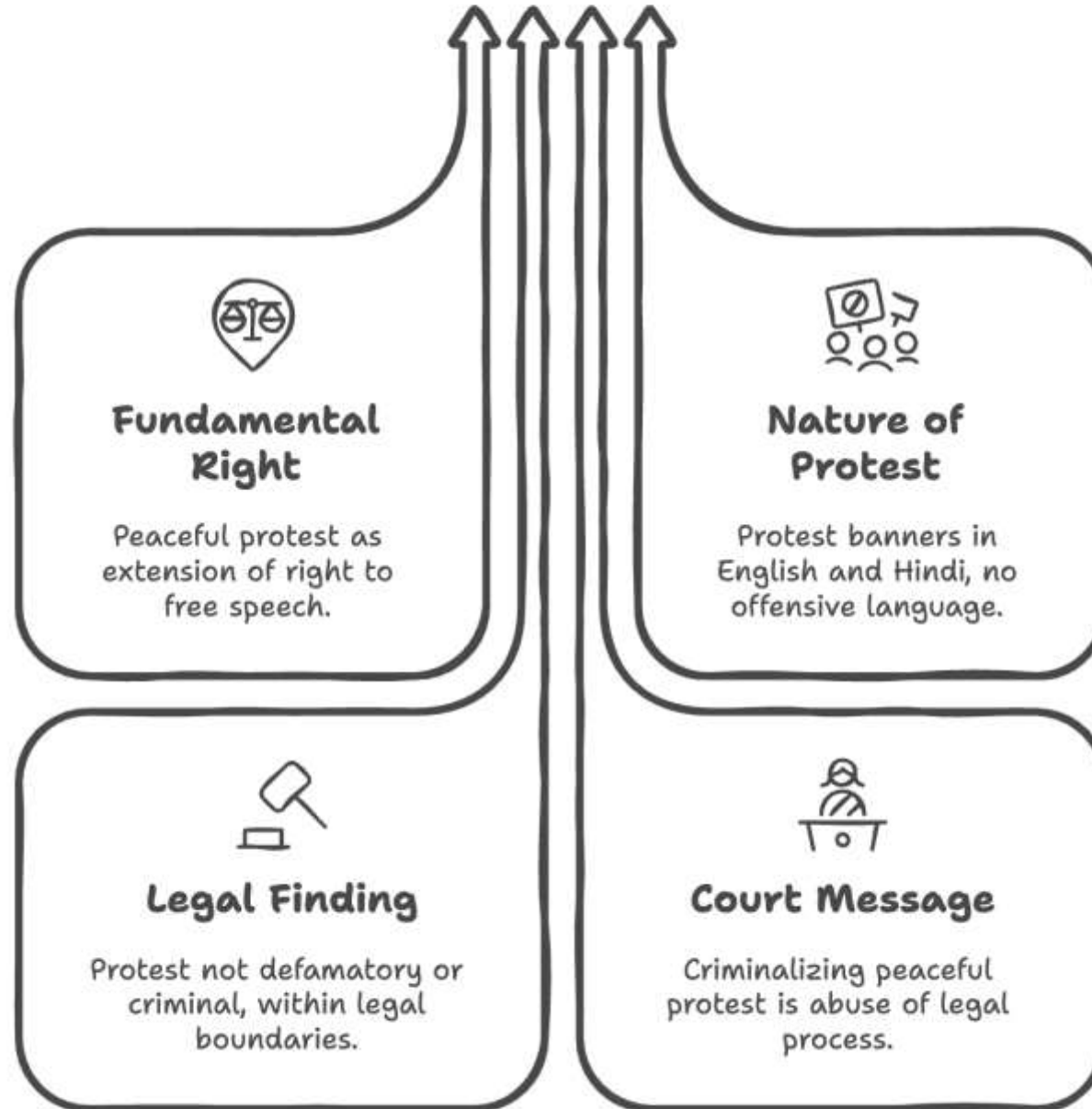
Authored significant legal
judgment with precision.



**Justice N. Kotiswar
Singh**

Contributed crucial
insights to the court's
decision.

Pillars of Peaceful Protest





Developer Identified

A. Surti Developers is named as the developer.

Homebuyers display banners to voice grievances.

Homebuyers Protest



Defamation Suit Filed

The developer files a defamation suit against homebuyers.

Homebuyers are summoned to court by the magistrate.

Magistrate Summons Homebuyers



High Court Rejects Plea

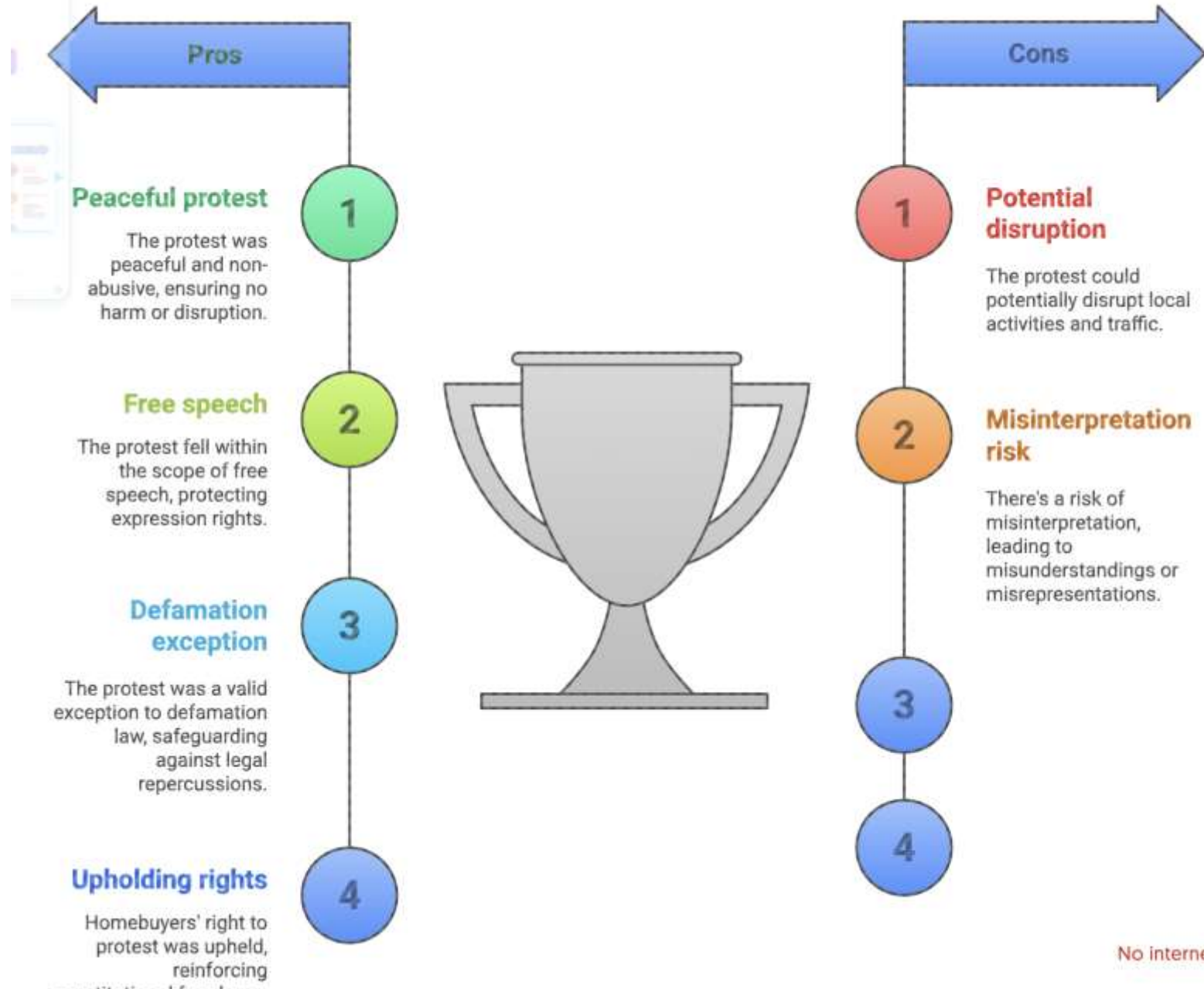
The Bombay High Court rejects the homebuyers' plea.

Homebuyers appeal to the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court Appeal



Homebuyers' protest



Consider the following statements regarding the recent Supreme Court judgment on homebuyers' protest rights:

- 1.The court held that peaceful protest by homebuyers does not qualify as defamation.
- 2.The right to protest peacefully is not considered part of free speech under Article 19(1)(a).
- 3.The Supreme Court found the protest of the homebuyers to be abusive and offensive in nature.
- 4.The court ruled that misuse of defamation charges against peaceful protesters is an abuse of process.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 and 4 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3 only

End of the road for BluSmart drivers

● No clarity as hubs locked; new job offers at half of earnings

NITIN KUMAR
New Delhi, April 18

OVER 10,000 DRIVER-PARTNERS of BluSmart have been stranded without a livelihood after the company abruptly halted operations following the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi) order on GenSol Engineering and its related parties. There has been no official communication from the ride-hailing company's management. What began as a routine message on Wednesday — instructing drivers to return to their respective hubs — has turned into complete silence, leaving the drivers in shock, confusion, and despair.

The shutdown came without a formal notice. The drivers' WhatsApp group received a vague voice note on Wednesday evening, citing "server issues" and asking them not to report to their hubs until further notice. Since then, the hubs have remained



The monthly earnings for drivers ranged from ₹12,000-50,000, often bolstered by generous incentives — as high as ₹8,000 a week. Now, the once-bustling parking lots like this one in Gurugram stand deserted

REUTERS

locked, the company has been unresponsive, and the once-bustling parking lots stand deserted.

"I've been waiting every day for some update, but there's nothing. We're not even allowed inside the hub," said Sachin Kushwah, who has been with BluSmart for two years adding he doesn't know who

to contact.

Kushwah, like thousands of others, is now on a job hunt. But with so many former BluSmart drivers in the market, opportunities are scarce.

"Even where there are jobs, dealers are demanding ₹20,000-30,000 as commission," said Satish John, Kushwah's fellow driver from

Haryana. "And that's for work that pays half of what we were earning at BluSmart," John adds.

For many, the financial impact is only part of the loss. Drivers say the company gave them not just a livelihood, but dignity and stability.

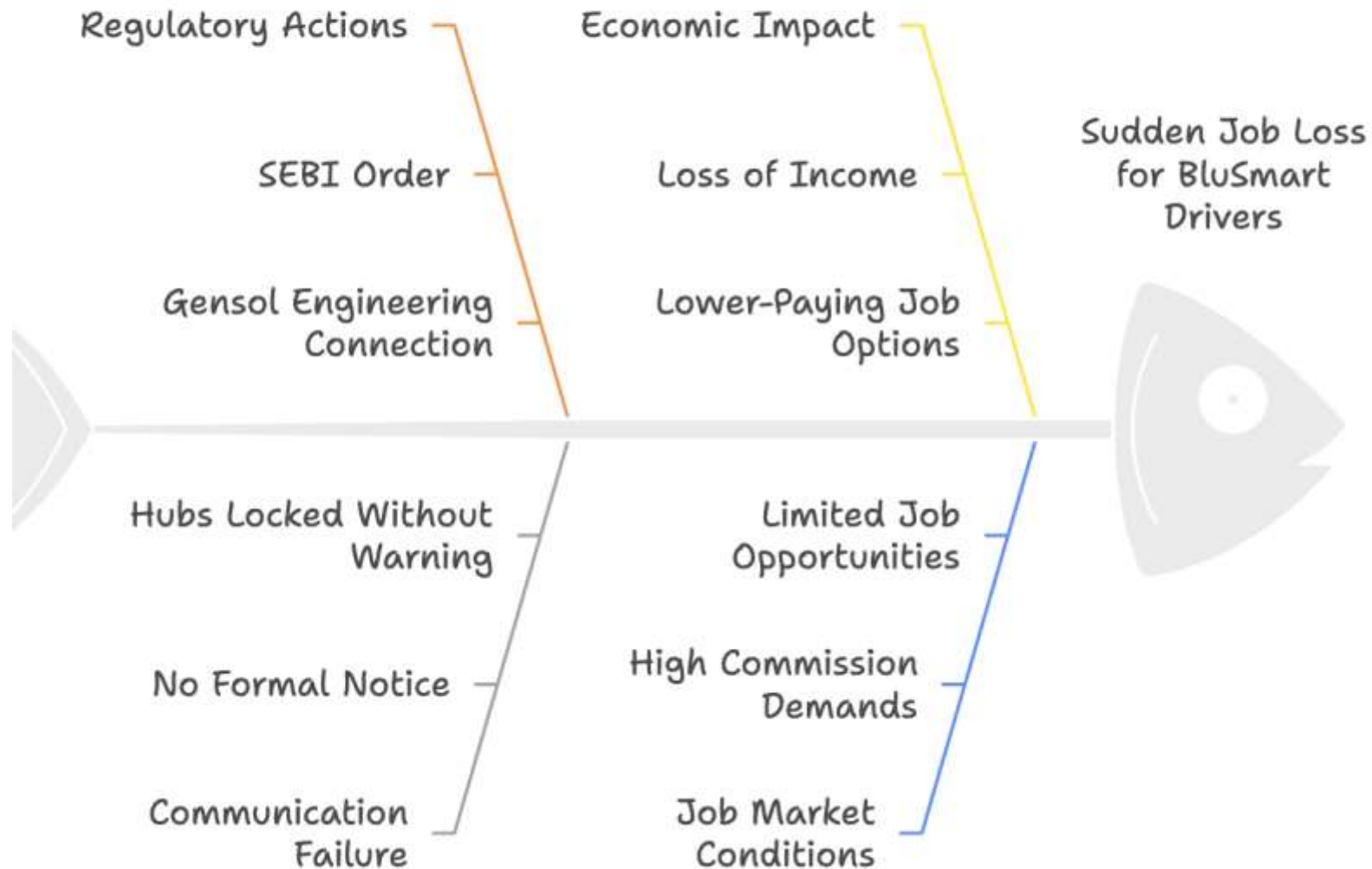
Continued on Page 6

BluSmart Mobility



Company type	Private
Industry	Automotive Electric vehicles
Founded	January 2019; 6 years ago
Founder	Anmol Singh Jaggi Punit K Goyal Puneet Singh Jaggi
Headquarters	Gurugram, Haryana, India
Area served	India, Dubai
Services	Electric Cab

Analyzing the BluSmart Driver Job Loss Crisis



Rise of Ride-Hailing Services in India

Surge in Cab Aggregators

Post-2010, India saw a rise in cab aggregators like Ola and Uber.

BluSmart's Launch

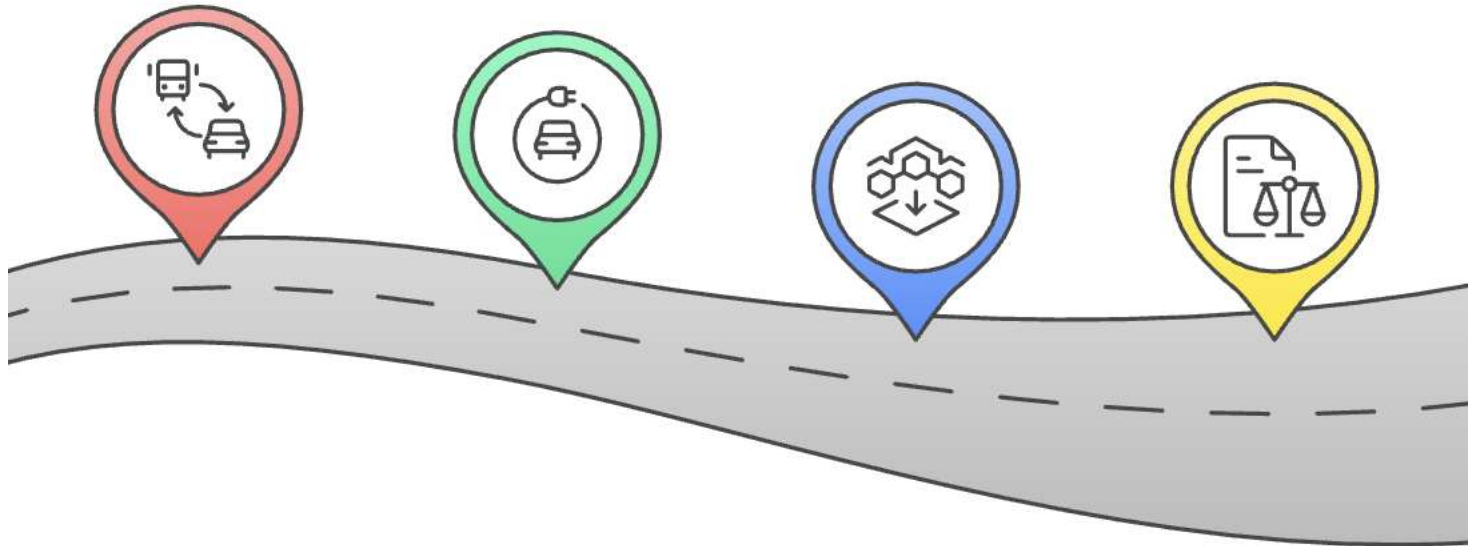
In 2019, BluSmart emerged as India's first all-electric ride-hailing platform.

Gensol Engineering's Role

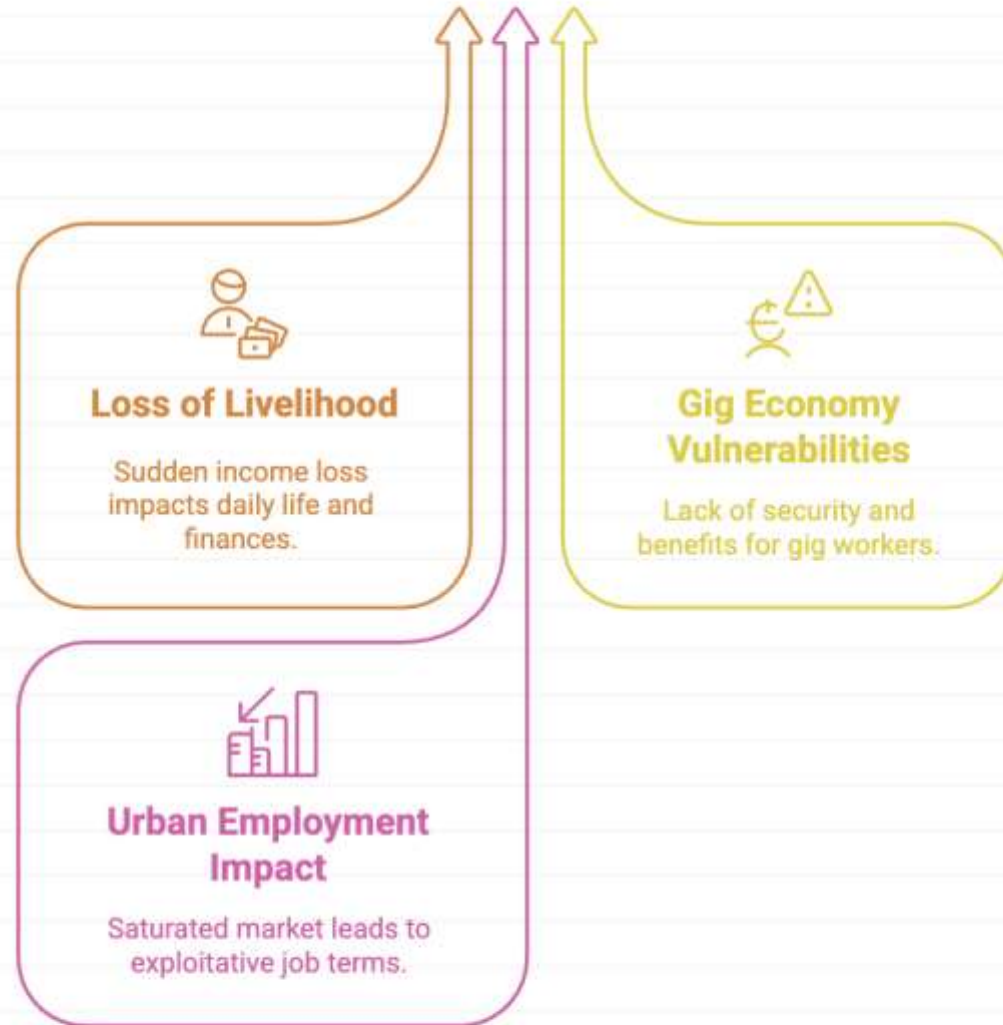
Gensol Engineering provided the operational backbone for BluSmart.

