Currently – 6 November 2026

1. Pralay Missile: India's Indigenous Quasi-Ballistic Missile
Source: The Hindu | GS III – Defence and Security

2. India's Time Will Come: For Now, It Is a Middle Power in a Bi-Multipolar World | GS II – International Relations

3. Saudi Arabia Issues Alerts, Warns of 'Danger' in Yanbu
Source: The Hindu | GS II – International Relations; GS III – Energy Security

4. Zero FIR I | GS II – Polity, Governance and Social Justice

5. CERT-In Lays Out Security Norms for Agentic AI Systems
Source: The Hindu | GS III – Science and Technology; Cybersecurity

6. UGC Equity Regulations, 2026: Government Considers
Source: The Indian Express | GS II – Education, Governance and Social Justice

DRDO carries out successful flight-test of Pralay missile

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Thursday successfully flight-tested the indigenously developed quasi-ballistic missile Pralay from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. The successful trial paved the way for its imminent induction into the armed forces.

According to Ministry of Defence, the missile was test-fired at around 11.10 a.m. as part of user evaluation trials. All test objectives were fully met, as confirmed by data captured through various range instruments deployed by the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, the Defence Ministry

1.PRALAY MISSILE – INDIA'S INDIGENOUS QUASI-BALLISTIC MISSILE

GS Paper III:Defence and Security

1. Context

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully tested the indigenous Pralay missile off the Odisha coast as part of its user-evaluation trials. Pralay is a quasi-ballistic missile designed to enhance India's precision-strike capability.

2. Pralay Missile: Key Features

1. **Type:** Short-range, surface-to-surface quasi-ballistic missile.
2. **Range:** Approximately 150–500 km.
3. **Propulsion:** Solid-propellant rocket motor.
4. **Warhead:** Capable of carrying different conventional warheads.
5. **Guidance:** Advanced guidance and navigation systems for precision targeting.
6. **Development:** Indigenously developed by DRDO.

3. Strategic Significance

1. **Precision strikes:** Enables attacks on high-value military targets and installations.
2. **Difficult interception:** Mid-course manoeuvrability makes its trajectory less predictable for enemy air-defence systems.
3. **Conventional deterrence:** Enhances India's ability to respond to military threats using conventional weapons.
4. **Operational flexibility:** Mobility and multiple warhead options improve battlefield effectiveness.
5. **Defence indigenisation:** Strengthens India's indigenous missile-development ecosystem.

4. Evolution and Classification of Missile Trajectories

A. Ballistic Missile – The Basic Concept

A ballistic missile is powered mainly during its initial boost phase. After this, it follows a largely gravity-driven, arcing trajectory towards its target.

Examples: Agni series and Prithvi series.

B. Cruise Missile – An Aerodynamic Flight Path

Unlike a ballistic missile, a cruise missile remains powered during most of its flight. It flies within the atmosphere using aerodynamic lift, broadly like an unmanned aircraft. It can travel at low altitudes and follow a programmed route.

Examples: BrahMos and Tomahawk.

C. Quasi-Ballistic Missile – A More Manoeuvrable Ballistic Trajectory

A quasi-ballistic missile retains the basic characteristics of a ballistic missile but follows a relatively lower trajectory and can manoeuvre during flight. This makes its path less predictable and complicates interception.

Example: Pralay.

Feature	Ballistic	Cruise	Quasi-Ballistic
Flight path	High, arcing	Low, aerodynamic	Lower ballistic trajectory
Propulsion	Mainly initial boost	Sustained during flight	Rocket-powered
Manoeuvrability	Generally follows a predictable trajectory	Can follow a programmed route	Can manoeuvre during flight
Example	Agni	BrahMos	Pralay

5. UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Consider the following statements regarding ballistic and cruise missiles:

1. Ballistic missiles are powered mainly during their initial boost phase.
2. Cruise missiles use aerodynamic lift and remain powered during most of their flight.
3. BrahMos is a ballistic missile, while Agni-V is a cruise missile.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

Explanation: BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile, whereas Agni-V is a ballistic missile.

