UGC’s Surgical Strike Day Circular

Why in news?

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- University Grants Commission has sent a circular to the vice-chancellors of the 900-odd universities regulated by it.
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What is the circular on?

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- UGC has urged universities and colleges to mark September 29, designated as the Surgical Strike Day by the present regime.
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- This is to commemorate two years of Indian armed forces' surgical strikes in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir in 2016.
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- It asks them to ensure students “pledge their support for the armed forces” via paper and digital letters.
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- All institutions with NCC units will have to organise a special parade.
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- After this, the NCC commander will address students on the modalities of border protection.
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- Universities/colleges will have to organise interactions with former members of the armed forces.
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What is the rationale?

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- It is claimed that this would make students appreciate the role of the armed

forces.
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- They would understand how privileges of citizenship for civilians and army-men flow alike from a robust defence apparatus.
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- Students get sensitised about the sacrifices made by the armed forces.
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What are the concerns?

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- **UGC** - The law assigns the UGC with all matters academic and administrative in the higher education ecosystem.
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- It is to be soon replaced with the Higher Education Commission of India.
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- The change of roles is a proof of how UGC has failed to carry out its mandate.
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- UGC has surrendered its independence by claiming that it has only given instructions in accordance with a “government directive”.
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- UGC, failing to ensure Indian universities figure among the world’s or Asia’s best, is signing off as a mere tool of competitive politics.
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- **Nationalism** - It is contested that observing a Surgical Strike Day is geared more towards political ends.
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- Moves such as “walls of valour”, tanks in campuses, etc, amount to unwarranted militarisation of academic spaces.
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- It conflates the nation and nationhood with the nation-state.
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- It thus breeds political allegiance rather than the intended patriotism/nationalism.
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- It, in turn, suppresses the legitimate criticism of the nation-state.
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- The said objectives could be sourced through ways that do not involve celebrating any particular military action.
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- The UGC circular sets a dangerous precedent as it has nothing to do with

higher education, let alone be under the UGC’s remit.
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Source: Financial Express

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