Regulatory Scrutiny

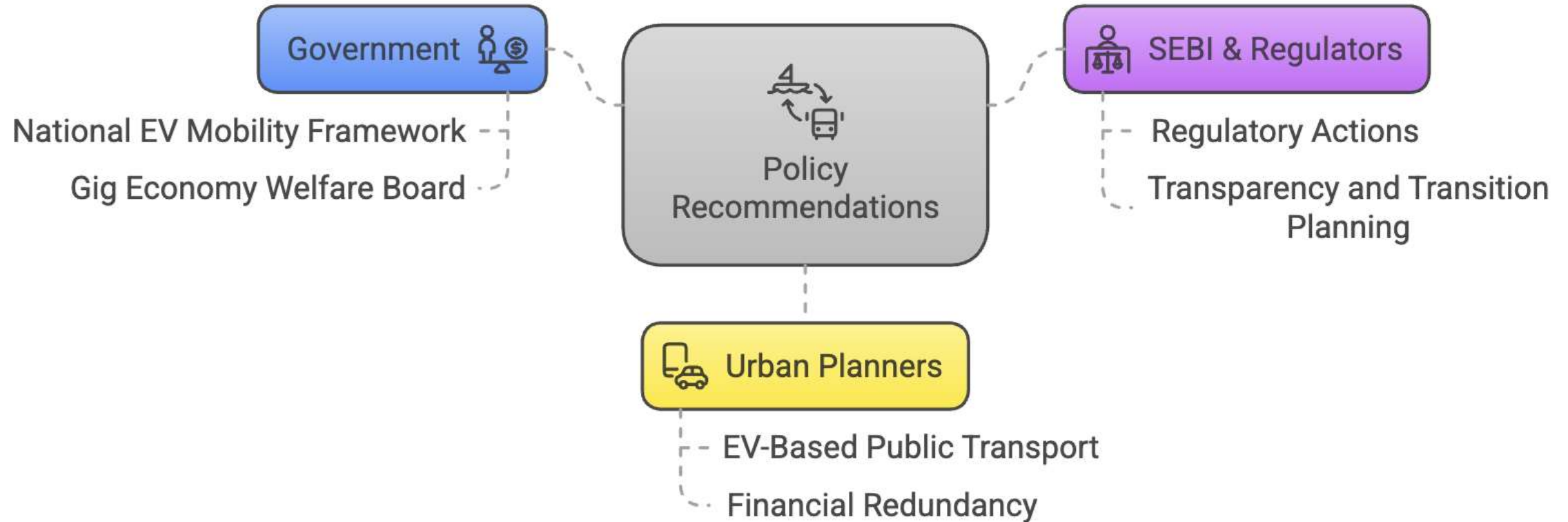
Gensol faced regulatory scrutiny, leading to operational disruptions.



The Ripple Effect of Job Loss



Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Mobility



ARTIFACTS AND AUDIENCES

What ails Indian museums today?

Experts say we must question what stories are being told and who gets to tell them

MAGAZINE 3 PAGE 1

INSIDE



PM's Saudi visit

The latest PM's Saudi visit will not be the first for an Indian leader. Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Saudi Arabia for the first time as Prime Minister. The visit was a landmark event for India-Saudi relations. The two countries have a long history of trade and cultural exchange. The visit was a landmark event for India-Saudi relations. The two countries have a long history of trade and cultural exchange.



Cong. discusses follow-up steps to AICC meet

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday presided over a meeting of general secretaries, state in-charges, and heads of local organizations of the party to chalk out a follow-up plan to implement the decisions taken at the party's annual general session on the ground. **A PAGE 4**

China likely to weaponize biotech: U.S. panel

A report submitted to the U.S. Congress, the U.S. National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology has warned that China is likely to weaponize the technology and may create genetically advanced super-soldiers, powered by artificial intelligence. **A PAGE 12**

Bangladesh killings follow systematic pattern: India

Right to minority rights

Continuing with its tough line on the rights of the minority religious communities in Bangladesh, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday said there is "systematic persecution" of Hindu minorities under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. A statement from the official spokesperson of the MEA issued the news of the killing of a Hindu community leader, Babul Chandra Roy, in Bangladesh and the arrest of his wife and son. The statement said that the Indian government is deeply concerned about the situation in Bangladesh and is urging the Bangladeshi government to take steps to protect the rights of minority communities.

Visa row: India expresses concern, U.S. denies bias

Indian embassy, missions in U.S. 'in touch' with students affected and offering support, says MEA | U.S. government denies targeting Indians with its actions, official says process not discriminatory | MEA tight-lipped on raising the issue with U.S. VP Vance who is set to arrive in Delhi tomorrow

Indian Embassy

India has "raised concerns" through diplomatic channels about the visa cancellation notices issued to Indian students in the U.S., government sources told The Hindu on Sunday. After a survey found that 70% of those impacted by the cancellations were students, the issue was taken up with India's U.S. Vice President, J.D. Vance, and senior U.S. State Department officials who arrived in Delhi on Monday for talks. Meanwhile, the U.S. government denied targeting Indians with its actions, official says process not discriminatory.

and more revocation notices were sent out in the past two months, and found that half of the notices had gone to Indians. The study was described in a policy brief that found "70% of those students were from India, followed by 15% from China," adding that other significant minorities in the data included South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Verifying process Arked along the report and the indication that its share were particularly targeted for the revocation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVIS) status, an American official, who asked not to be named, denied that the process was discriminatory against Indians. "Continuing to verify and then revocation actions are not limited to visa holders from any specific country or area in the world. All visa applications and visa holders are subject to the same type and where they are issued," the official told The Hindu in a written response.



The survey studied 327 notices in a month and found that half of the notices went to Indians. **A PAGE 12**

not limited to visa holders from any specific country or area in the world. All visa applications and visa holders are subject to the same type and where they are issued," the official told The Hindu in a written response. The report also noted that the process was not discriminatory against Indians.

Robot marathon



RoboBots learning: A group of people, including a robot marathon, running across the finish line to secure the first position during the 3rd RoboBots learning. **A PAGE 12**

SEVIS terminations came after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio launched a new AI-related "Catch and Recycle" programme that would identify students believed to have political views inimical to U.S. foreign policy interests based on their social media posts.

Nationalist crackdowns In addition, the Department of Homeland Security is carrying out a nation-wide crackdown on students whose names are regularly featured in police databases, and terminating their student status due to their violations according to U.S. immigration laws. Two Indian researchers, Anand and Arun, were among the first batch of students detained or told to "self-deport" in the first round of such notices, where the MEA had contacted Indian students to "follow the law".

Shift in stance Subsequently, a number of Indian students have approached courts to have their SEVIS status reinstated, and in an indication of a shift in the MEA's stance, spokespersons said that the Indian embassy and missions are "in touch" with the students affected and were offering support.

The AILA study found that the Indian embassy and missions are "in touch" with the students affected and were offering support. The AILA study found that the Indian embassy and missions are "in touch" with the students affected and were offering support.

appeared in the police complaint. Only two of the 327 notices received pertained to allegations that the students were involved in any political activity, and 10 were found pointing out that protesting is not illegal per se, and that the students did not have their future due to the government's action. "International students contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. Scholars and researchers are making our country stronger by doing incredibly valuable work in various fields, including science and technology, computer science, and engineering. We are committed to supporting their education and research. We are committed to supporting their education and research. We are committed to supporting their education and research."

Eleven killed as four-storey building collapses in Delhi

Rescue efforts

Eleven people, four children among them, were killed and 40 were injured in a four-storey building collapse in north-east Delhi on Saturday. The building, which was under construction, had been used as a temporary shelter for people displaced by the recent flooding in the area. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction.



Rescue efforts: A group of people, including a building collapse, running across the finish line to secure the first position during the 3rd RoboBots learning. **A PAGE 12**

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was on-site about the site of the building in an unauthorised colony in north-east Delhi on Saturday. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction.

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Building survey soon MCD officials said that preliminary survey of the building had been completed. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction. The building was a four-storey structure, which was under construction.

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Visa row: India expresses concern, U.S. denies bias

Indian embassy, missions in U.S. 'in touch' with students affected and offering support, says MEA

U.S. government denies targeting Indians with its actions, official says process not discriminatory

MEA tight-lipped on raising the issue with U.S. V-P Vance who is set to arrive in Delhi tomorrow

Subasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

India has "raised concern" through diplomatic channels about the visa revocation notices issued to Indian students in the U.S., government sources told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

After a survey found that 50% of those reporting the revocations were Indian, the issue was taken up days before U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance and senior U.S. State Department officials arrive in Delhi on Monday for talks.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government denied targeting Indians specifically.

The survey, conducted by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), studied 327 responses to a research call, out of an estimated 4,000

and more revocation notices sent out in the past two months, and found that half of the notices had gone to Indians.

The study was described in a policy brief that found "50% of these students were from India, followed by 14% from China", adding that other significant countries in the data included South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Vetting process

Asked about the report and the indication that Indians were particularly targeted for the revocation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVIS) status, an American official, who asked not to be named, denied that the process was discriminatory against Indians.

"Continuous vetting and visa revocation actions are



The survey studied 327 responses to a research call and found half of the revocation notices had gone to Indians. FILE PHOTO

not limited to visa holders from any specific country or area in the world. All visa applicants and visa holders, no matter the visa type and where they are located, are continuously vetted," the official told *The Hindu* in a written response.

The External Affairs Mi-

nistry declined to comment on whether the issue would be raised directly with Mr. Vance or other officials such as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Ricky Gill, who will be in Delhi on Monday for official meetings.

The rapid increase in

SEVIS terminations came after U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio launched a new AI-assisted "Catch and Revoke" programme that would identify students believed to have political views inimical to U.S. foreign policy interests based on their social media posts.

Nationwide crackdown

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security is carrying out a nationwide crackdown on students whose names allegedly feature in police databases, and terminating their student status due to visa violations according to U.S. immigration laws.

Two Indian researchers, Ranjani Srinivasan and Badar Khan Suri, were among the first batch of students detained or told to "self-report" in the first

round of such notices, where the MEA had cautioned Indian students to "follow the law".

Shift in stance

Subsequently, a number of Indian students have approached courts to have their SEVIS status restored, and in an indication of a shift in the MEA's stance, spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal disclosed this week that the Indian embassy and missions are "in touch" with the students affected and were offering support.

The AILA study found many of those whose visa has been revoked had been in police reports for minor traffic violations or campus infractions, while in an extreme case, a student who was a victim of domestic abuse had their visa cancelled because their name

appeared in the police complaint.

Only two of the 327 responses received pertained to allegations that the students were involved in any political activity, and lawyers have pointed out that protesting is not illegal per se, and that the students risked losing their future due to the government's action.

"International students contribute billions of dollars to [the U.S.] economy. Scholars and researchers are making this country stronger by doing incredibly valuable work in cancer research, space travel, computer technology and almost every area of science and research. Driving them elsewhere not only weakens our economy but threatens our national security," AILA Executive Director Ben Johnson said.

Rank	Country	Number of Students
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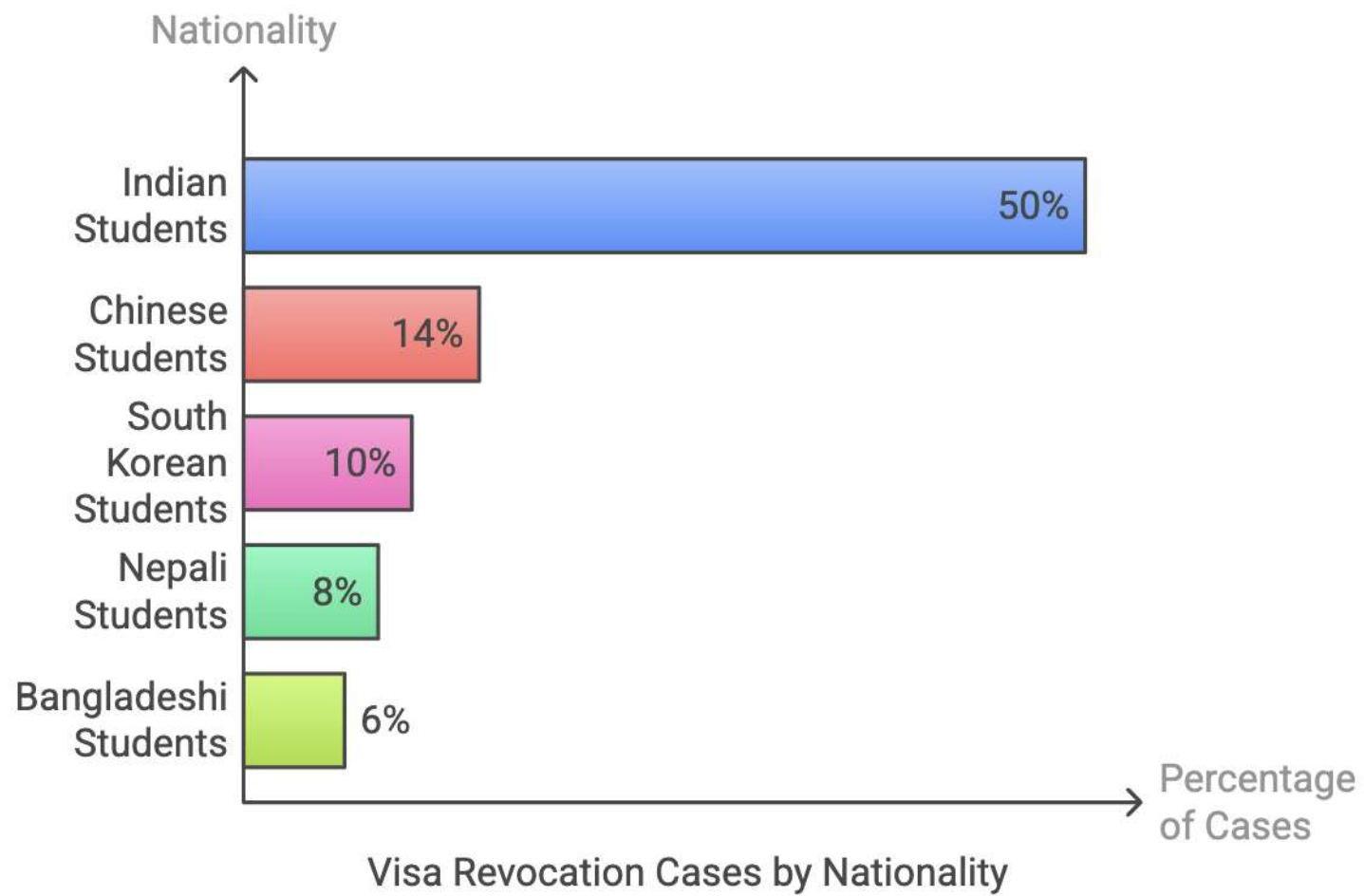
1	India	331,602
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2	China	277,398
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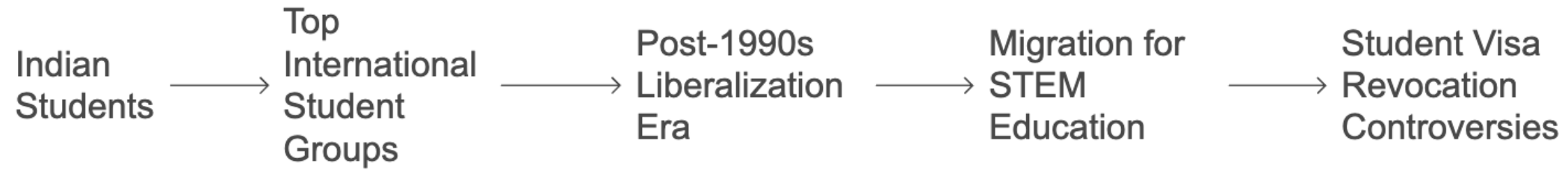
3	South Korea	43,847
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4	Canada	27,876
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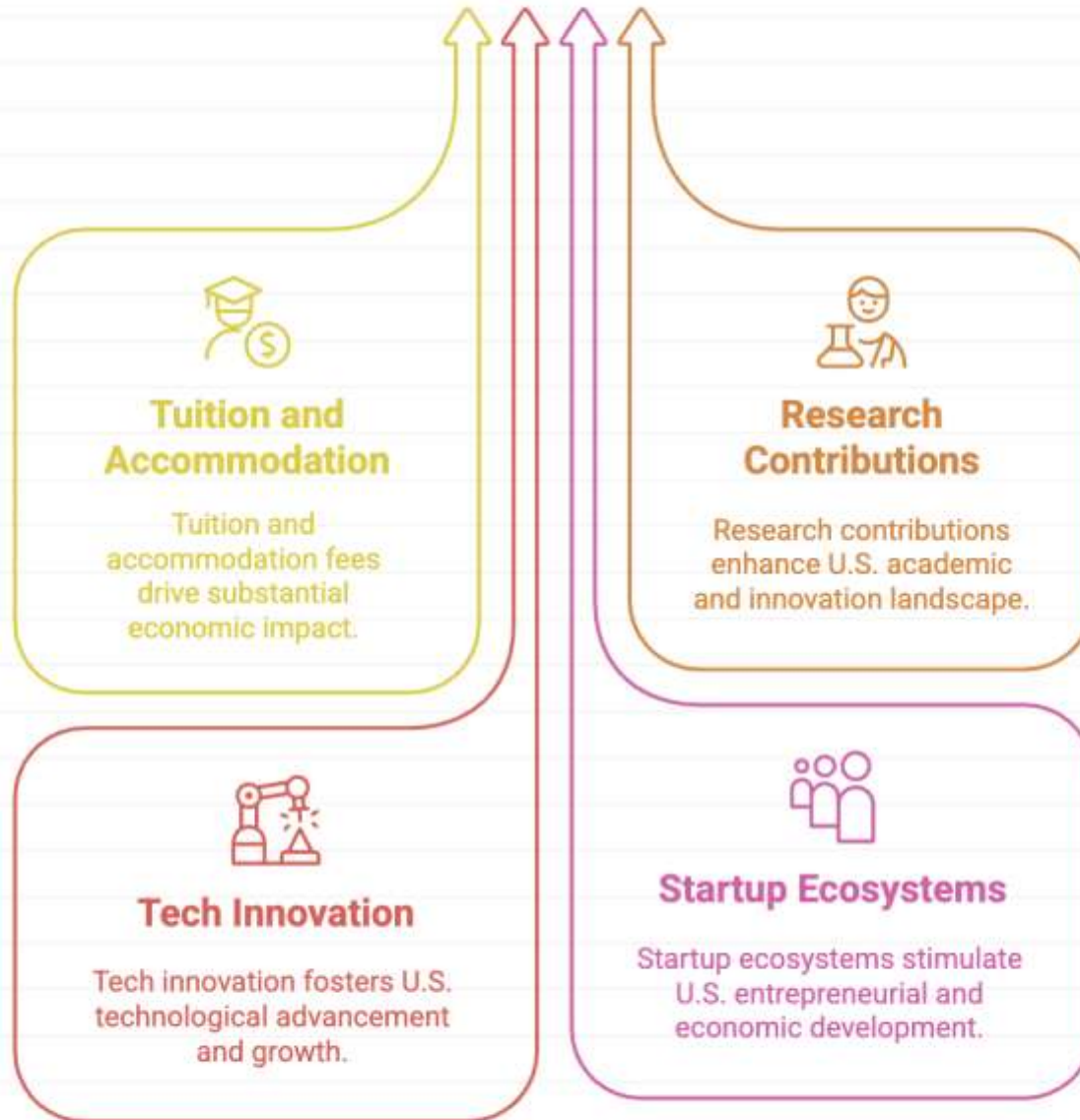
5	Vietnam	21,900
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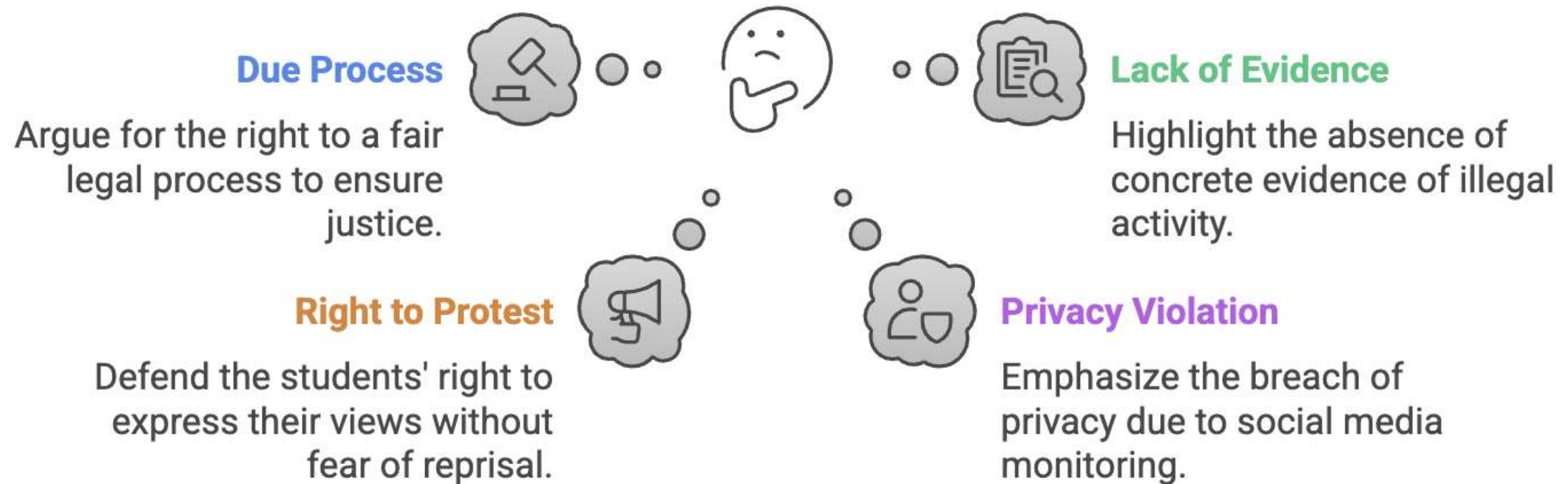
Indian Students in the U.S.