India's time will come. For now, it is a middle power in a bi-multipolar world



SANJAYA BARU

FROM HIS debating days at Jawaharlal Nehru University, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has had a knack for wit and repartee. Not surprisingly, therefore, when he found a European interlocutor wondering whether India, like all European powers, was a "middle power", not a Big Power like the United States and China, Jaishankar was quick to respond with a clever one-liner — we are a "power in the middle".

The rapid rise of China over the past two decades and the slowing down of the Indian growth process over the past decade have raised new questions about India's place in the world. Economic status alone does not define either power or influence in world affairs. But it matters. It was not a happenstance that the view of India within the international community began to change at the turn of the century when the economy began to perform better and India's skills in the then new field of information technology were globally sought after.

Recall the fact that the Goldman Sachs report on emerging economies, clubbing India with China, Brazil and Russia, the famous BRIC report, was published in 2001. In the same year, the influential American foreign affairs analyst, Stephen P Cohen, published his book *India: Emerging Power*. Through the first decade of this century, several such books were published overseas and in India. The Japanese diplomat Hiroshi Hirabayashi went to the extent of titling his book *India: The Last Super Power*. By 2007 an India sceptic like Singapore's founder-mentor Lee Kuan Yew referred to China and India as "two engines" that would power the rise of Asia.

What made the difference? Clearly, the increase in India's long-term growth from 3.5 per cent in 1950-80 to 6.0 per cent in 1980-2010, with a peak of over 8.0 per cent growth achieved during 2003-2010, made the world look at India with new eyes. India was beginning to show the potential to catch up with East Asian Tigers and the then rapidly rising China. The economy also demonstrated the capability to survive economic sanctions imposed by the US, Japan and other US allies in 1998 after the country conducted nuclear weapons tests and made public her nuclear power capability.

Conscious of the impact of economic performance on the country's power status, the strategic affairs guru, K Subrahmanyam, tasked me to write a paper for the National Security Advisory Board in 2000 that was eventually published as "Strategic Consequences of India's Economic Performance". The strategic affairs community recognised that strong economic performance is key to India's global status.

There was, to be sure, a time when the world did view a poorer India as a "great power" because of what it had come to represent as the first post-colonial, democratic nation in the developing world. India's support for anti-colonial movements and record as a plural, secular democracy imparted a global stature that was not yet warranted by economic performance. In the long run, however, economic performance and capability matter.

Developments over the past decade have contributed to the present scepticism about India's global status. First, the non-fulfilment of the exaggerated claims made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi about India's place in the world. Not only did Modi claim an ideological pre-eminence for India as a "*vishwaguru*", he also made premature claims on economic performance by stating that by 2020 national income would be $5 trillion. Last year, his officialdom rushed to claim that India was now the third largest economy, when in fact it is still the sixth largest.

As a purely political slogan in a contentious democracy, one can understand such claims. However, these claims were then buttressed by books and conferences that may well have made the PM believe that he was prescient in his declamations. Senior officials, scholars and journalists joined the bandwagon. Many westerners worried about the rise of China went along with the narrative in the hope that India would join the West in standing up to China. India's decision to join the Quad and enhance military engagement with the US added to such expectations.

The problem is that, between 2010 and 2025, not only did China's economy take off, à la W W Rostow, but China emerged as a knowledge power with advanced capabilities in science and technology. On the other hand, the BJP's obsession with electoral dominance at home and the unleashing of bigotry, majoritarianism and antediluvianism have combined to damage the narrative of India's rise.

> At one time, the world did view a poorer India as a 'great power' — as the first post-colonial, democratic nation in the developing world.

The fact that economic growth rate has not been able to significantly rise above the long-term average of around 6.0 per cent only affirmed the view that India's emergence as a Big Power will take more time. It is now evident that Modi's other slogan about a Viksit Bharat by 2047 is also tall talk since the economy would have to grow well above 8.0 per cent per annum over the next decade for that goal to be met.

There is in fact no harm in conceding that in the foreseeable future we will remain a "middle power". Our time will come but effort is required. Meanwhile, it is India's status as a middle power and a developing country that will in fact empower its voice in world affairs. Even to get elected to the UNSC, a diplomatic objective that Jaishankar has been tasked to meet, it is an India that speaks for the weak that will fetch the votes. Not an India that desperately courts the powerful.