Economic Impact of Indian Students



How to address the revocation of student visas?



Robot marathon



Machine learning: Tiangong Ultra, a humanoid robot, running across the finish line to secure the first position during the E-Town Humanoid Robot Half Marathon in Beijing, China, on Friday. REUTERS

VATICAN CITY

Vatican holds talks with Vance after criticisms of Trump policies



U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance went to the Vatican on Saturday to meet senior Catholic Church officials who have been sharply critical of President Donald Trump's policies. The two sides had "cordial talks" that included "an exchange of opinions on the international situation," according to a Vatican statement. **AP/REUTERS**

WASHINGTON

U.S. top court pauses deportation of Venezuelans from Texas facility



The U.S. Supreme Court on Saturday paused the Trump administration's deportation of alleged Venezuelan gang members under an 18th-century law. The order came after rights lawyers filed an emergency appeal to halt the deportation of migrants currently held in a facility in the southern state of Texas. **AP**

DEIR AL-BALAH

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill more than 90 people in 48 hours



Israeli strikes on Gaza have killed more than 90 people in the last 48 hours, as Israeli troops ramp up attacks to pressure Hamas to release its hostages and disarm. The dead include 18 pregnant women who were killed overnight, among them women and children, some of whom were sheltering in a designated humanitarian zone. **AP**

MOSCOW

Putin announces 'Easter truce' till Sunday midnight in Ukraine war



Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday announced an Easter truce in the conflict in Ukraine starting Saturday evening and lasting 100 hours on Sunday. The short-term ceasefire proposal from Russia comes as U.S. President Donald Trump has been pressing both Moscow and Kyiv to agree a truce. **AP**

U.S., Iran plan to meet again in a week after second round of talks concludes

The Oman-mediated talks held in Rome lasted about four hours in a 'constructive' atmosphere, with nuclear issue being the only topic raised. Tehran says the two sides managed to reach a better understanding on a series of principles and goals

Agence France-Presse
ROME

The United States and Iran on Saturday concluded a second round of high-stakes talks on Tehran's nuclear programme, agreeing to meet again in a week's time, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

The Oman-mediated talks in Rome lasted about four hours, according to Iranian state television, which described the atmosphere as "constructive".

The two sides agreed to resume indirect talks at a technical level over the



Highly guarded: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani in Rome on Saturday. **AP**

next few days and subsequently continue at the level of two senior negotiators next Saturday, April 26, Iran's Foreign Ministry

turning to the site of the initial dialogue a week ago.

Those were the first discussions at such a high level between the two since U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned a landmark nuclear accord in 2018.

Western countries including the United States have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons — an allegation Tehran has consistently denied, insisting that its programme is for peaceful civilian purposes.

Images broadcast by the state TV showed Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arriving in the Italian capital, with U.S. West Asia envoy Steve Witkoff also expected to participate.

Mr. Araghchi later described the discussions as a "good meeting" that yielded progress. "This time we managed to reach a better understanding on a series of principles and goals," he told state TV. He also told the Iranian news agency that the nuclear issue was the only topic raised.

Mr. Araghchi said the delegations had been "in two different rooms". The Trump administration's growing frustration over its inability to achieve a breakthrough was evident in the remarks of Marco Rubio, the U.S. Secretary of State, on Friday. "It's not possible to end the war in Ukraine we need to move on," Mr. Rubio stated after talks with European diplomats in Paris. "It's not our war. We have other priorities to focus on," he said. Meanwhile, in Moscow, Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, announced that a 30-day pause on attacks on Ukraine's energy facilities had expired.

U.S. views

Why does the diplomatic path to ending the war remain so difficult? The answer lies in the fundamentally divergent positions of the parties involved. Mr. Trump and his top officials have argued that the Ukraine war holds limited relevance to America's security. Mr. Trump, who doesn't subscribe to the trans-Atlantic world view of America's liberal internationalism, is then seeking a reset in America's ties with Russia. But such a reset remains un-

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Greetings from Yoda



A Star Wars fan dressed as Yoda tries to look airborne at a fan convention called the Star Wars Celebration Japan in China near Tokyo. **AP**

Afghanistan 'concerned' by Pakistan's deportations

Agence France-Presse
KABUL

Afghanistan's Foreign Minister expressed "deep concern and disappointment" at its Pakistani counterpart on Saturday over the forced deportation of tens of thousands of Afghans since the start of April.

Pakistan has launched a campaign to evict more than 2,50,000 Afghans. Pakistan's top diplomat Ishaq Dar flew to Kabul for a day-long visit on Saturday where he held discussions with Afghan Taliban officials, including Prime Minister Hasan Akhund and Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttqi.

China will weaponise biotech, may create AI-powered super-soldiers, says U.S. panel

Disakar Patel
NEW DELHI

As the world enters an age of biotechnology, there is emerging evidence that China is "distorting" biotechnology markets and quickly ascending to "dominance" in this field, having made this a strategic priority for the last 20 years, according to the U.S. National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology.

In a report submitted to the U.S. Congress, the Commission warned that China is likely to weaponise the technology and may create genetically enhanced super-soldiers, powered by artificial intelligence.

"To remain competitive, the U.S. must take swift action in the next three years. Otherwise, we risk falling behind, a setback

from which we may never recover," said the report, which was released earlier this week, and is based on two years of research and consultations with private and public experts.

It is certain that a biotechnology revolution is coming, the Commission reiterated. "There will be a ChatGPT moment for biotechnology, and if China gets there first, no matter how fast we run, we will never catch up," it warned.

"Steal, scale, strangle" The world is entering the age of biotechnology, a time when biology is the basis of innovation, the report says in a sober analysis, stressing that every strategic sector — including defence, healthcare, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing — can be advanced by biotechnology, but also breached by it.

The Commission's research indicates that China is likely to follow the same playbook with biotechnology as it has with other strategic technologies, the report said.

"First, they steal. Then, they scale. Once they have cornered the market, they strangle," it said, pointing to the Chinese restrictions on gallium and germanium in 2024 that had disrupted U.S. semiconductor production.

Noting that U.S. allies and partners offer unique capabilities, the report referred to India which it says is "prioritising" cost-effective bio-manufacturing, particularly of vaccines.



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Now, with its Military-Civil Fusion strategy, the CCP aims to use biotechnology-powered troops — termed the "intelligent warfare" — to make the People's Liberation Army (PLA) a "world-class military" by 2040.

Particularly focusing on biotech in the defence domain, the Commission said it has every reason to believe that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will create super-soldiers with fused human and AI, the report warned. It will soon quantify if we are faced with genetically enhanced PLA super-soldiers with fused human and AI, the report warned.

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Giving an example of how China is distorting the biotechnology markets, the report delves into how the Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) and MGI Tech have advanced their growth in an "atypical manner" that indicates "undisruptive" state involvement and "subsidisation".

These findings contrast with competitors in the genome sequencing market. China's ability to manufacture active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) at disproportionately low prices led India to impose a unilateral anti-dumping duty on certain APIs from China in 2024 to protect its domestic manufacturing industry," it observed.

Plans for the U.S. The Commission's main recommendation is that the U.S. government should

dedicate a minimum of \$15 billion over the next five years to unleash more private capital into the national biotechnology sector.

After an extensive study, including more than 1,500 stakeholder consultations, the Commission listed out a set of top priority recommendations for the U.S. government.

These include suggestions to prioritise biotechnology at the national level, mobilise the private sector to get U.S. products to market, maximise the benefits of biotechnology for defence, and innovate strategic competitors. Build the biotechnology workforce, and the infrastructure to mobilise the collective strengths of allies and partners.

Further cautioning that the window to act is closing, the Commission pitched a two-track strategy

to make America innovative faster, and slow China down.

In this regard, it called for the U.S. to invest in biotechnology IT and data against Chinese state-sponsored corporate espionage, even if this means rejecting an attractive investment.

"We must not treat Chinese state-run companies as ordinary competitors in our market, even if it means using more expensive alternatives. China does not have a right to American research; period," it said.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is accelerating in technology, the report says, and the Commission said, noting that though the U.S. has an "unassailable" lead in AI-enabled biotechnology.

possible without first bringing the Ukraine war to an end.

Russian position The Russians appear to recognise this is a rare opportunity to shut down the war, and are eager to engage the Trump administration. But if Mr. Trump's focus is on achieving a ceasefire, what Russia seeks is a comprehensive peace agreement. Russia has put forward three core demands. First, Ukraine must remain a neutral country (meaning, no NATO membership) and no NATO troops stationed on its territory; second, the five oblasts that Russia has annexed (Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson) must be formally recognised as part of Russia; and Western sanctions be lifted; third, Ukraine must be demilitarised. The Russians believe they currently hold strategic momentum on the battlefield and are unwilling to surrender that advantage for a ceasefire. A frozen conflict, akin to the Korean peninsula of 1953, would merely perpetuate the conflict rather than resolve it.

Then there are Ukraine and its European allies. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Uk-

rainian President, finds the Russian demands difficult to swallow. Having already lost significant portions of Ukraine's territories, he is unwilling to go down in history as the leader who legitimised those losses. Mr. Zelenskyy continues to seek credible security guarantees from the West and wants to retain the right to rearm and remobilise Ukraine's forces.

Several European countries, including France and the U.K., believe that if Ukraine swallows Russian demands, that would effectively rewrite the security architecture of Europe, bolstering Russia's status as a great power.

Europe today sees Ukraine as a critical buffer between Russia and the rest of the continent. A full Ukrainian capitulation, in Europe's view, would weaken its strategic position. As a result, Europe's major powers prefer Ukraine to continue to fight, or preserve the right to intervene itself in the event of a ceasefire, rather than settle for a peace agreement with Russia.

At there is little common ground among the main players, Mr. Trump's overtures for peace seems to have hit a stone wall.

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Dinakar Peri
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“We must do more to take advantage of our partners’ unparalleled strengths, which could include entering into reciprocal data-sharing agree-



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ments or pooling demand for biotechnology products,” it said.

AI super-soldiers

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Now, with its Military-Civil Fusion strategy, the CCP aims to use biotechnology-powered troops – terming this “intelligent warfare” – to make the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) a “world-class military” by 2049.

“Drone warfare will seem quaint if we are faced with genetically enhanced PLA super-soldiers with fused human and AI,” the

report warned.

Giving an example of how China is distorting the biotechnology markets, the report delved into how the Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) and MGI Tech have financed their growth in an “atypical manner” that indicates “undisclosed” state involvement and “subsidisation,” undermining their foreign competitors in the genomic sequencing market. “China’s ability to manufacture active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) at disproportionately low prices led India to impose a unilateral anti-dumping duty on certain APIs from China in 2022 to protect its domestic manufacturing industry,” it observed.

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These include suggestions to: prioritise biotechnology at the national level; mobilise the private sector to get U.S. products to scale; maximise the benefits of biotechnology for defence; out-innovate strategic competitors; build the biotechnology workforce of the future; and mobilise the collective strengths of allies and partners.

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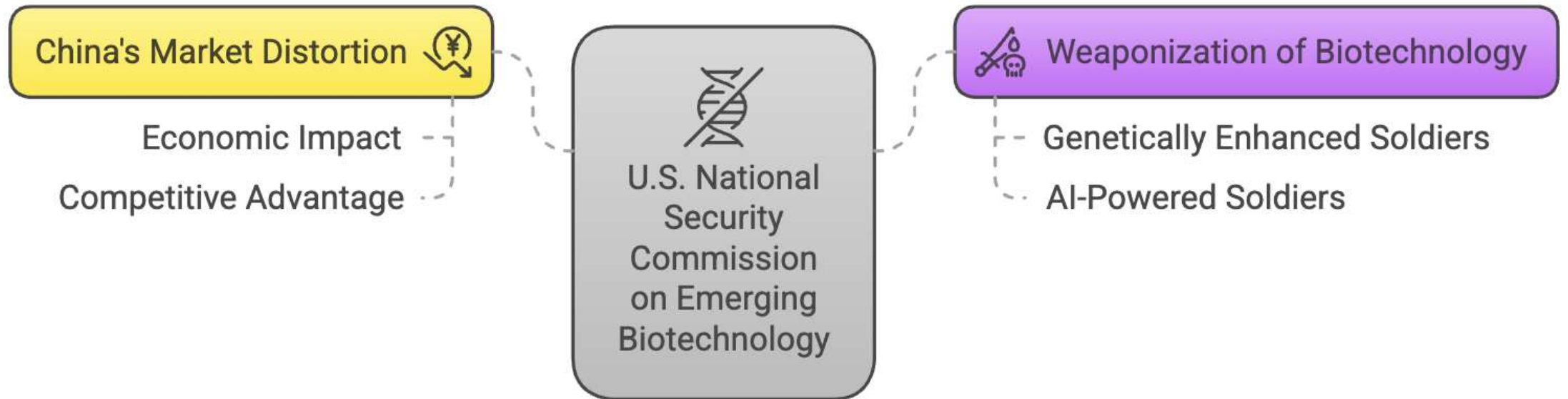
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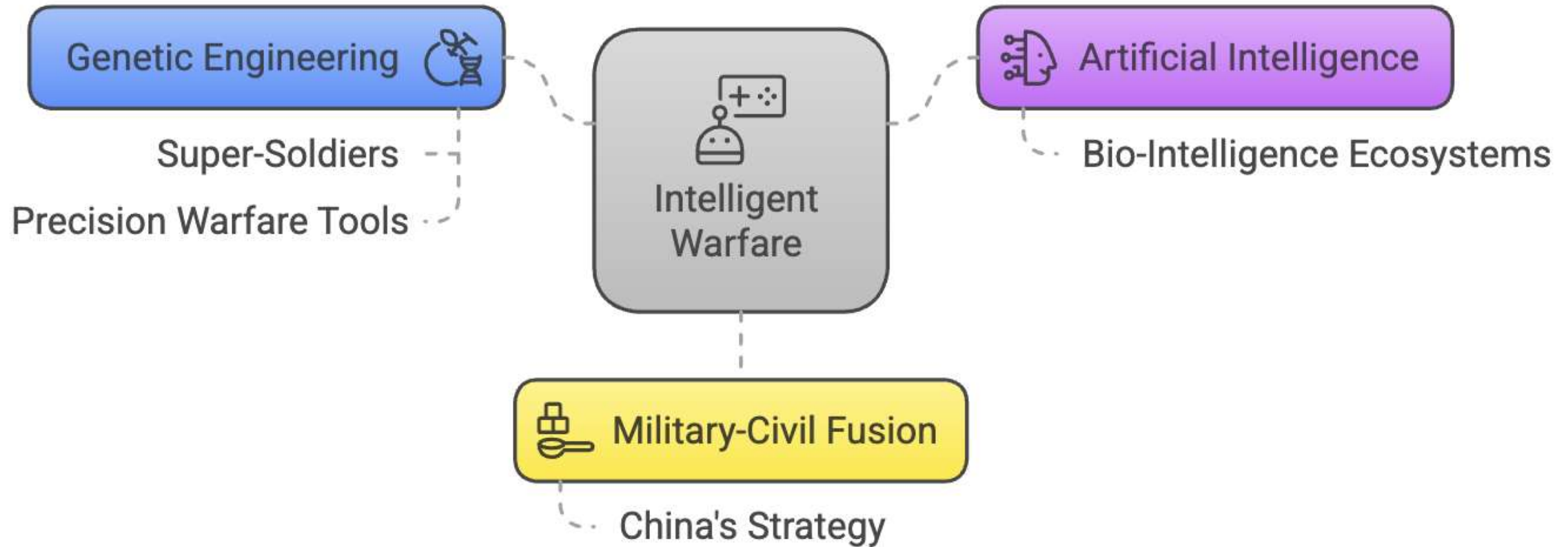
“We must not treat Chinese state-run companies as ordinary competitors in our market, even if it means using more expensive alternatives. China does not have a right to American research-period,” it said.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is accelerating us toward the inflection point, the Commission said, noting that though the U.S.’s advantage was once thought “unassailable”, China has emerged as a powerhouse in AI-enabled biotechnology.

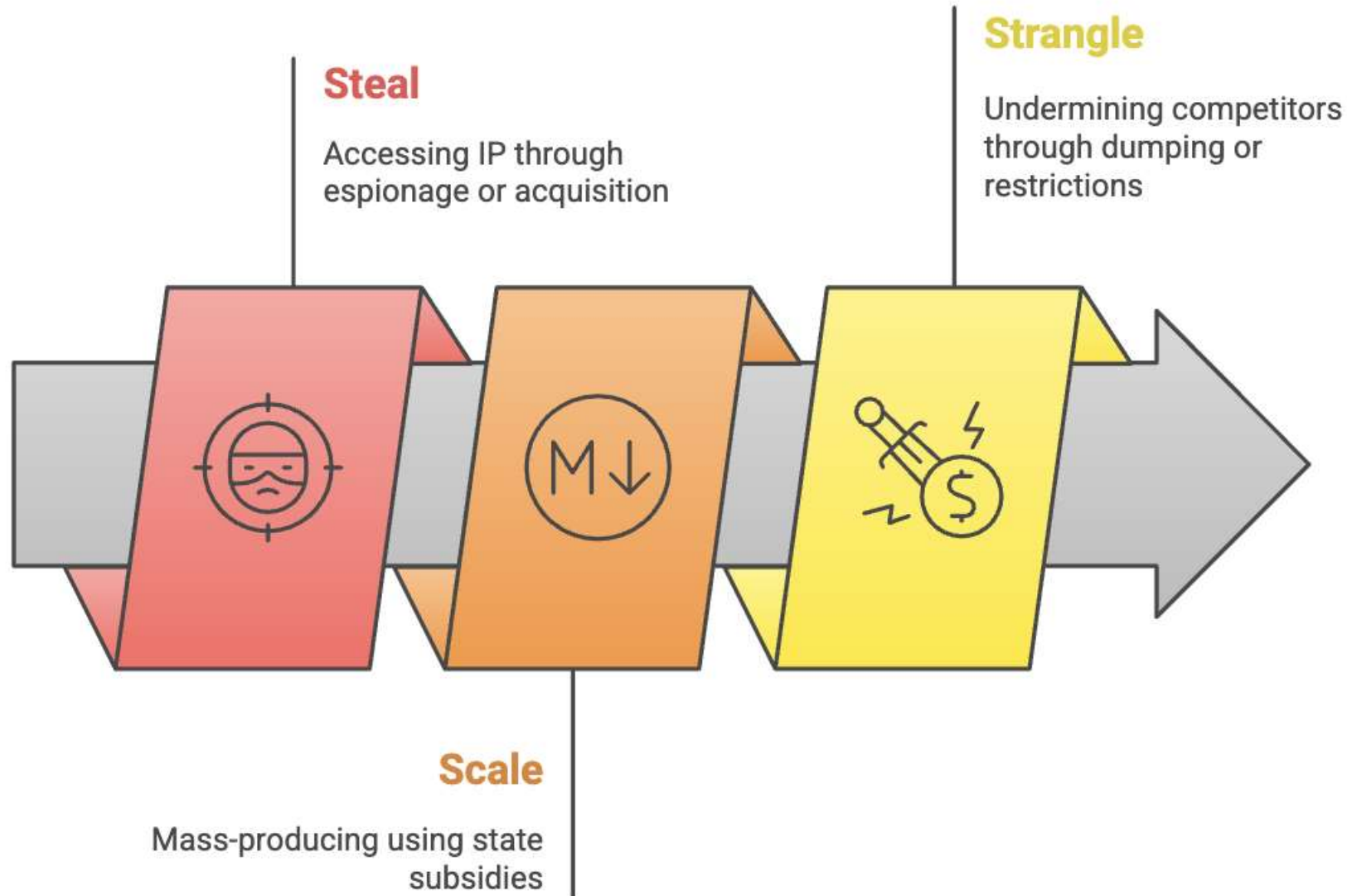
U.S. National Security Commission's Concerns on Biotechnology



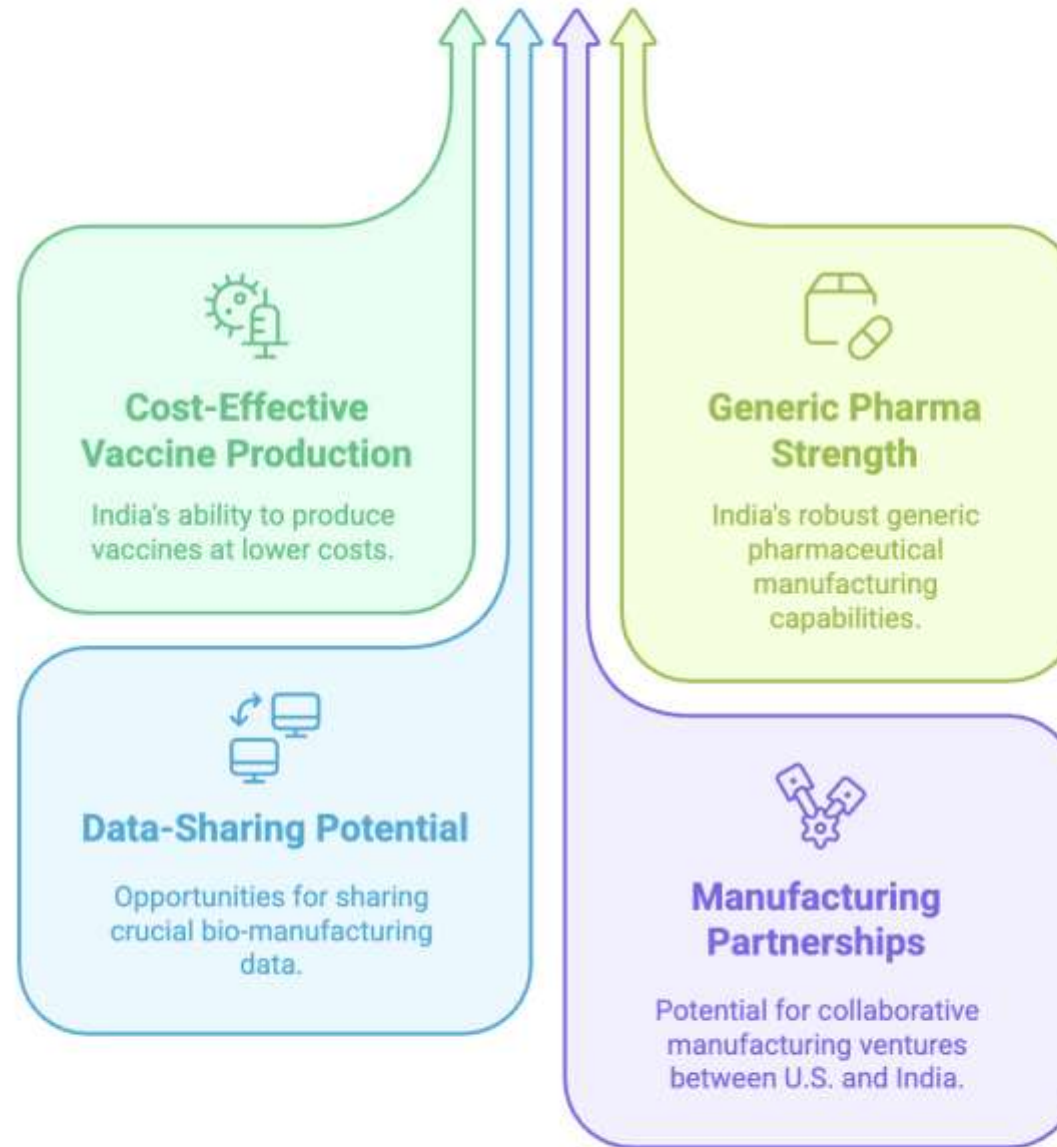
Intelligent Warfare: Genetic Engineering and AI Integration



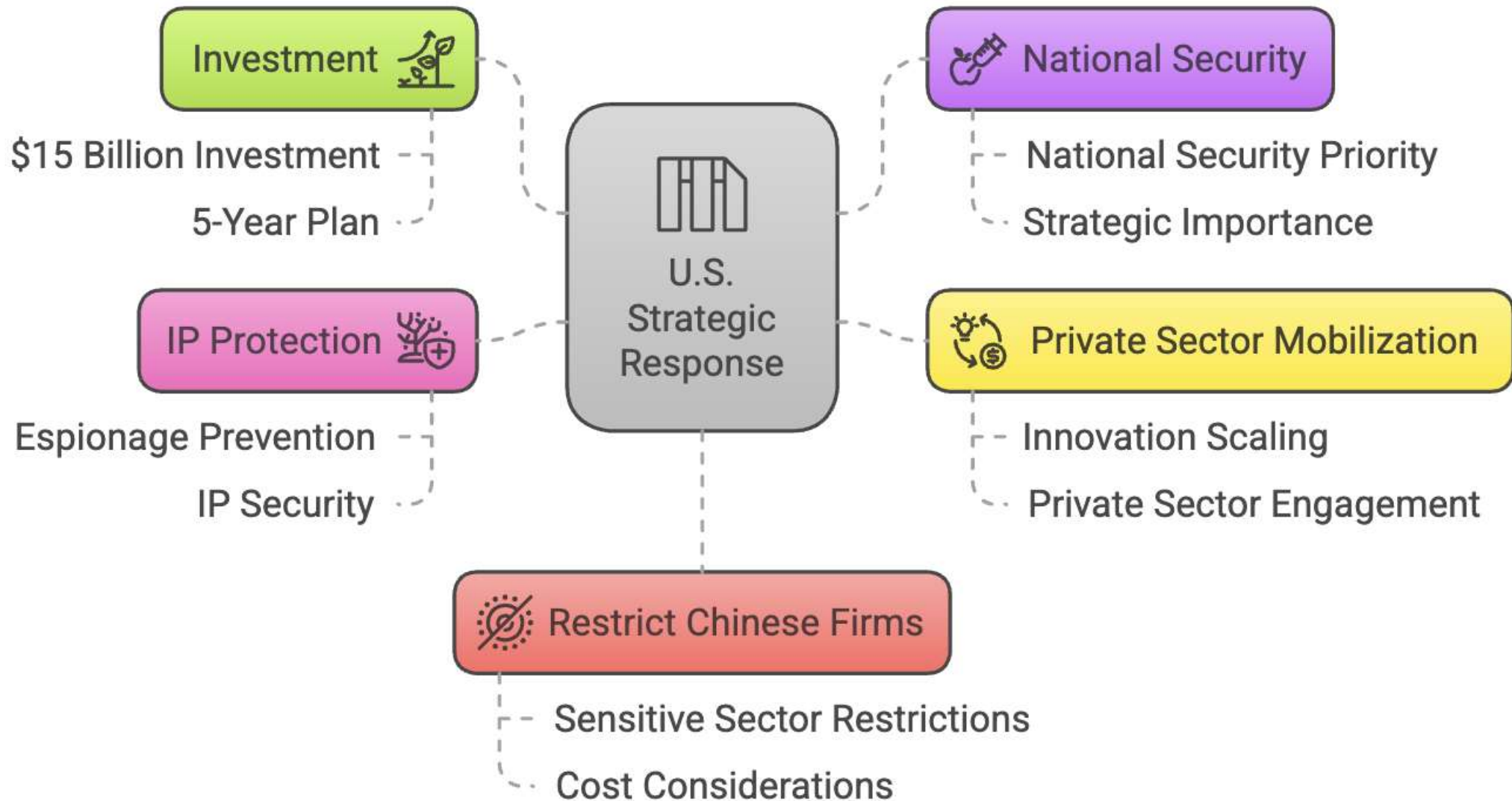
China's Economic Strategy



Building Bridges in Bio-Manufacturing



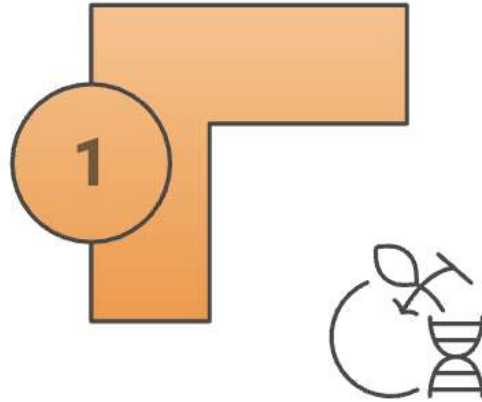
U.S. Strategic Response to Biotechnology Weaponization



Biotech Impact and Control

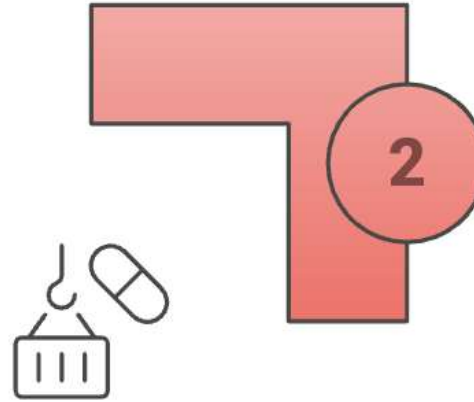
GM Crop Innovation

GM crops exemplify biotech's significant agricultural influence.



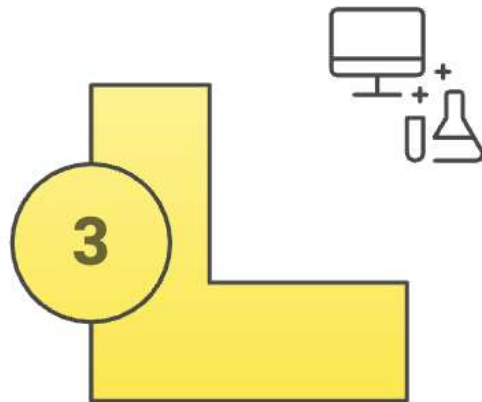
Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Dominance

High control over biotech shapes global pharmaceutical markets.



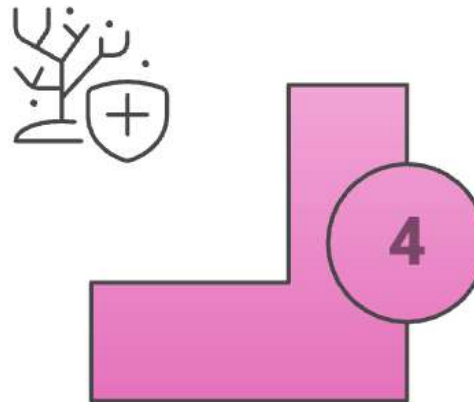
Basic Research

Basic research lays groundwork with minimal economic control.



Bio-defense Strategies

Bio-defense strategies require high control but have limited impact.



MILESTONE

Rahul completes 200 sixes in the IPL, 11th to achieve the feat



Debut Capitals' R.L. Rahul became the sixth Indian and 11th overall to hit 200 sixes in the IPL. He accomplished the milestone against Gujarat Titans. Rahul's 28 off just 14 balls was faced with four boundaries and a six. The top three six-hitters in the competition are Chris Gayle (387), Rohit Sharma (286) and Virat Kohli (282).

RECORD-BREAKER

At 14, Suryavanshi becomes the youngest to make IPL debut



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Suryavanshi became the youngest player to make his debut in the IPL. The 14-year-old 43-day-old left-hander bettered the record of Prayas Rai Sharma (16 years, 157 days) when he took the field against Lucknow Super Giants. Suryavanshi smacked a first ball six as he made 34 off 20 balls.

FAMILIAR ROLE

Nayar returns to the Knight Riders' dugout as assistant coach



After termination of his contract as the assistant coach of the Indian cricket team, Abhishek Nayar rejoined the Kolkata Knight Riders franchise as an assistant coach. Nayar, who worked as KKR's assistant coach from 2018 to 2022, joined the national team last July and was relieved of his duties following a disappointing tour of Australia.

DILEMMA

We have run out of time to be too patient, says Fleming



Head coach Stephen Fleming admitted CSK faces a dilemma regarding players who aren't delivering consistently. "It's a delicate phase, isn't it? We are still in the competition but we are hanging on by the thread, trying to find a balance between giving the players an extended run to show some form and also, wanting to get results".



On the rampages: Buttler's hits included a brutal takedown of the in-form Starc. (see story)

Buttler's dazzling knock takes GT to top of the table

The Gujarat outfit makes it three-in-a-row at home; Capitals' top-order fails to convert starts; Prasidh and Ishant hold their own on a beller

IPL 2023

Debut Capitals

Gujarat Titans made it three-in-a-row at home and climbed to the top of the standings in IPL 2023 with an authoritative seven-wicket victory over Delhi Capitals at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Saturday.

Joe Buttler's scintillating knock, which included a brutal takedown of the in-form Mitchell Starc, was too hot to handle for Capitals.

The Englishman toyed with Starc's yorkers, backing away and smearing the off side with four consecutive fours before pulling a short one to make it five boundaries in a row.

Costly over
That 20-run over left GT needing just 46 runs from the last five overs.

Sherfane Muralidharan maintained a rock-solid base with 11 needed, and Starc was left to defend nine runs off the final over.

If there were any nerves, Rahul Tewatia shook them off with a six.

Points table

	W	L	T	PTS	NRR
Gujarat Titans	7	0	3	19	0.993
Delhi Capitals	3	2	5	10	0.589
Punjab Kings	7	5	2	19	0.260
Lucknow Super Giants	5	2	3	15	0.088
Royal Challengers	7	4	3	15	-0.490
Rajasthan Royals	7	4	4	15	-0.847
Mumbai Indians	7	5	4	15	-0.979
Bengaluru Kings	7	6	3	15	-0.933
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	6	5	14	-1.117
Chennai Super Kings	7	7	5	14	-1.476

For the 2023-24 match on April 29

and a four, leaving Buttler stranded on 97. Earlier, Capitals started off like the clappers, posting its season-best 72 runs in the PowerPlay, but stuttered at the death, eking out just 53 in the last five overs. All of Delhi's top six batters got off to starts, four of them struck thrice, but a big score evaded them.

Missing it up
Prasidh Krishna and the hard lengths on a better and Ishant Sharma mixed it up well to ensnare Mohammed Shami and Rashid Khan's off-days didn't cost the bats too much.

Both Prasidh and Ishant were cramping up under the scorching sun but turned the heat on the opposition.

Prasidh nabbed Axar Patel and Virat Kohli off consecutive deliveries in the 18th over, and Ishant bowled Devon Conway back in the next with a low full toss.

K. Sai Kishore was brought on only to bowl the final over, and the Tamil Nadu spinner's ploy to keep the ball wide outside off-stump paid off as only nine runs came off the last six balls. Kauldeep Yadav smacked a boundary off the final ball to take Capitals past the 200-run mark, but that wasn't enough.

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Avesh swings it LSG's way at the death

Shayan Acharya

MUMBAI

It was another so-close-but-not-quite moment for Rajasthan Royals as it suffered a two-run defeat against Lucknow Super Giants, despite Vaibhav Jaiswal's 52-ball 74 and teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi's promising innings on debut in the IPL on Saturday. Chasing 181 on a slightly dewy Maunthali stadium surface, the 14-year-old 43-day-old Suryavanshi, who became the youngest player to make his debut in the tournament, did not look under pressure as he hit Shardul Thakur for a six and followed it up with a six and a boundary off Avesh Khan, en route to a 20-ball 34.

In the absence of captain Sanju Samson, who is yet to recover from his lower abdominal injury, Suryavanshi forged an 85-run opening stand with Jaiswal before being dismissed off Avesh Khan.



Left: Avesh Khan's performance in the final overs and Samson's cameo helped LSG with a thriller. (see story) RIGHT: Avesh Khan

However, with the seasoned left-hander bringing up his fourth half-century of the season, and adding 62 runs with stand-in captain Ryan Parag, Royals looked on course for a much-needed win, before Avesh threw for 37 turned things around, dismissing both in a span of five deliveries.

Royals needed only nine runs off the final over, but Avesh came up with a brilliant performance. Dhruv Jurel and Shubham Dubey struggled as the home team fell short.

Earlier, Parag shuffled his bowlers well. It was a disciplined show by the bowling unit, led by Jofra Archer, going into the 20th over despite illness by Markram and Avesh Bhatia.

But Avesh Bhatia hit four sixes off Sanjeev Sharma to help his side add 27 off the last six balls. It was the joint-most Sanjeev has conceded in an over in IPL. In the end, that cost the Royals dear.

For most of the pre-match stage at Chhatrapati, he usually enters the ground in the latter half of Chennai Super Kings' practice session. On Saturday, though, he walked down the stairs of the Wankhede Stadium soon after the batters started a range-hitting streak and had a gentle jog with the team physio Tommy Sturges.

As he returns to lead the men in yellow, M.S. Dhoni will be expected to sprit to a cameo and give the CSK campaign a much-needed boost at the start of the latter half of the IPL.

While Dhoni will continue to be in the spotlight in the marquee clash between the two most successful IPL teams, both the camps will be eager for a convincing win to switch gears into the playoffs.

Both teams have been languishing in the bottom



Legends Dhoni and Samson in a relaxed form of mood ahead of the big clash. (see story)

Mumbai Indians, Super Kings brace for another chapter of storied rivalry

Amol Karhadkar

MUMBAI

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Today's matches

<p>MI vs CSK New Chandelgarh, 3:30 p.m. HEAD-TO-HEAD Played: 34 MI: 17 CSK: 17 MI: 17 CSK: 17 MI: 17 CSK: 17 MI: 17 CSK: 17</p>	<p>MI vs CSK Mumbai, 7:30 p.m. HEAD-TO-HEAD Played: 34 MI: 17 CSK: 17 MI: 17 CSK: 17 MI: 17 CSK: 17</p>
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half at the halfway stage. Despite missing a win in their last games, neither outfit appears to be a set-up for that's ready to challenge for a place in the playoffs yet.