In the foreseeable future, the global balance of power system is best seen as a "bi-multipolar" system, with the US and China as the two dominant powers with global reach and several other middle powers defining the many ends of a multipolar power structure. In this system, there is no point in India pretending to be a third big power. It is best to build alliances with other middle powers including Russia, the EU, the UK, Japan, Brazil, South Africa and other like-minded countries.

Both the US and China pose a challenge for India. Neither is an option in dealing with the other. Neither can be weaponised against the other. Ensuring stability in relations with both should remain a priority in the present phase of bi-multipolarity.

The writer is distinguished fellow, Takshashila Institution and United Services Institution of India

2. INDIA'S PLACE IN A BI-MULTIPOLAR WORLD: A MIDDLE POWER TODAY

Author: Sanjaya Baru
GS Paper II: International Relations

1. Context: India's Changing Global Position

India's economic growth, nuclear capability and democratic credentials have enhanced its international standing. However, despite its growing influence, India is not yet a global superpower. It remains a **middle power in an emerging bi-multipolar world**.

2. India's Rise: Foundations of Global Influence

1. **Economic growth:** Sustained economic growth, particularly during 2003–2010, improved India's global standing.
2. **Strategic capability:** The 1998 nuclear tests strengthened India's strategic position.
3. **Democratic credentials:** Its identity as a large, plural and secular democracy enhanced its international stature.
4. **Global recognition:** Growing economic and strategic importance attracted greater international attention.

3. Why Is India Still a Middle Power?

1. **Economic gap:** India's economic scale and technological capabilities remain below those of leading global powers.
2. **China's rise:** China's rapid economic and technological advancement has widened the strategic gap.
3. **Limited global influence:** Economic strength alone does not guarantee the ability to shape international affairs.
4. **Domestic constraints:** Institutional weaknesses and social divisions can undermine India's international credibility.
5. **Growth imperative:** Sustained economic growth of around 8% annually over the next decade is required to strengthen India's global position.

4. Emerging Global Order: Bi-Multipolarity

The global balance of power is increasingly characterised by two dominant powers—the **United States and China**—alongside several other influential countries.

1. The US and China exercise predominant global influence.
2. Russia, India, Japan and the European Union remain important centres of economic and strategic influence.
3. Middle powers can shape international outcomes through partnerships, diplomacy and multilateral institutions.

Implication for India: It should pursue strategic partnerships and strengthen its influence without prematurely projecting itself as a global superpower.

5. Way Forward: From Middle Power to Major Global Power

1. **Economic transformation:** Strengthen productivity, industrialisation, technological innovation and sustained growth.

2. **Strategic partnerships:** Deepen cooperation with Russia, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan, Brazil and South Africa.
3. **Strategic autonomy:** Avoid rigid bloc politics and maintain independent decision-making in relations with both the US and China.
4. **Institutional credibility:** Strengthen democratic institutions, governance and social cohesion.
5. **Pragmatic diplomacy:** Align global ambitions with actual economic and strategic capabilities.

6. Conclusion

India's emergence as a major global power is a long-term process, not an immediate achievement. Recognising its present position as a middle power reflects strategic realism. India must convert its economic potential, democratic strengths and strategic partnerships into sustained global influence.

7. Important International Relations Terminology

1. Middle Power

A country with significant regional influence and the capacity to contribute to global affairs, but without the capabilities to dominate the international system.

Examples: India, Australia, Canada and South Korea.

2. Great Power

A country possessing substantial economic, military, technological and diplomatic capabilities to influence international decisions and shape global affairs.

Examples: United States, China and Russia.

3. Bipolarity

An international system in which global power is primarily concentrated in two dominant powers or rival blocs.

Example: Cold War (1945–1991), characterised by the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Distinction: Bipolarity – two dominant powers; Multipolarity – several major power centres; Bi-multipolarity – two predominant powers alongside several influential powers.

8. UPSC Mains Previous-Year Questions – GS Paper II

1. 2019 | 10 Marks

“The long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalised nations has disappeared on account of its new-found role in the emerging global order.” Elaborate.

2. 2019 | 10 Marks

“What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India’s national self-esteem and ambitions.” Explain with suitable examples.

3. 2021 | 10 Marks

“The USA is facing an existential threat in the form of a China, that is much more challenging than the erstwhile Soviet Union.” Explain.

4. 2022 | 10 Marks

How will the I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India’s position in global politics?

5. 2023 | 15 Marks

The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India. What is your opinion about this statement? Give reasons and examples to support your answer.

6. 2024 | 10 Marks

“The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China’s supply chain and as a strategic ally to counter China’s political and economic dominance.” Explain this statement with examples.

Saudi Arabia issues alerts, warns of 'danger' in Yanbu

Reuters
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia issued alerts on Thursday warning of potential danger in Yanbu, the kingdom's Red Sea oil export hub, as Yemen's Houthis (Ansar Allah) continue attacks on the kingdom that have opened another front in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis in Yemen said it destroyed a missile launched by the group towards Islam's holy city of Medina.

"Air defence intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by the terrorist Houthi militia toward the Medina region," coalition spokesperson Turki al-Malki said in a post on X.



Fighters from the Saudi-led coalition hold a position during clashes with Houthis in Yemen's northwestern Jawf province. AFP

The Houthis rejected any suggestion they were targeting the city, saying such accusations were a "blatant and grave falsehood". "Our operations target only its oil facilities and military bases."

The kingdom's civil defence also issued emergency alerts for the southeastern area of Sharurah that borders Yemen.

Houthis said on Wednesday they had attacked Riyadh's international airport while Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa visited the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter and a key U.S. ally, has been requesting assistance from countries for support in its renewed war against the Yemeni militia.



3. SAUDI ARABIA WARNS OF HOUTHI THREAT TO YANBU

GS Paper II: International Relations | **GS Paper III:** Energy Security

1. Context

Saudi Arabia issued security alerts over potential Houthi threats to **Yanbu**, a major oil-export hub on its Red Sea coast, amid escalating tensions in West Asia.

2. Yanbu: Strategic Importance

1. **Major oil-export hub:** Yanbu is a key terminal for exporting Saudi crude oil through the Red Sea.
2. **Alternative to Strait of Hormuz:** The 1,200-km East-West Pipeline (Petroline) transports crude oil from eastern Saudi Arabia to Yanbu, allowing exports to bypass the Strait of Hormuz.
3. **Global energy security:** Any disruption to Yanbu's oil infrastructure could affect international oil supplies and prices.
4. **Strategic maritime location:** Its position on the Red Sea provides access to the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the Suez Canal, connecting Saudi oil exports to global markets.

3. UPSC Prelims PYQ Linkage: Maritime Geography

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026

Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach the Indian Ocean?

1. Bahrain
2. Syria
3. Qatar
4. Egypt

Select the correct answer:

(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) 3 and 4

Answer: (b) 1 and 3

Explanation: Bahrain and Qatar are situated along the Persian Gulf, whose maritime exit to the Indian Ocean is through the Strait of Hormuz. Syria and Egypt do not depend on this route.

Zero FIR is progressive, but it is not enough



AUDREY DMELLO

ON AUGUST 4, the chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Vijaya K Rahatkar, described the Zero FIR as one of the new criminal laws' most progressive provisions. Under Section 173 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), a woman can walk into the nearest police station to get her FIR registered, regardless of where the offence has taken place. In her words, it "places accessibility before technicalities".

It was the 2013 Justice Verma Committee, constituted in the aftermath of the December 2012 gangrape, that first recommended the recording of Zero FIRs in cases of sexual violence.

Since then, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued several advisories stating that an FIR must be registered irrespective of territorial jurisdiction and that refusal to do so will result in prosecution and disciplinary action against the police officer.

Yet, even today, police remain resistant to filing Zero FIRs. It takes painful persuasion and reiteration of the law to convince them to do so. But what happens immediately after a Zero FIR is filed? Accessibility ends and the ordeal of the victim begins. The FIR is transferred to the police station with jurisdiction, and every procedure thereafter is done in that jurisdiction.