The pitch, though, will be in focus, with Thursday's strip being a tacky, slow turner. With the adjacent strip that saw a run-out against Royal Challengers Bengaluru being used, fans can hope for a six-hitting contest.

Karn Sharma, the MI leggie, is all but ruled out after having split his week against Mumbai. The home team will thus be banking on Will Jacks' off-spin to stifle yet another left-handed top-order.

CSK will be tempted to field Dewald Brevis, who joined the camp on Saturday, considering his familiarity with the conditions and the desperation to find new aggression in its batting order.

Punjab Kings eyes the double against Royal Challengers

M.S. Praveen Chandra

NEW CHANDLER

Punjab Kings is enjoying one of its better starts in IPL under its prized catch Shreyas Iyer. Halfway through the tournament, Kings are in third spot with 10 points and will look to cement their position when they take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru here on Saturday.

Fresh from a five-wicket win in the rain-truncated match against RCB in Bengaluru, PBKS will look to keep up its momentum. Yuvraj Singh is making the ball talk, while an indifferent start to the season, Chahal's wicket in the middle overs have been the key factor in PBKS' win in the last two matches.

The RCB bowlers will be wary of King's batting firepower, which should all the batters, with the exception



Top: Shreyas Iyer was right on the money with his bowling and catching in the rain-hit game against RCB. (see story)

of Glenn Maxwell, making a significant contribution. PBKS has started well at home, winning two out of the three matches. However, it will be up against RCB which has been formidable on the road this season.

RCB, which has won four consecutive matches away from home, will be looking for revenge.

On a tacky pitch in Bengaluru, the RCB batters

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On a tacky pitch in Bengaluru, the RCB batters

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PTI

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second 18 months' time in October 2008. The rake was named Vande Bharat Express and flagged off between Delhi and Varanasi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2009, and was considered as one of the most successful products of the 'Make in India' initiative.

The safety report said Railways should identify regular trespassing locations and cattle ingress and devise suitable mechanism such as deployment of Forest Protection Force (FPPF) personnel, regular patrolling and providing railway for crossing.

As on December 26, 2014, a total of 136 Vande Bharat Express rake were running across the railway network.

India, EU can collaborate on space policy, says envoy

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

India can be a very active player in developing an international framework for responsible behaviour in space, says Marjolijn van Deelen, European Union Special Envoy for Space, while flagging debris from Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapon testing and Rendezvous and Proximity Operations (RPO) that threaten satellites as major concerns.

As India and EU look to deepen strategic cooperation, they are also looking to hold a "space dialogue" as a first step for collaboration in the space sector.

"I think it would be important to jointly look at how we would want to regulate, in a way, these RPOs... to have international agreements on what is okay and what is not okay. And for that, we are setting up this framework for norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour and India and the EU could cooperate on setting out how we think they should be regulated in a way that does not pose a threat to us," Ms. van Deelen said, while speaking to *The Hindu*. "RPOs in themselves are not necessarily a problem. You don't want a solution that also kills all the programmes and the



Marjolijn van Deelen

civilian benefits we can have from them."

RPOs refer to a spacecraft intentionally manoeuvring to dock or operating close to another space object.

Asked if India's ASAT test was a matter of concern, the envoy said, "The

creation of debris by ASAT is something that should concern all states and we've spoken about that and that's why the EU has supported in the UN context a ban on destructive ASAT testing. The word 'destructive' is key here."

To a follow-up question on whether there had been a conversation with regard to India's ASAT programme, she replied there have not been any discussions yet and her conversations here will be "about how we cooperate".

In March 2019, India announced the successful demonstration of ASAT capability, after destroying a live-orbiting satellite in the

Low Earth Orbit of around 300 km with a new three-stage interceptor missile in a "hit to kill" mode.

Speaking of the top concerns, the envoy, whose visit followed the historic visit of EU College of Commissioners led by President Ursula von der Leyen, noted that several countries had tested ASAT weapons. "But we also see cyber jamming and spoofing in space, which are threats to delivering services to our citizens. We also see RPOs, which basically involves having a satellite get very close to your satellite, and if that is without notification and if that is done by an actor with

whom we do not have friendly relations, and especially if our satellite is a sensitive one... that's something we need to talk about. So these are the threats that we see, maybe the key ones on the security side."

The EU is set to bring in a Space Act in the next few months, which the envoy termed is an instrument designed for European competitiveness. While reiterating that it does not regulate third parties, she said the Act tries to ensure EU companies cooperate more closely so that the bloc does not "get 27 individual space programmes, but do that more jointly".

Area	Key Highlights (One-liners)
Trade & Investment	Bilateral trade crossed \$137.5 billion in 2023–24; FTA talks ongoing; 6,000+ EU firms in India.
Technology & Innovation	TTC launched in 2023; cooperation in AI, semiconductors, and Horizon Europe research program.
Climate & Sustainability	Collaboration on green hydrogen, solar energy, and clean tech under EU Green Deal.
Connectivity & Infrastructure	IMEC corridor and Global Gateway aim to boost Indo-EU digital and transport links.
Security & Defense	Cooperation in Indo-Pacific maritime security, cybersecurity, and counter-terrorism.
Education & Mobility	Joint academic exchanges, Erasmus+ programs, and skill development initiatives.
Multilateral Cooperation	Shared goals on global health, democracy, and rules-based international order.

Aspect	Details
Full Name	European Union
Established	1 November 1993 (by the Maastricht Treaty)
Headquarters	Brussels, Belgium
Number of Member States	27 countries
Major Institutions	European Commission, European Parliament, European Council, European Court of Justice
Official Currencies	Euro (€) (used by 20 of 27 countries – the Eurozone)
Official Languages	24 official languages
Population	Approx. 448 million (2024)
Area	About 4.2 million square kilometers
GDP (Nominal)	Approx. \$18 trillion USD (2024) – 2nd largest globally
Major Policies	Single Market, Customs Union, Common Agricultural Policy, Environmental Policy
Common Foreign Policy	Coordinated foreign and security policy among member states
Key Treaties	Treaty of Rome (1957), Maastricht Treaty (1993), Lisbon Treaty (2009)
Flag	Blue field with 12 golden stars in a circle
Anthem	"Ode to Joy" (from Beethoven's 9th Symphony)
Motto	"United in diversity"

3 India's ASAT Test (2019):

- Destroyed a satellite in Low Earth Orbit (~300 km)
- Used a **three-stage interceptor missile** in a **"hit-to-kill" mode**
- Marked India's entry into elite group of ASAT-capable nations (US, Russia, China, India)

4 EU's Viewpoint:

- Supports ban on **"destructive" ASAT tests** via UN resolutions
- Recognizes India's **technical capability**, but calls for **rules-based framework**
- Emphasizes on **non-threatening RPOs** and civilian use of space assets

5 What is the EU Planning?

Initiative	Objective
EU Space Act (Upcoming)	Ensure competitiveness of EU in space tech
Internal Coordination	Avoid 27 separate space programs; push joint missions
Norm-Setting	EU wants to lead global discussions on safe space practices

Ensuring a fair federal balance

For nearly a century, the Dravidian movement has been strongly advocating the need for a de-centralisation of powers to accelerate growth and implement a development model that benefits everyone. Hence, my announcement in the Legislative Assembly — on constituting a three-member high-level committee to review the provisions of the Constitution, laws and policies regarding Centre-State relations, and recommend appropriate steps to strengthen the States' autonomy and ensure a fair federal balance — was the most logical step in our quest to push back the ever-increasing intrusiveness of the Union into State domains.

The Constitution of India clearly states that India is a 'Union of States'. This preamble exemplifies the inherent powers that are vested with the States. Our party's founder, C. Annadurai, in his Rajya Sabha speech, had repeatedly highlighted the need for the Union government to devolve adequate powers to the States. The fundamental principle of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is 'Self rule in the State and collective rule at the Union'. In this regard, our leader Kalaignar (former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi) formed a three-member commission headed by Justice P.V. Rajamannar to realise this goal.

Trampling on rights

Today, we witness a scenario that is much worse than what it was when Kalaignar raised his voice for fair distribution of power. In those days, some powers were grabbed from States. However, today, under the hyper-centralising Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at power in the Union, there is a clear attempt to immobilise the States and make them dysfunctional by trampling on their rights. The Union government intends to curtail the legislative power of the States and



M.K. Stalin
Chief Minister,
Government of Tamil Nadu

It is imperative that States reclaim their guaranteed rights and secure autonomy



reduce the States to being subservient to the Union. Attempts are also being made to eradicate the States' unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

The Constitution has a clear demarcation of powers through three vital lists: the Union List, the State List, and the Concurrent List. In the last decade, many subjects listed under the Concurrent List, by default and practice, have been functionally moved to the Union List. There is also little regard for the items listed in the State List. The BJP-led Union government has been brazenly enacting laws in subjects which are clearly under the State List. Compounding the issue further, the Union is also creating steep stumbling blocks against States' legislative powers on State List subjects, by misusing the constitutional offices of Governors and President. We have successfully removed these blocks by securing the recent historic judgment at the Supreme Court.

A contentious attitude

The Tamil Nadu government's progressive and prosperous India continues to thrive. Tamil Nadu will never allow the concept of cooperative federalism to be replaced through aggrandisement and centralised decision making at Delhi. Our struggle against this new norm of BJP governance is not only to fulfil Tamil Nadu's demands, but also to secure due powers for all the States. Hence, we are confident that other States will also join us in this just struggle for our legitimate rights.

We are firm in our understanding that only strong States can create a strong India, while at the same time protecting the plurality of the country. The time has come to reset the balance in Centre-State relations. Structuring a robust mechanism will ensure that the inherent rights of the States cannot be trampled on by the Union. At this critical juncture, Tamil Nadu will once again rise to fulfil its historic duty, as it has always done in the past. Tamil Nadu will fight and Tamil Nadu will win.

Policy (NEP). The NEP also has a hidden agenda of the Union three-language formula, which indirectly pushes Hindi as a mandatory language. We have rightly rejected this dubious design. Hence, the Union government has kept Tamil Nadu's share of ₹2,500 crore in abeyance, with scant regard for the welfare of nearly 42 lakh students. This same ruthless behaviour was displayed by the Union recently when it withheld presidential assent for our NEP-compliant Bill. The Union's deeds on these two vital issues exemplify its contemptuous attitude.

A struggle for rights

We have also listed out the harms that will befall India if any unfair delimitation exercise is carried out by the Union government. The penalising performing States and incentivising non-performing States. We are building a coalition of like-minded States to counter any such legislative move and to ensure that the idea of a progressive and prosperous India continues to thrive. Tamil Nadu will never allow the concept of cooperative federalism to be replaced through aggrandisement and centralised decision making at Delhi. Our struggle against this new norm of BJP governance is not only to fulfil Tamil Nadu's demands, but also to secure due powers for all the States. Hence, we are confident that other States will also join us in this just struggle for our legitimate rights.

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Empowering the most marginalised

The prospects of the Telangana Congress may be bolstered by recent decisions

STATE OF PLAY

M. Ramesh
Congress candidate for Telangana

Last week, Telangana became the first State to notify categorisation of Scheduled Caste (SC) under the Supreme Court's landmark judgment last year upholding the constitutionality of sub-classifying SCs and STs. The government has granted separate quotas for the most marginalised groups within these communities.

Soon after the Court's verdict, the Telangana government headed by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, boldly announced its resolve to take up sub-classification in accordance with the Court's orders. It constituted a Cabinet sub-committee headed by Irrigation Minister R. Uttam Kumar Reddy and chaired by Health Minister C. Damodar Rajanarasimha to examine the judgment and suggest the way forward. The committee held wide-ranging consultations with various stakeholders and favoured the constitution of a one-time judicial commission. The government appointed retired High Court judge Sharmen Akhtar as the one-man commission and asked him to submit an intra-group dispute among the various castes within the SC category and propose a rational redistribution of reservation benefits.

Justice Akhtar convened meetings with individuals and voluntary organisations such as the Madhya Reservation Panchayat Samiti headed by Manasa Krishna basins reviewing earlier reports including the findings of the 1997 Ramachandrarao Commission of 1997 and the 2007 Latha Mehra Commission. Both-time reports found that Malas and Ahi-And

Telangana

has had disproportionately benefited from SC reservations. They recommended sub-classification of SCs into four groups on the basis of population size and redistribution of reservation benefits to them accordingly. The one-man commission has favoured classification of SCs into three groups instead of four, as recommended by the earlier commissions. It has listed 15 of the 29 SC communities as the most backward and classified them under Group-I with 8% reservation. It also classified Group-II with 5% reservation. Justice Akhtar favoured implementation of the creamy layer concept, but this has been rejected by the government on the grounds that segregating some people could lead to legal challenges. The government, according to Mr. Uttam Kumar Reddy, also took note of the Court's observation emphasising the difference between sub-classification and sub-categorisation and cautioned against using these classifications for political appeasement rather than for the genuine uplift of marginalised communities.

Mr. Rajanarasimha said that 33 of the 59 SC communities continue in the same groups

as recommended by earlier commissions and that only 26 sub-castes constituting 3.42% of the SC population would be sub-classified. The census survey conducted by the Congress government said that the SC population was 54.09 lakh, constituting 17.43% of the total population, and that 3.43% among the SCs will be affected by the categorisation.

The Cabinet panel as well as the one-man commission favoured in the Supreme Court's ruling that sub-classification should be based on empirical data and historical evidence of systemic discrimination rather than arbitrary or taken due to political considerations. The government studied the social, economic, educational, employment, and political status of SC communities during the caste census while categorising SCs into three groups. The Cabinet panel has announced that recruitment in government jobs will now be based on the categorisation of SC communities. Categorisation will not be applicable to the vacancies already notified, for jobs relating to the Central government, and for educational institutions run by the central government.

Recalling that the government had based 8% reservation for SCs based on the 2011 Census, the government said that it would ensure reservation once the 2026 Census is conducted. The issuance of the caste notification on sub-classification, as well as the government's move to enhance reservation for backward classes to 42% (which is awaiting assent from the government and will likely run into legal issues), could bolster the prospects of the Congress, which has been trying to brand itself as a champion of social justice.

U.S visas issued to Indian students decline by 30%

The decline in the number of visas issued to Indian students was the highest among the top source countries by a significant margin

DATA POINT

Samhavi Pathasavathry
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In February 2025, the first month of the second Donald Trump administration, the number of student visas issued to Indians by the U.S. dropped by 10% compared to the same month the previous year. This decline was notably higher than the overall decrease in student visas granted by the U.S. to all countries combined. Moreover, the drop in student visas issued to Indians was much sharper than the decline in visas issued to Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese students.

This worrying statistic comes at a tumultuous time when the visas of over 1,000 international students, including Indians, issued by the U.S. have been terminated or revoked without much notice. According to the Associated Press, at least 1,000 students across 170 colleges across the U.S. have been affected. Many students have filed lawsuits against the terminations. Associated Press quoted the name of at least one such Indian student, Manikanta Pandey, who was about to get a Master's degree in computer science at Rivier University in New Hampshire. Chinmay Dore, along with four other students at public universities in Michigan, have also filed a lawsuit. According to a report in *The Hindu*, the Indian government too has shifted its stance, from advising the students to "follow the law" to "offering them support" by reaching out to the affected students. Officials of the External Affairs Ministry are now advising affected students to pursue the "legal route".

Chart 1 shows the percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued to February 2025 compared to February 2024. It shows the data only for the top four countries that received the most number of student visas in February 2024. In February 2025, 6,604 F-1 vi-

sas were issued in total — a 4.75% drop from the 7,143 visas issued in February 2024. During the same period, the number of F-1 visas issued fell from 1,179 to 1,137 (a 3.5% drop) for Chinese students, 800 to 482 for Japanese students (a 39.6% drop), and from 326 to 262 (a 7.4% drop) for Vietnamese students. The number of F-1 visas issued for Indian students dropped from 590 to 40 (a 93% decline).

Moreover, the waiting time for a student visa is the longest in Delhi compared to the waiting time in the capitals of the other countries listed in Chart 1. On average, Indian students (including exchange visitors) wait 56 days for a U.S. visa, whereas students in Tokyo wait only 18 days, and those in Hanoi wait just two days (Chart 2).

While the recent overall decline in student visas, and its disproportionate impact on Indian students, may be attributed to Mr. Trump's aggressive policies, the struggles faced by international students are not new. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a sharp decline in applications for international student programmes. As a result, there was a surge in applications in the post-pandemic years, which led to a significant increase in rejections.

Chart 3 compares the denial rates of F-1 visas and all other visa categories from 2013 to 2024. From 2013 to 2023, the denial rates for both categories remained relatively flat, but a sharp divergence emerged in the post-pandemic years. In 2024, 41% of student visa applications were denied, compared to the 22.1% of all other types of visa applications that were denied. A gap of nearly 19 percentage points. Before the pandemic, the largest difference was just 6 points (in 2016).

In fact, in 2023 and 2024, over half a million students were denied visas. Chart 4 shows the absolute number of F-1 visas issued and denied by the U.S. between 2013 and 2024.

Indian students bear the brunt

The data for the charts were sourced from Travel Statistics (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs)



Chart 1: Percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued in February 2025 compared to February 2024



Chart 2: Student visa wait times (in days) for the capitals of countries mentioned in Chart 1

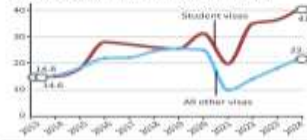


Chart 3: Denial rates of F-1 visas (student visas) and all other visa categories from 2013 to 2024. Figures in %



Chart 4: Absolute number of F-1 visas issued and denied by the U.S. between 2013 and 2024

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1975

Satellite sending messages: reception good at Sriharikota

Sriharikota space centre, April 20: "The equipment carried by the first Indian satellite Aryabhata, is in perfect condition and transmitting regularly the results of experiments. The reception here is very good," said a beaming Dr. Y. Janardhana Rao, Project Engineer of the Sriharikota Rocket Launching Station (SHRS) in an interview to-day.

The only tracking and monitoring station in the country which is here, monitored the satellite when it passed over the SHRS at 3-18 hours to-day and again at 14-59 hours. When tracked at 15-16 hours the satellite was in its fifth orbit and the tracking was done for the fourth time.

As the satellite lifted off yesterday afternoon from the Thiru Launching Station in the Soviet Union, scientists and engineers here were anxious to establish contact with the satellite. "Unfortunately we missed the first orbit, as we could not trace the satellite. But later we got on to its track. The orbit was over French Guiana in South America, Toulouse in France, Bears Station in Moscow, and over Sriharikota," they said.

The Indian Project Director, Dr. U.C. Rao, now in Moscow, spoke to Dr. Janardhana Rao at Sriharikota this afternoon just as the satellite was passing over the Indian tracking station.

Two observers from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, who had been deputed to this station, told *The Hindu* that they were happy to note that the satellite was orbiting according to schedule.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1925

Race to north pole

What will really resolve itself into a race between lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air machines is forthcoming in the attempt to reach the North Pole in an expedition led by the twenty-year-old explorer, Gertie Algranoff. The members of the expedition arrived at Liverpool in the Argentine "Island", which is the fastest vessel which has ever been fitted for such a hazardous undertaking.

The ambition of the expedition is to reach the North Pole at all costs. They intend to use an airship from the ship to the Pole. Algranoff's chief companion in the race, Captain Amundsen, has chosen a relay of aeroplanes for the final sprint.

Indian students bear the brunt

The data for the charts were sourced from Travel.State.Gov (U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs)



Chart 1: Percentage drop in F-1 visas (student visas) issued in February 2025 compared to February 2024



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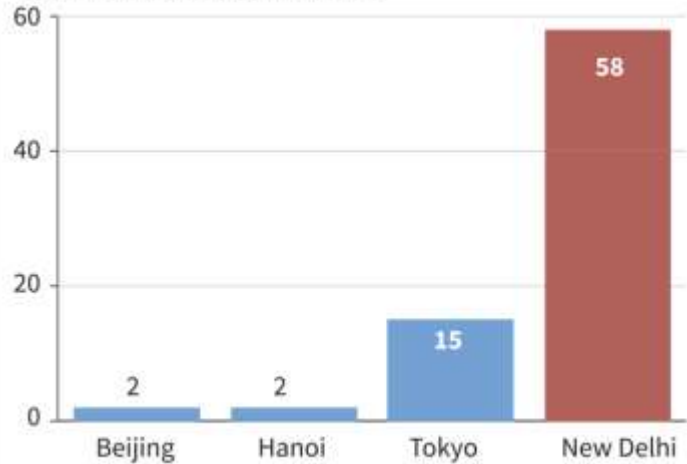


Chart 3: Denial rates of F-1 visas (student visas) and all other visa categories from 2013 to 2024. Figures in %

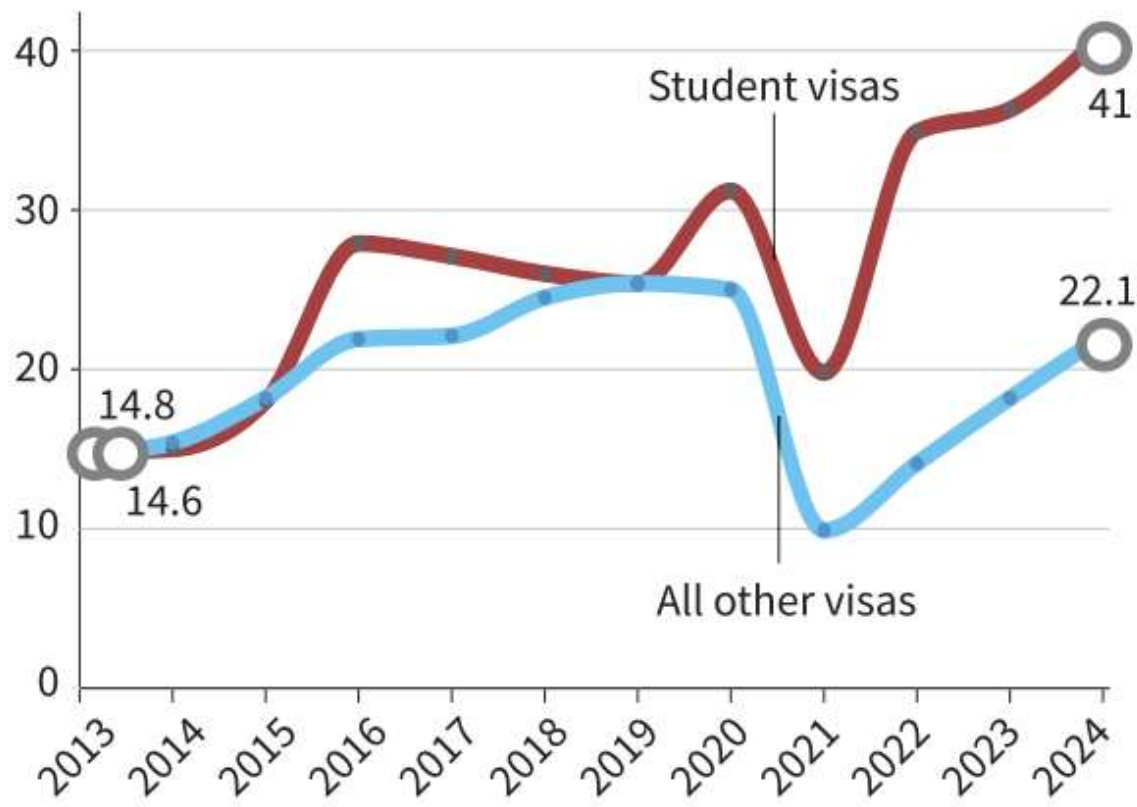
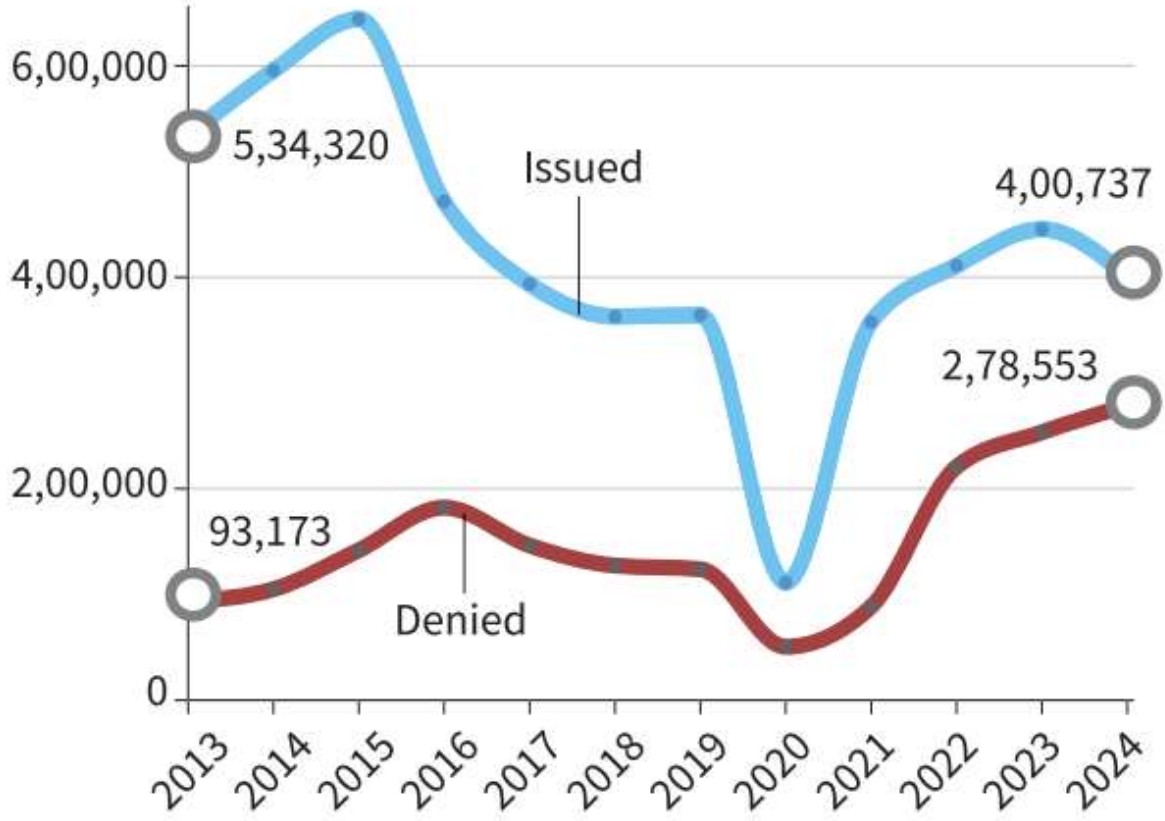


Chart 4: Absolute number of F-1 visas issued and denied by the U.S. between 2013 and 2024



IBCA Headquarters in India

India's Role in Big Cat Conservation



Establishment and Operation of IBCA

Launch of IBCA

IBCA is launched by India on the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger. tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.

Ratification by Five Countries

IBCA gains full legal status after ratification by five countries. India, Liberia, Eswatini, Somalia, and Nicaragua.

India Joins IBCA

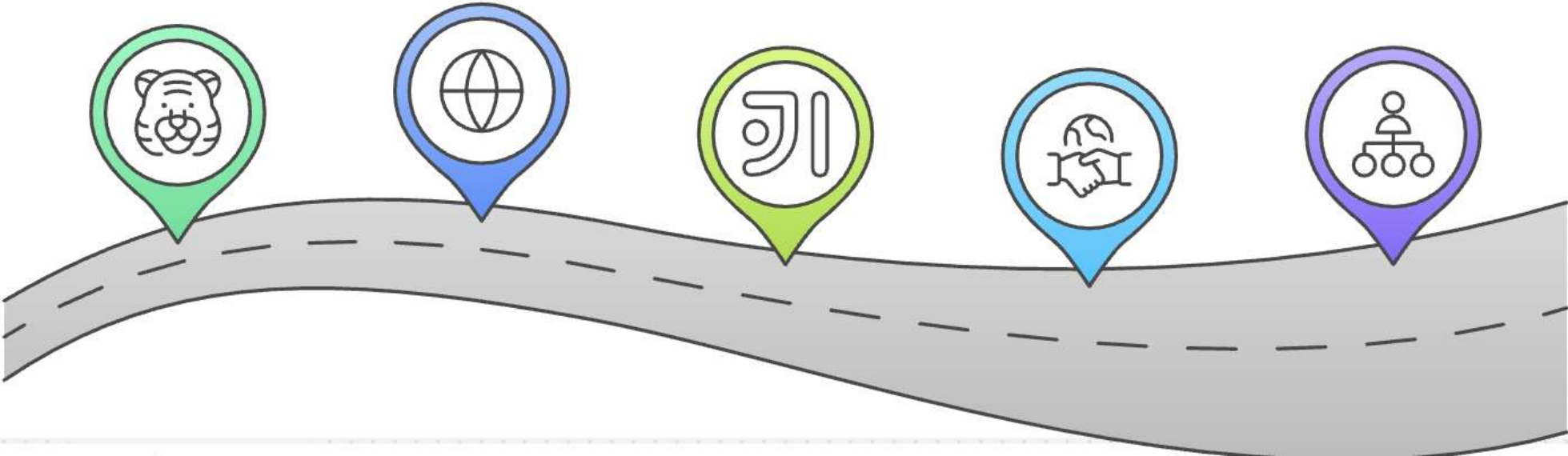
India officially joins IBCA in September 2023.

Membership Open to UN States

Membership is open to all UN member states, including range and non-range countries.

Governance Structure Established

IBCA's governance structure includes an Assembly, Committee, and Secretariat.



INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

The International Big Cat Alliance is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition aimed at conserving big cat species and their habitats.

Launched by

India (2023)

Headquarters

India

Member states

96 countries

Structure

Consists of Assembly of Members
Standing Committee & Secretariat



FUNCTIONS

- ④ Secure the future of big cats (Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, Pumas, Jaguars, and Cheetahs)
- ④ Mitigate the adverse effects of climate change
- ④ Advocate for policy initiatives
- ④ Attain the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals

THREATS TO BIG CATS

- ④ Poaching
- ④ Habitat loss & fragmentation
- ④ Human-Leopard conflict
- ④ Climate change & Deforestation

Conservation Status of Big Cats

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List	CITES	Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
Tigers	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Endangered	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Lions	<i>Panthera leo</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Leopards	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Snow Leopards	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
Pumas	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Least Concerned	Appendix II (P. c. Costaricensis and cougar: Appendix-I)	NA
Jaguars	<i>Panthera onca</i>	Near Threatened	Appendix-I	NA
Cheetahs	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I

A close-up photograph of a brown leather suitcase. The suitcase features several metal latches and a keyhole. A small, light-colored tag is attached to one of the latches. The leather is worn and aged, with some scuffing and discoloration. The text "Karnataka set to be the first State to finish village-level antiquities survey" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Karnataka set to be the first State to finish
village-level antiquities survey

Journey to Document Antiquities

Initiate Survey

Begin the village-level survey to identify antiquities.

Analyze Data

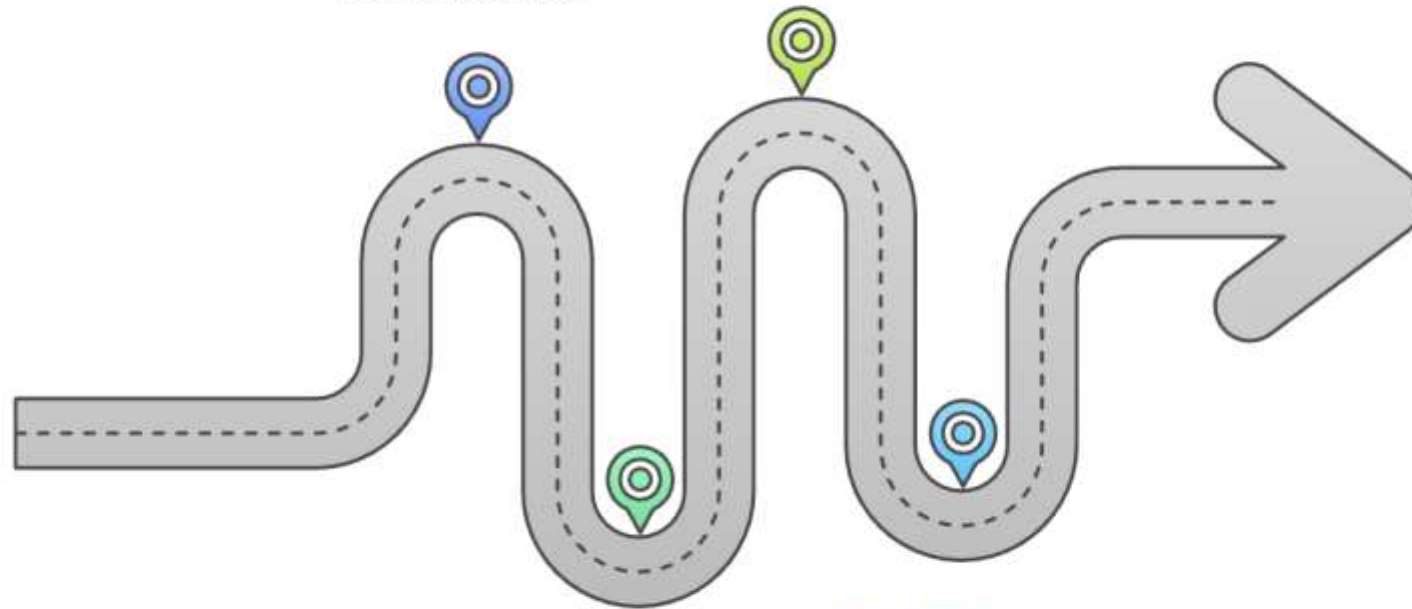
Interpret the collected data to understand the historical context.

Document Findings

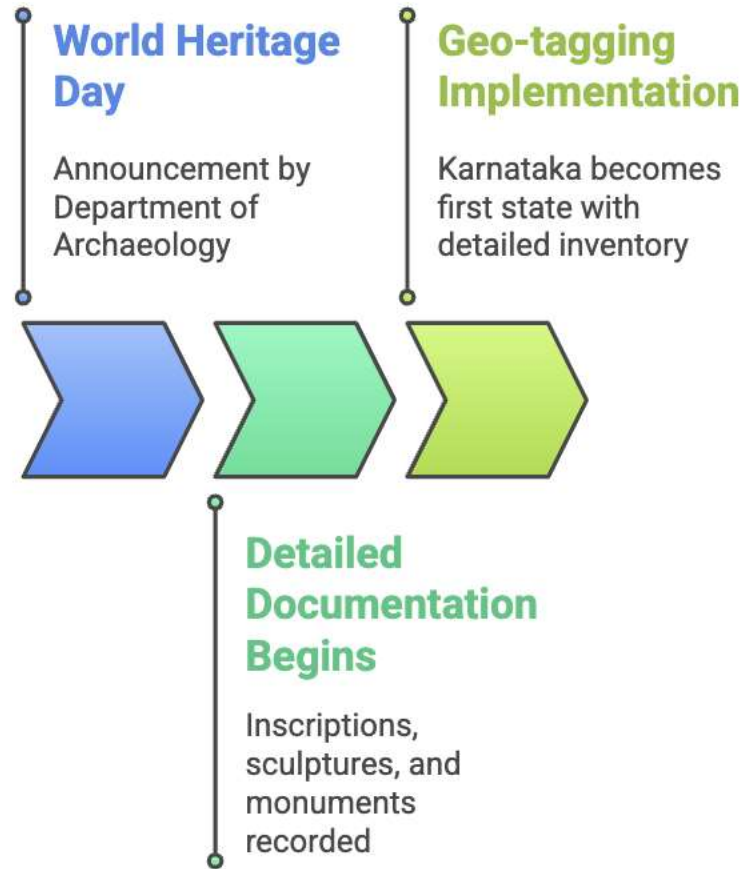
Record and catalog the discovered antiquities.

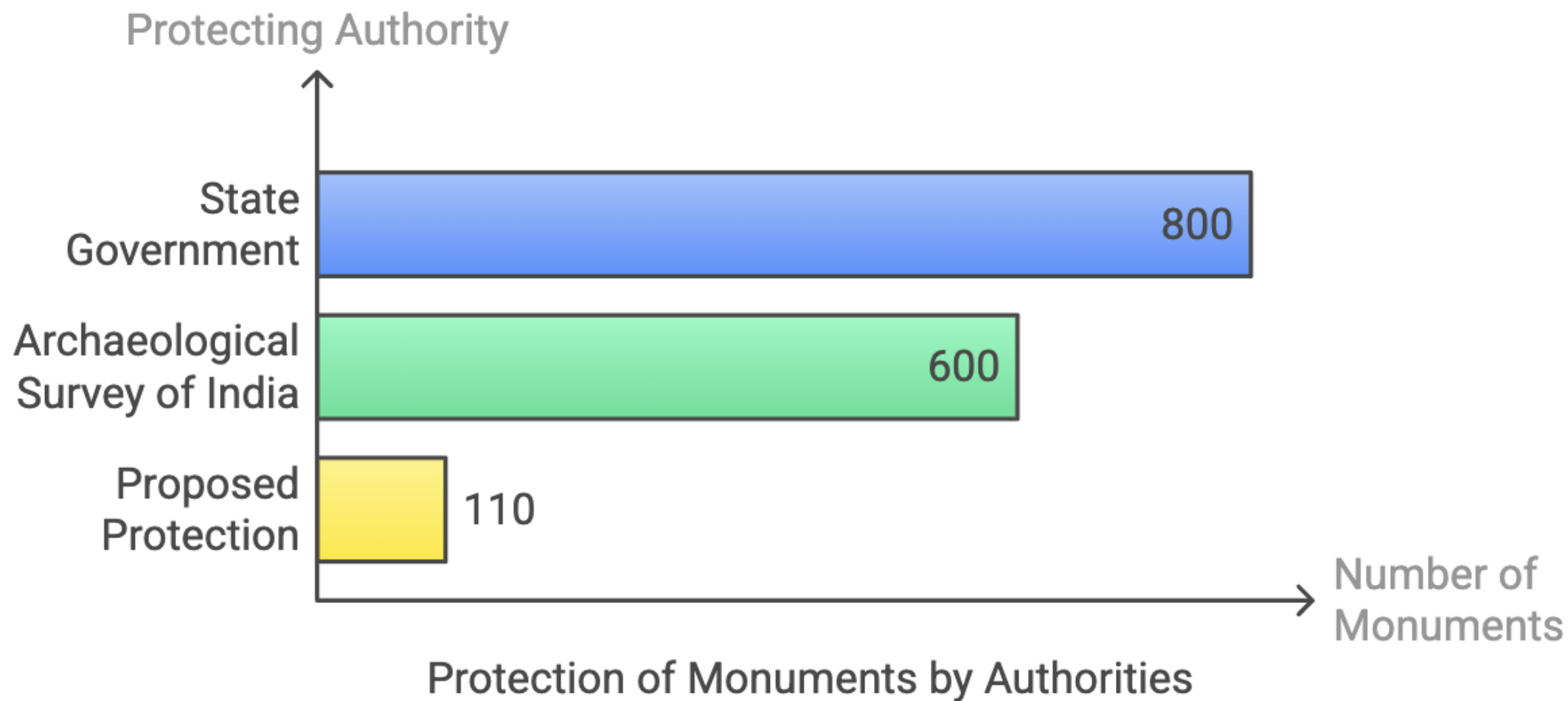
Preserve Heritage

Implement measures to protect and preserve the antiquities.