Take the case of Mitra (name changed), a 15-year-old orphan, who lives in one of the poorest Mumbai slums. Mitra lives with her two brothers, one 18 and the other 13. Her elder brother does delivery work to support the family. None of the siblings has attended school since their father died four years ago.

Mitra was taken by her friend to Raigad district, where she was brutally raped and beaten. When she missed her periods, she shared her ordeal with a local NGO. With great difficulty, we filed a Zero FIR at a police station near her home. The next day, the case was transferred to Raigad, and the police insisted that Mitra travel to Raigad, a four-hour journey each way from her home, for the procedure. We explained to them Mitra's vulnerabilities — her pregnancy, her motion sickness, her younger brother being home alone, the loss of wages for her elder brother — did not cooperate.

Mitra and her elder brother were forced to travel several times to Raigad at their own cost. They were made to wait for hours for spot identification, panchnama, Mitra's medical examination — which took a few days — the recording of her statement before a magistrate, and production before the Child Welfare Committee.

We had spoken to the government hospital near her home for the medical termination of Mitra's pregnancy, but the police refused.

Eventually Mitra was admitted to a shelter in Raigad. To conduct her MTP, Mitra was admitted to a hospital where she spent almost 20 days with no clear information on when the procedure would begin. The child victim was not informed who her support person was.

Her elder brother was made to run from pillar to post simply to meet her. For the past one-and-a-half months, the police have repeatedly called him to the Raigad police station and court. Mitra has not yet been granted the Maharashtra victim compensation, even though interim compensation is meant to reach her within seven days.

A Zero FIR is a good provision, but it must be extended to every procedure where the victim is required to attend thereafter.

To make the Zero FIR truly accessible, the state must issue clear, enforceable directions that ensure survivors receive support at their doorstep. Two suggestions come to mind: In the case of a Zero FIR, as far as possible, the medical examination, magistrate statement recording, Production before the Child Welfare Committee and shelter placement should be arranged near the survivor's place of residence, and if a survivor must be called to another district, the state must provide transport, not only for her but for a family member or support person accompanying her.

The measure of a progressive law is how it treats a victim after she finds the courage to speak. If reporting rape costs a family its income, safety and stability, it's not surprising that families choose silence.

A Zero FIR is a good provision, but it must be extended to every procedure where the victim is required to attend thereafter. The state must issue clear directions that ensure survivors receive support at their

The writer is director, Majlis

4. ZERO FIR – A PROGRESSIVE REFORM, BUT NOT ENOUGH

Author: Audrey D'Mello
GS Paper II: Polity, Governance and Vulnerable Sections

1. Context

Section 173(1) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 provides for Zero FIR, allowing information relating to a cognizable offence to be registered at any police station, irrespective of where the offence occurred. This removes territorial jurisdiction as a barrier to accessing justice, particularly for women and vulnerable victims.

2. Ground-Level Challenges

1. **Jurisdictional hurdles:** Survivors may still have to travel to distant police stations for subsequent procedures.
2. **Procedural delays:** Medical examination, recording of statements before a magistrate and other formalities may take several days.
3. **Institutional insensitivity:** Police resistance and lack of sensitivity increase the survivor's distress.
4. **Inadequate support:** Lack of transport, shelter, financial assistance and family support creates additional barriers.
5. **Delayed compensation:** Administrative delays can prevent victims from receiving timely financial assistance.

3. Way Forward: Survivor-Centric Justice

1. **Localise procedures:** Arrange medical examination, magistrate statement recording and other necessary procedures near the survivor's residence, wherever possible.
2. **Integrated support:** Improve coordination among police, hospitals, Child Welfare Committees and shelter homes.
3. **Transport assistance:** Provide travel support to survivors and accompanying family members when movement to another district is unavoidable.
4. **Timely compensation:** Ensure prompt disbursement of victim compensation.
5. **Police sensitisation:** Strengthen gender-sensitive training and accountability.