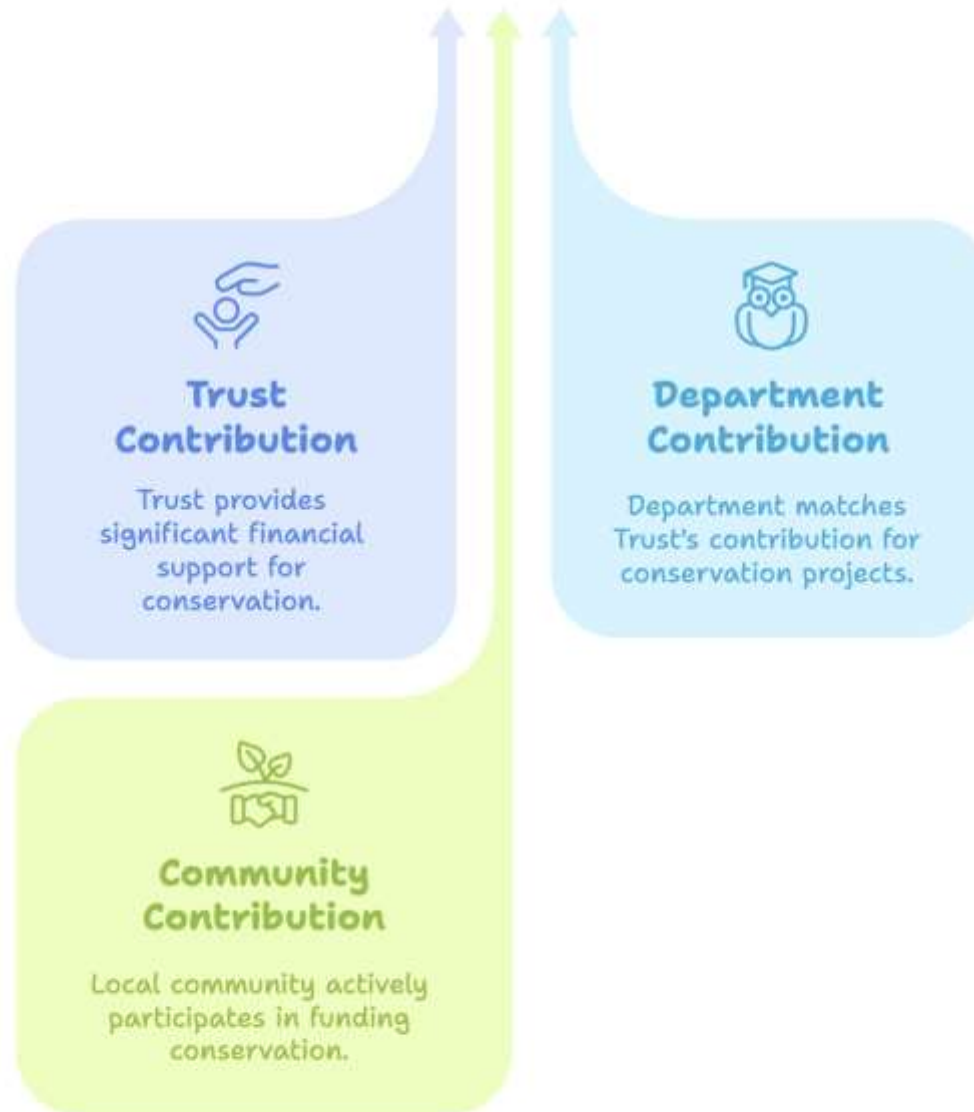


Karnataka's Pioneering Archaeological Heritage Survey



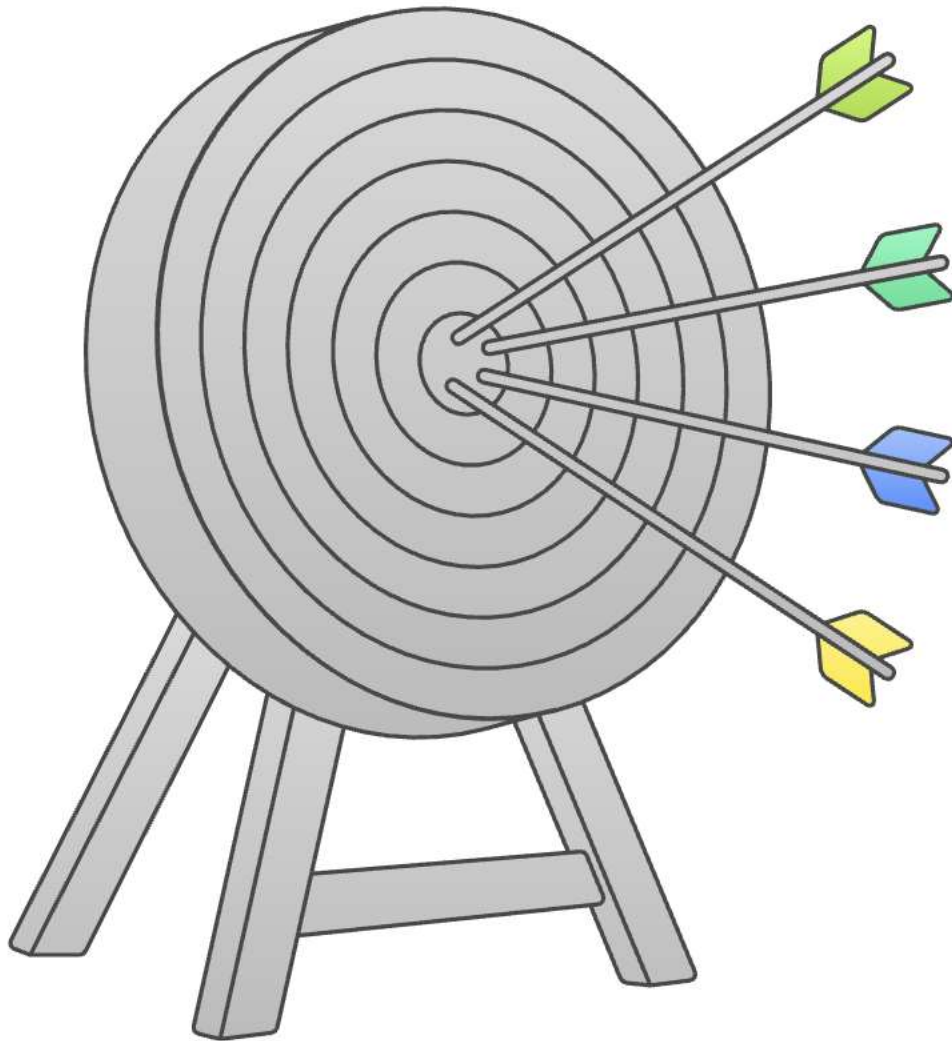


Collaborative Conservation Model



Operation Atalanta

Operation Atalanta Structure



Maritime Security

Core mission of Operation Atalanta



EU Member States

Primary contributors to the operation, shipping routes off the coast of Somalia and the Western Indian Ocean.



Associated Partners

Supporting nations in the mission



CSDP

Framework under which the operation functions



Shinkansen Trains and Bullet Train Project

BULLET TRAIN PROJECT

MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD HIGH SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR



Operational Speed
320 km/hr

Time
2.07 hr (Limited stops)
2.58 hr (Total stops)

Total stations
8 Gujarat
4 Maharashtra



SABARMATI
AHMEDABAD
ANAND
VADODARA
BHARUCH
SURAT
BILIMORA
VAPI
BOISAR
VIRAR
THANE
MUMBAI

STRUCTURES



12 Aesthetically Designed Stations



8 Maintenance Depots



HSR Training Institute in Vadodara



3 Rolling Stock Depots



High Speed Rail Multi Modal Hub Sabarmati

Japan-India Shinkansen Train Donation



Japan decides to donate

Japan decides to donate Shinkansen trains to India.

Japan selects the E5 and E3 series train sets.

Selection of train sets



Preparation for transfer

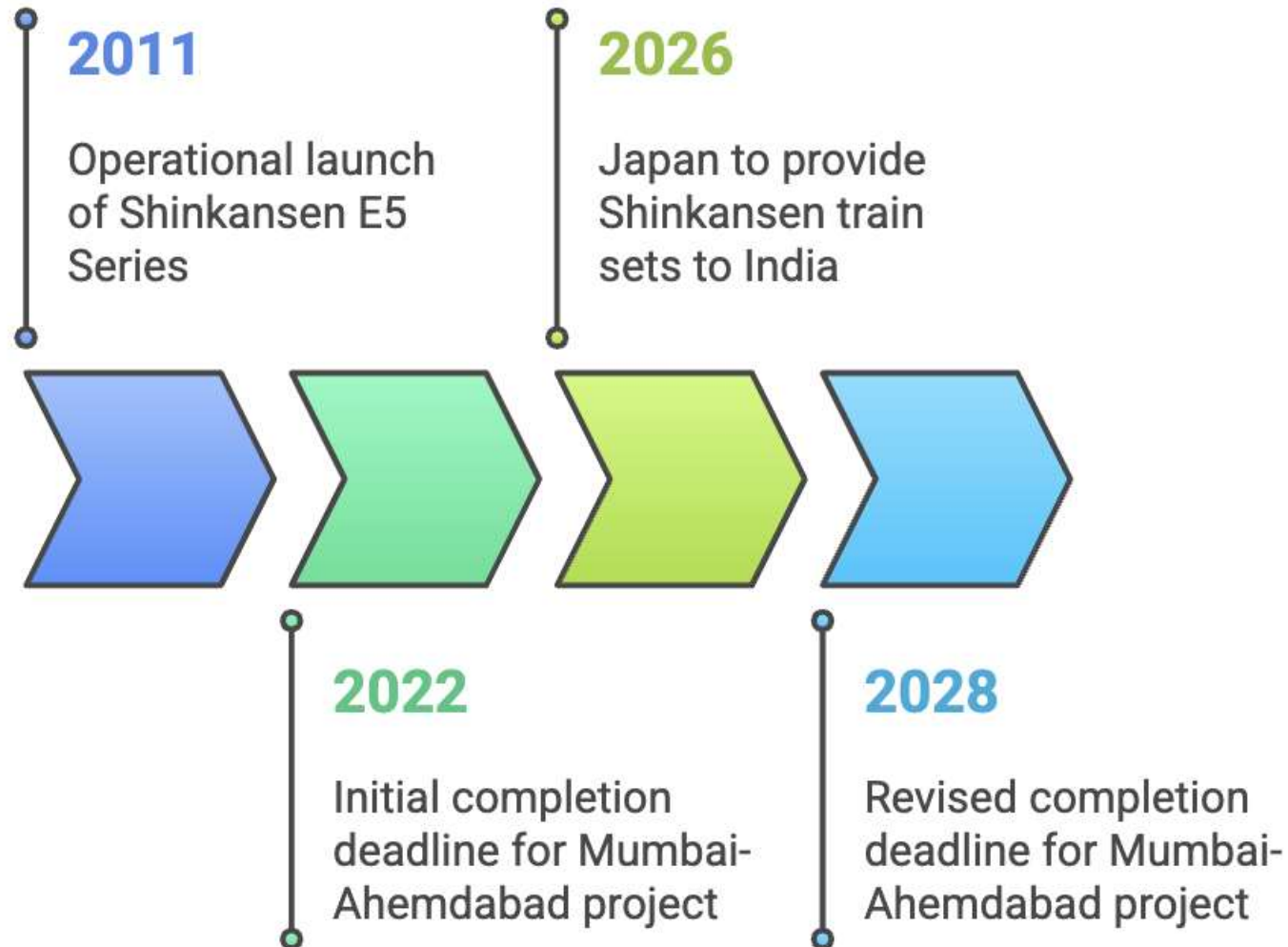
Japan prepares the trains for transfer to India.

The trains are transferred to India in 2026.

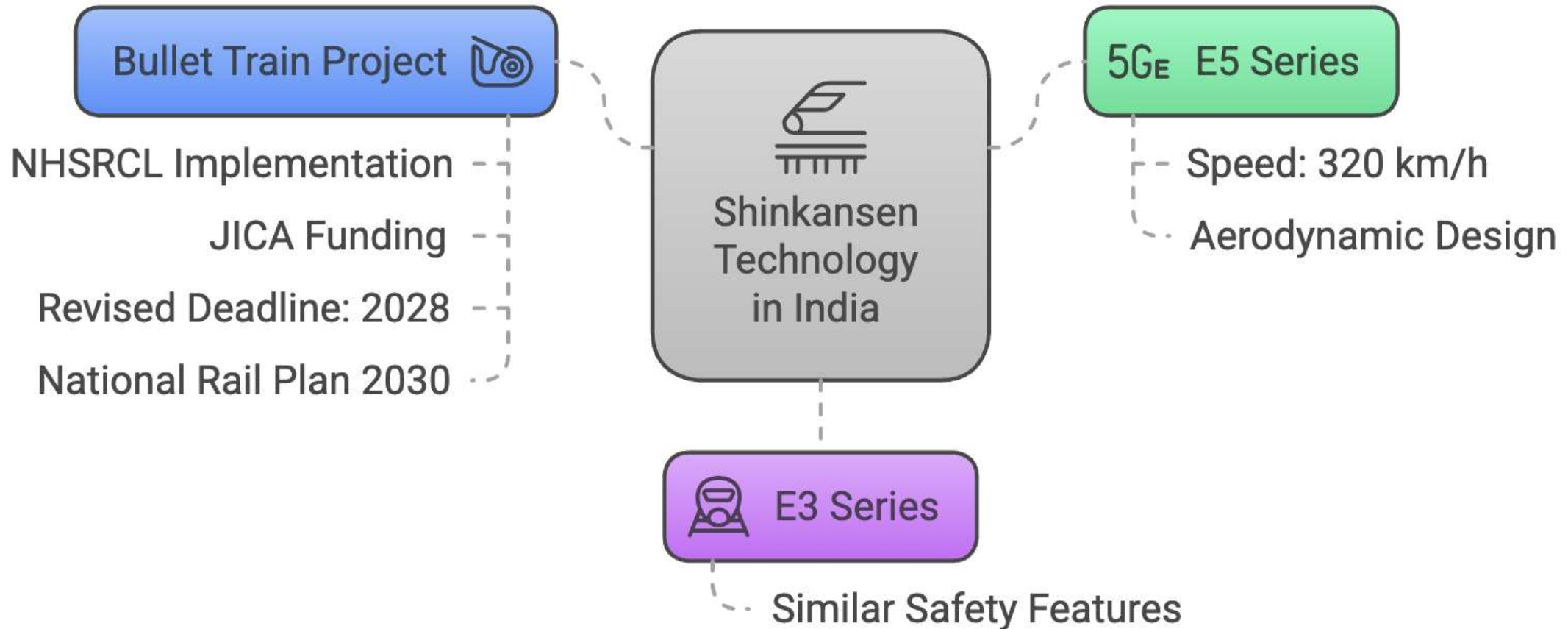
Transfer to India



India's High-Speed Rail Journey with Japan



Japan's Shinkansen Technology in India



Ironwood: 7th Generation TPU



Google Ironwood TPU Architecture

7th Generation

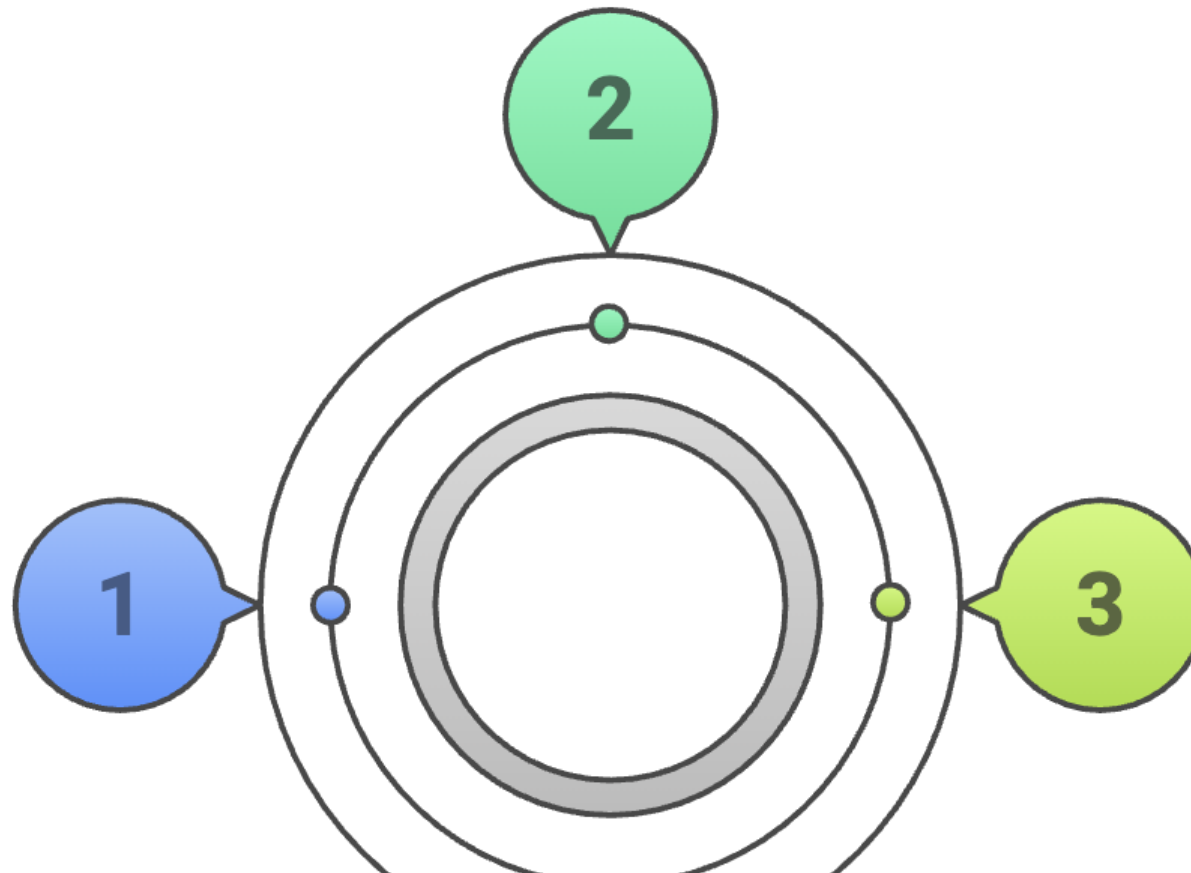
Evolution of TPU
technology

Ironwood TPU

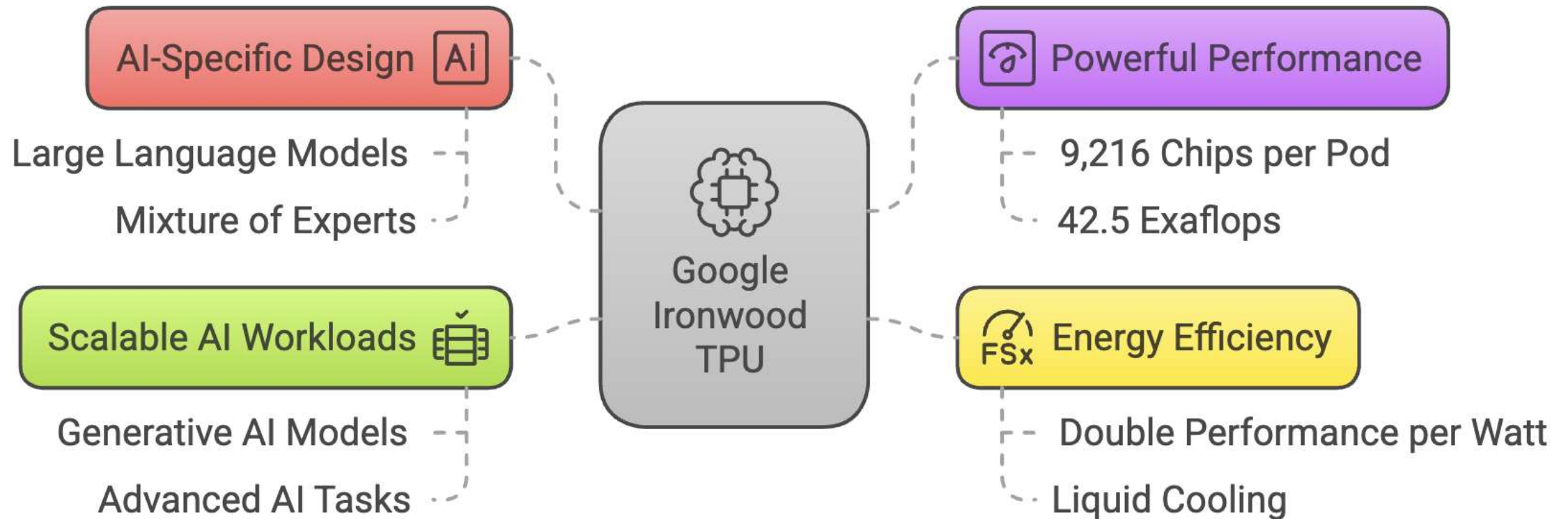
Core of AI
processing

AI Model Processing

Application of
Ironwood TPU



Google Ironwood TPU: Key Features and Capabilities



What is the Difference between CPU, GPU and TPU?

Feature	CPU	GPU	TPU
Primary Function	General-purpose computing	Parallel processing, graphics rendering	Accelerating machine learning workloads
Processing Type	Sequential processing (can also include some parallelism in modern CPUs)	Parallel processing	Parallel processing (optimized for AI tasks)
Number of Cores	1 to 16 cores (can be more in advanced CPUs)	Thousands of cores	Specialized cores optimized for tensor operations
Performance for AI	Not optimized for AI	Good for AI tasks, especially for large datasets	Highly optimized for deep learning and neural networks
Efficiency	Versatile but less efficient for parallel tasks	Highly efficient for parallel tasks (e.g., deep learning training, large-scale data processing)	Extremely efficient for AI, especially neural network training
Real-World Applications	Personal computing, business applications, software development	Autonomous vehicles, facial recognition, video processing, AI model training	Healthcare AI (e.g., diagnostics), autonomous systems, speech recognition, image recognition

A photograph of a wetland landscape during dawn or dusk. A narrow, winding waterway flows through dense, tall grasses and reeds. The water is calm, reflecting the hazy, golden light of the sky. In the background, a line of dark evergreen trees is visible under a thick mist. The overall mood is serene and quiet.

DPS Wetland



Flamingo Conservation Reserve Overview

Conservation Status

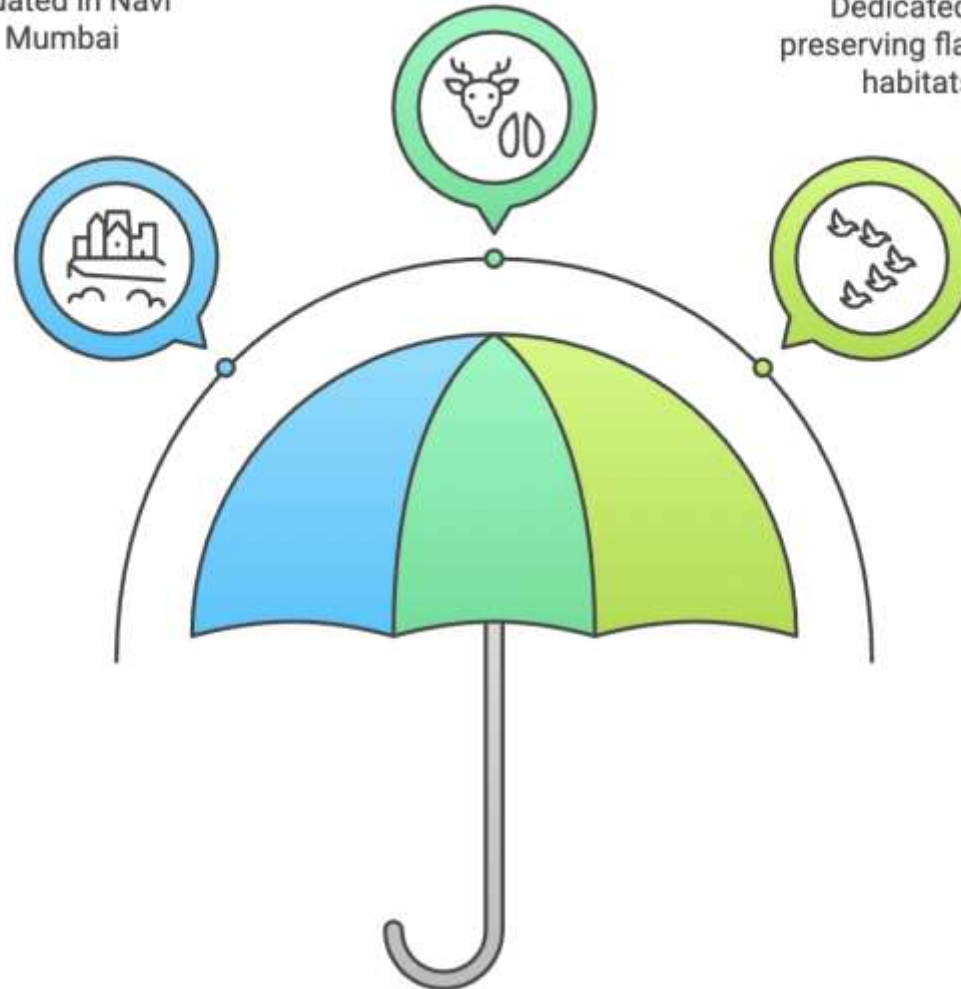
Officially recognized
by the Maharashtra
State Wildlife Board

Wildlife Protection

Dedicated to
preserving flamingo
habitats

Location

Situated in Navi
Mumbai



Location features



Location

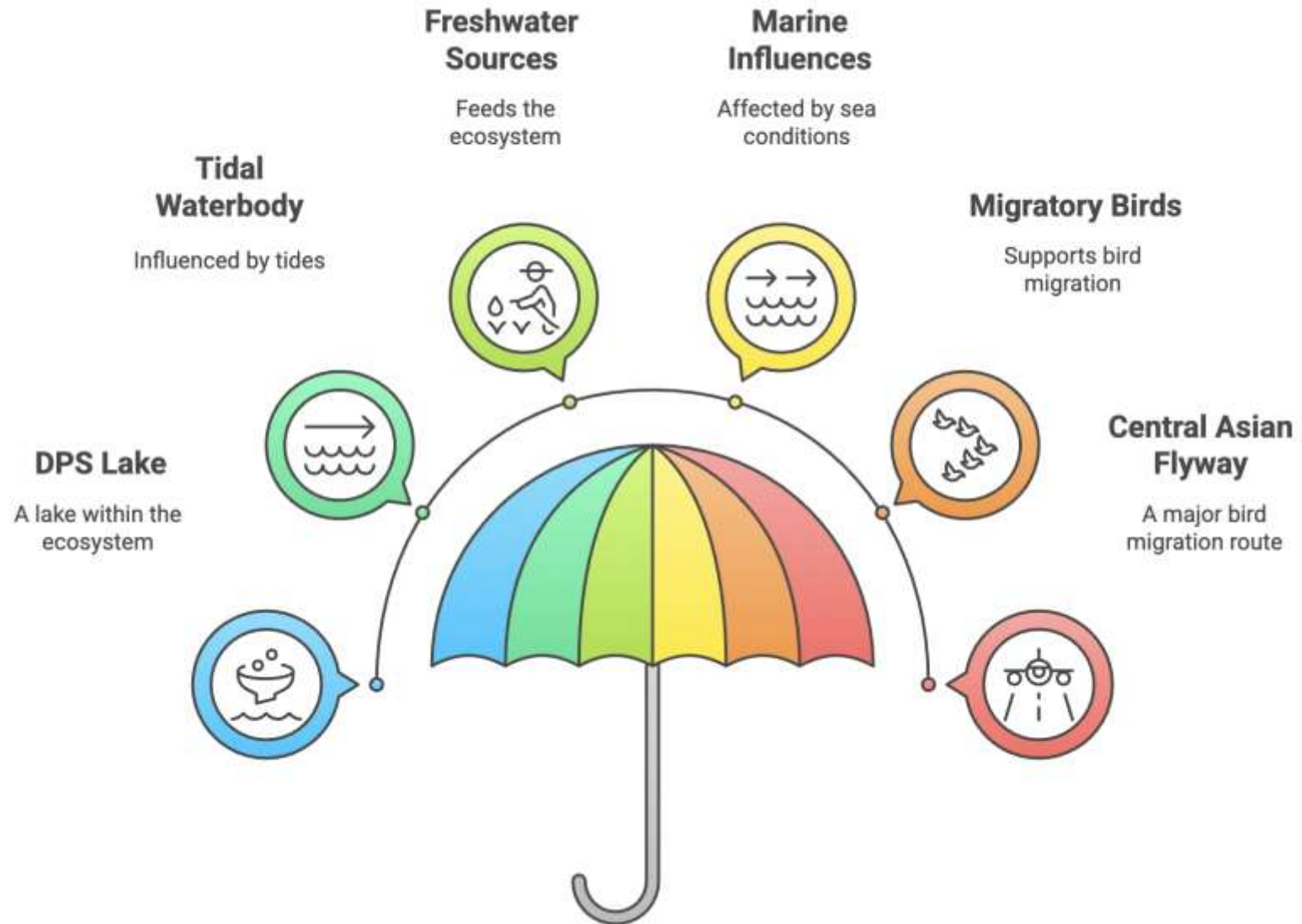
Situated in Seawoods, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra.



Area

Spread over 30 acres, adjacent to the Thane Creek Ramsar site.

The Thane Creek Ecosystem



Flamingo Migration and Wetland Restoration



Flamingo Migration

Thousands of flamingos arrive at the wetland

Initiatives to restore tidal flow and clear algae

Wetland Restoration



Ecological Buffer

The wetland acts as a buffer against floods and sea-water intrusion

Gita and Natyashastra added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register



Cultural Heritage Preserved



Bhagavad Gita

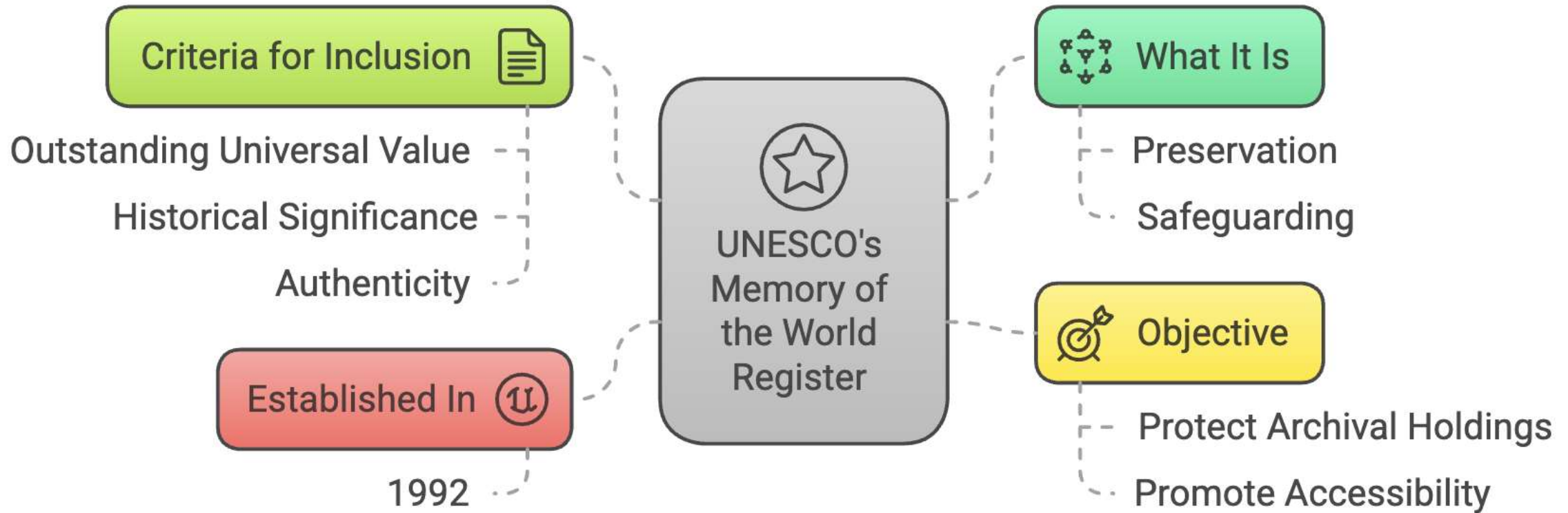
Ancient scripture added
to UNESCO's Memory
Register.



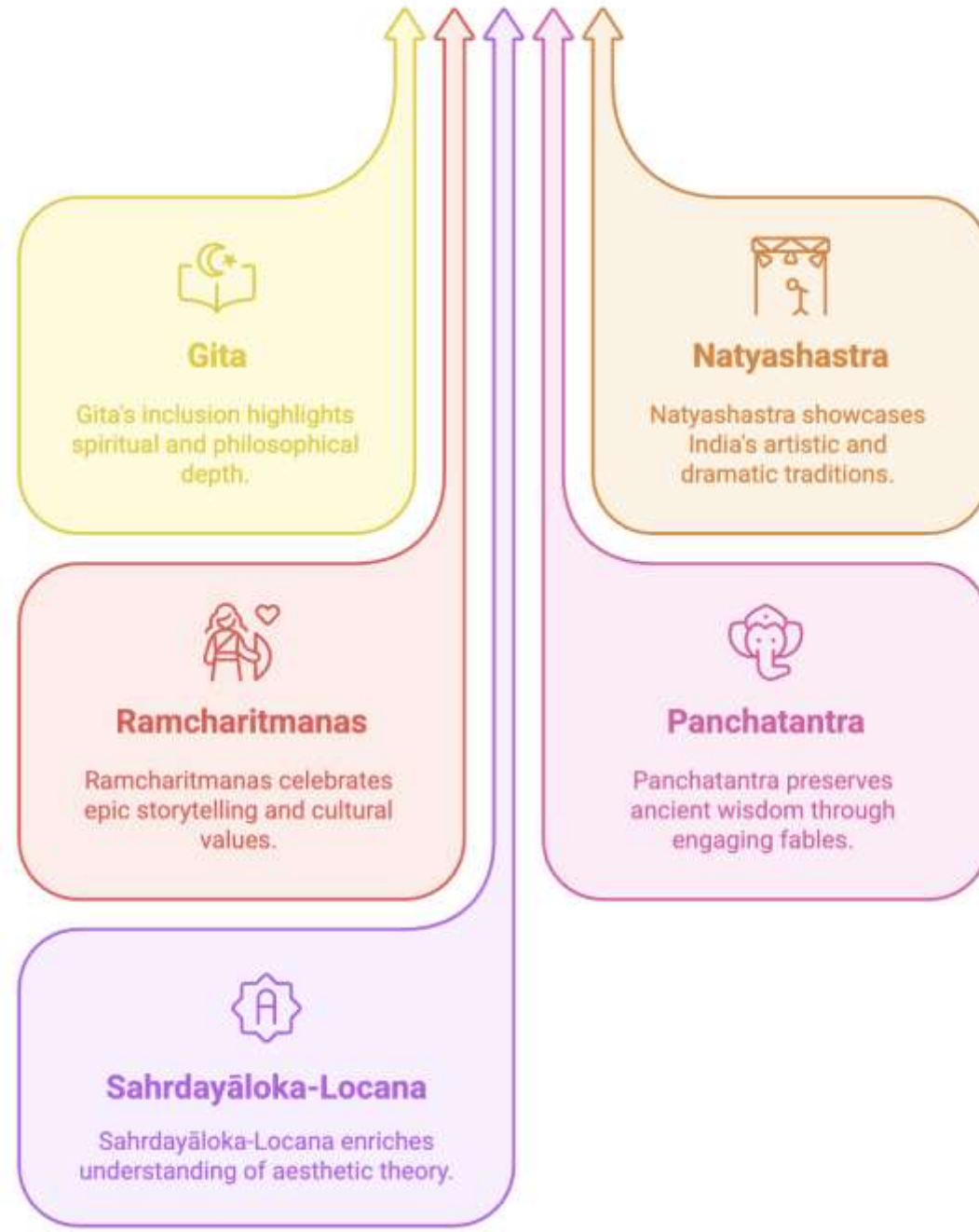
Natyashastra

Classical text on
performing arts now
UNESCO-listed.

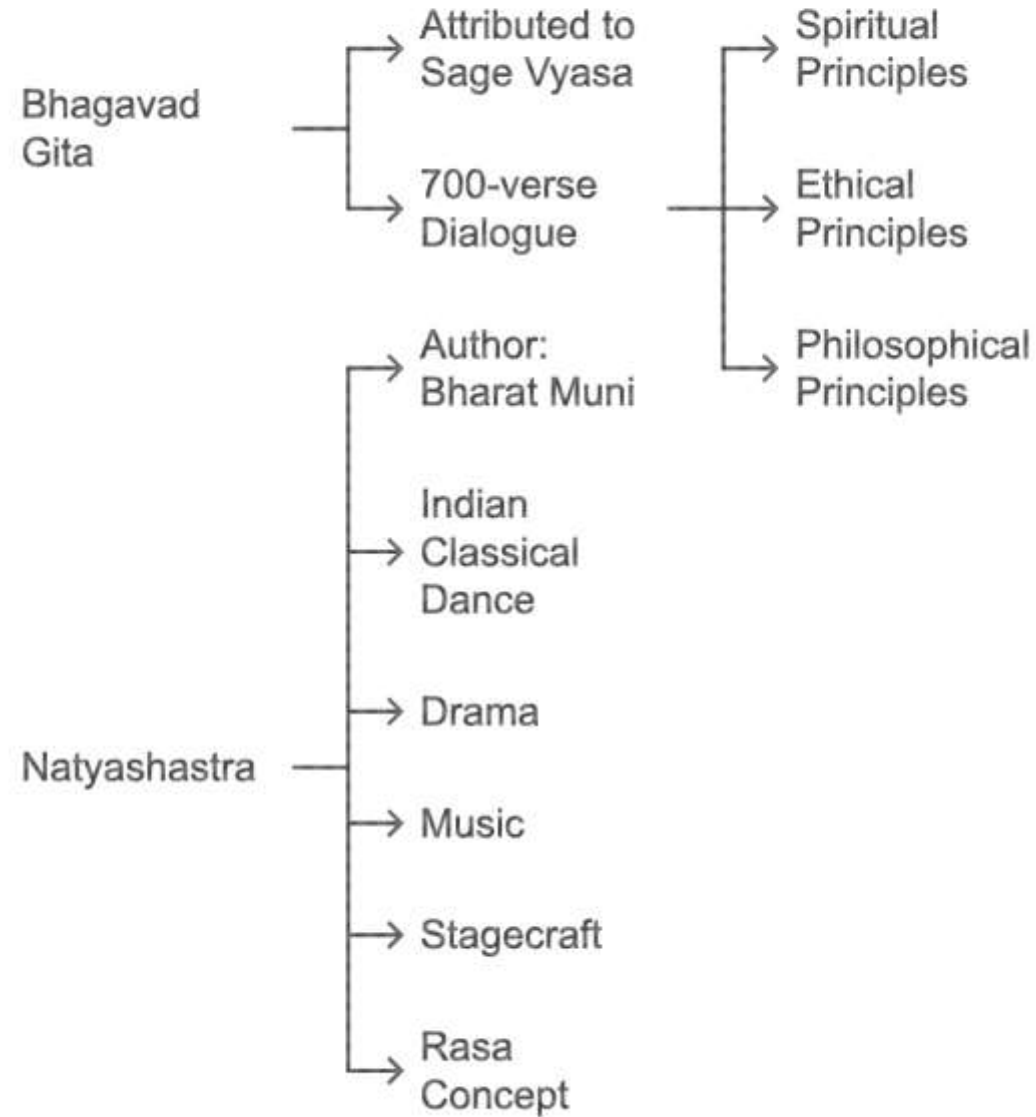
UNESCO's Memory of the World Register



India's Global Cultural Recognition



Key Features of Bhagavad Gita and Natyashastra



Word of the day

Talisman:


a trinket or piece of jewellery usually hung about the neck and thought to be a magical protection against evil or disease

Usage: *Every time he travelled, he held on to his watch like it was his talisman.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/talismanpro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /'tæl.ɪs.mæn/

A blurred background image showing a group of people in a meeting or conference, with several hands raised in the air, suggesting applause or a group exercise. The image is out of focus, with the foreground hands being sharper than the background figures.

Thank you
guys.