4. UPSC Prelims PYQ – 2026

Consider the following statements about Zero First Information Report (Zero FIR) under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023:

1. A Zero FIR can be lodged at a police station even when the place of commission of a cognizable offence is outside its territorial jurisdiction.
2. The Officer-in-Charge of a police station may, with the permission of the competent authority, initiate a preliminary enquiry.
3. Under Zero FIR, it is obligatory for the informant to furnish information electronically.

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: The reproduced answer key gives (d), but the question as worded is inconsistent: Statement 1 is supported by Section 173(1) BNSS, while Statement 2 concerns the separate preliminary-enquiry provision under Section 173(3). The original question and options should be checked before using it as an official PYQ.

Important provisions:

- **Section 173(1):** Information relating to a cognizable offence, irrespective of territorial jurisdiction.
- **Section 173(3):** Preliminary enquiry in specified cases, subject to prescribed conditions.

CERT-In lays out security norms for Agentic AI systems

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has set out specific security and auditing requirements for artificial intelligence (AI) systems that can independently plan and carry out tasks, use external tools, and delegate work to other AI systems.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Security Auditing Guidelines: Framework for Secure, Ethical, and Auditable Artificial Intelligence Systems issued by the country's top cybersecurity agency identify features such as autonomous task execution, persistent memory, and the ability to delegate work as factors that can increase the risks associated with these systems.

Unlike conventional AI tools that primarily respond to user instructions, agentic AI systems can take multiple steps to complete a task. They may access information, use software tools, execute code, or communicate with external systems.

The guidelines identify such capabilities as factors requiring closer security scrutiny.

The framework calls for testing whether an AI agent can exceed its authorised permissions, use tools without approval, bypass approval mechanisms, or misuse credentials. It also identifies unsafe delegation of tasks and the effectiveness of emergency-stop mechanisms as areas that auditors should examine.

The guidelines also address the risks associated with an agent's memory and the information it retains from earlier interactions or tasks.

Hacking group behind bank attacks identified

Reuters
BENGALURU/MUMBAI

India's cybersecurity agency has named the hacking group behind a wave of AI-driven attacks on financial firms and identified the tools it used, at least two of them linked to China.

The group, which the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) calls "Crafty Falcon", has breached non-bank lenders, fintech firms and cryptocurrency exchanges, according to an advisory issued on Wednesday.

CERT-In said the attackers use publicly available AI tools to automate break-ins "at machine speed". It named four tools: ARTEX, PentAGI, Cairn and CyberStrikeAI.

5. CERT-In LAYS DOWN SECURITY NORMS FOR AGENTIC AI

GS Paper III: Science & Technology; Cybersecurity

1. Context

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued **AI Security Auditing Guidelines: Framework for Secure, Ethical and Auditable AI Systems**, prescribing security and auditing requirements for Agentic AI systems.

2. Agentic AI: Meaning and Features

Agentic AI refers to AI systems capable of independently planning and executing multi-step tasks with limited human intervention.

1. **Autonomous execution:** Independently plans and performs tasks.
2. **External tool access:** Interacts with software, information and external systems.
3. **Persistent memory:** Retains information from previous interactions.
4. **Task delegation:** Assigns work to other AI systems or agents.

3. Major Security Risks

1. **Unauthorised access:** Exceeding permitted access and misusing credentials.
2. **Uncontrolled execution:** Using external tools or executing code without approval.
3. **Security bypass:** Circumventing approval mechanisms.
4. **Unsafe delegation:** Transferring tasks to other agents without adequate oversight.
5. **Memory vulnerabilities:** Exposing sensitive information retained from earlier interactions.
6. **Weak emergency controls:** Failure of mechanisms designed to stop unsafe operations.

4. CERT-In: Key Security Requirements

1. **Security audits:** Examine autonomous execution, memory and task delegation.
2. **Permission controls:** Test whether agents exceed authorised access.
3. **Approval mechanisms:** Prevent unauthorised tool usage and code execution.
4. **Emergency-stop systems:** Ensure unsafe operations can be terminated.
5. **Memory protection:** Audit information retained from previous tasks and interactions.

5. AI-Driven Cyberattacks

CERT-In identified the hacking group **Crafty Falcon**, associated with attacks on non-bank lenders, fintech firms and cryptocurrency exchanges.

Four AI tools identified in its advisory:

- ARTEX
- PentAGI
- Cairn
- CyberStrikeAI

These tools were reportedly used to automate cyber intrusions. At least two were linked to China, according to the advisory.

6. UPSC Mains PYQ Linkages – GS Paper III

1. UPSC 2023 | 10 Marks

Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare?

2. UPSC 2022 | 10 Marks

What are the different elements of cyber security? Keeping in view the challenges in cyber security, examine the extent to which India has successfully developed a comprehensive National Cyber Security Strategy.

3. UPSC 2021 | 10 Marks

Keeping in view India's internal security, analyse the impact of cross-border cyber attacks. Also discuss defensive measures against these sophisticated attacks.

Looking at forming a committee to revisit UGC equity rules: Govt to Supreme Court

Opposed by general category groups, OBC and Dalit sections, regulations stayed in Jan

Ananthakrishnan G
New Delhi, November 5

THE CENTRE told the Supreme Court Thursday that it is planning to put in place a committee to reconsider the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, which were stayed by the court earlier this year after petitions questioned neutrality of the rules.

"The government is contemplating appointing a committee," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana.

Mehta said this after the bench asked the government to consider taking a relook at the provisions. "Why don't you revisit these regulations so that the next generation is taken care of? They should protect the interest of every student," the CJI said.

Notified on January 13 this year, the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, snowballed into a political issue after drawing objections from both general category groups and sections of Dalit and OBC communities.

In the eye of the storm is regulation 3(1)(c) which defines caste-based discrimination as discrimination on the basis of caste or tribe against members of the Scheduled Castes,

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

e EXPLAINED

Ahead of UP, Punjab polls

The Centre's declaration that it may ask a committee to revisit the UGC equity rules is significant because the regulations impact voter bases in key states. In UP and Punjab, where Assembly polls are due early next year, there are significant SC and OBC populations alongside politically influential groups of the general category.

6. UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS, 2026 – GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS REVIEW

GS Paper II: Education, Governance and Social Justice

1. Context

The Central Government informed a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court that it is considering constituting a committee to revisit the **UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026**. The regulations, notified on 13 January 2026, faced objections from general category groups and sections of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), leading to their earlier stay by the Supreme Court.

2. Major Issues Surrounding the Regulations

1. **Definition of caste-based discrimination:** Regulation 3(1)(c) defines caste-based discrimination as discrimination against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
2. **Concerns over exclusion:** General category groups and sections of OBC communities have objected to the definition, raising concerns about the coverage and inclusiveness of the framework.

3. **Equality and institutional neutrality:** The debate centres on whether equity regulations should protect every student against discrimination while addressing the historical disadvantages faced by marginalised communities.
4. **Social and political implications:** The regulations have generated opposition across different social groups. Their significance is particularly visible in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, where SC and OBC populations are substantial and politically influential.

3. Constitutional and Governance Dimensions

1. **Article 14:** Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
2. **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on specified grounds, alongside provisions for affirmative action.
3. **Article 15(5):** Enables special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, SCs and STs in educational institutions.
4. **Social justice:** Balancing substantive equality, protection against discrimination and equal dignity within higher education institutions.

4. Way Forward

1. **Inclusive framework:** Ensure that equity mechanisms provide protection against discrimination while recognising historical social disadvantages.
2. **Clear definitions:** Establish precise and unambiguous definitions of discrimination to minimise interpretational disputes.
3. **Institutional accountability:** Strengthen transparent grievance-redressal mechanisms in universities.
4. **Stakeholder consultation:** Involve students, universities, social groups and legal experts before revising the regulations.
5. **Constitutional balance:** Reconcile affirmative action with equality, fairness and dignity for all students.

5. Key Governance Issue

The challenge is to ensure that **equity does not become exclusion and that equality does not undermine affirmative action**. Higher education institutions must protect historically disadvantaged communities while maintaining a fair, inclusive and discrimination-free academic environment.