

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

EVERY TOPPER'S LAST READ

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Friday, 21 August 2026

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§1 Top Headlines

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§2 Polity & Governance

20 AUGUST 2026

GS2 • Polity

Supreme Court: The UP Gangsters Act, 1986 Creates No Independent Offence — A "Stillborn" Provision Clarified

WHY IN NEWS

On 20 August 2026, the Supreme Court held that the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986 does not by itself create an independent criminal offence, quashing proceedings opened against advocate Shiv Pratap Singh (arising from a Fatehgarh Bar Association election dispute) and against Himanshu Srivastava, along with his brother and father. The Court held that a "Gang Chart" prepared under the Act's subordinate Rules cannot manufacture penal liability where the parent statute itself creates no offence. Proceedings under the ordinary IPC/BNS provisions against the accused, where applicable, remain unaffected by the ruling.

BACKGROUND

The UP Gangsters Act, 1986 was enacted to combat organised gang activity by empowering police to open a "Gang Chart" against a person believed to belong to an organised gang, triggering enhanced police powers with limited upfront judicial oversight. The Act has long been criticised as a tool of harassment against political rivals, lawyers and dissenting voices, since a Gang Chart could be opened on the subjective satisfaction of the police. The ruling follows a broader constitutional line holding that delegated legislation (Rules) cannot expand the scope of a parent Act — penal liability must flow from a validly enacted offence-creating provision, never from subordinate rule-making alone.

KEY FACTS

- UP Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986 — enacted to curb organised gang crime in the state.
- 20 Aug 2026 ruling: the Act "does not create an independent criminal offence."
- Proceedings quashed against advocate Shiv Pratap Singh and against Himanshu Srivastava, his brother and father.
- A "Gang Chart" is prepared under subordinate Rules framed under the Act, not under a substantive penal section.
- Subordinate Rules cannot create penal liability absent an enabling offence in the parent statute — a delegated-legislation limit.
- Underlying IPC/BNS charges against the accused, where applicable, continue unaffected.
- The Act has been criticised for enabling police to brand individuals "history-sheeters" with limited upfront judicial scrutiny.
- Comparable state "anti-gangster"/organised-crime laws (e.g., Maharashtra's MCOCA) raise similar due-process questions.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Constitutional limits on delegated legislation: subordinate Rules cannot supply an offence the parent Act itself omits (*ultra vires* doctrine).
- Due-process concerns with preventive/special-security laws granting police wide discretion with limited judicial checks at the entry stage.
- Potential misuse of gangster/anti-social-activity laws against political dissidents, lawyers and civil-society figures — a chilling effect on legitimate activity.
- Federal dimension: state-specific special laws create inconsistent standards of liberty protection across India.
- Way forward: a "judicial review at entry" safeguard for Gang Chart-type preventive classifications, aligned with Article 21 due process.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

The trick: An Act needs a SECTION to punish; a RULE can only explain HOW, never WHAT. A Gang Chart is a "HOW" document — it cannot invent a "WHAT" offence.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2022 — delegated legislation and the limits of rule-making power under Article 246/13(3)(a).

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding the UP Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986:

1. It creates a specific, independent criminal offence for being part of a "gang."
2. A "Gang Chart" against a person can be prepared under Rules framed under the Act.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b). The Supreme Court held the Act itself creates no independent offence; only Rule-based Gang Charts exist, and those cannot substitute for a penal provision.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): "Delegated legislation cannot travel beyond the four corners of the parent statute." Discuss with reference to the Supreme Court's recent ruling on the UP Gangsters Act, 1986.

GS2

Polity

PYQ-2022

#DelegatedLegislation

#DueProcess

20 AUGUST 2026

GS2 • Polity

SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act: The "Public View" Test Reaffirmed — Proceedings Against School Manager Quashed

WHY IN NEWS

On 20 August 2026, a Supreme Court bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta quashed proceedings under Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 against a school manager accused of hurling caste-based abuses, holding that the alleged remarks were made inside an enclosed room with no evidence they occurred "within public view." The Court was hearing an appeal against an Allahabad High Court order that had refused to quash the proceedings. Proceedings under the ordinary IPC/BNS provisions against the accused continue unaffected.

BACKGROUND

Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the SC/ST (POA) Act, 1989 (inserted by the 2016 Amendment) criminalise intentionally insulting or intimidating a Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe member "in any place within public view." Earlier precedents — *Swaran Singh v. State* (2008) and *Hitesh Verma v. State of Uttarakhand* (2020) — have consistently held that "public view" is a strict, fact-specific threshold, not satisfied merely because other persons exist nearby. The 2026 ruling reaffirms this narrow reading: school teachers confirmed a dispute occurred but none stated they were present when the specific remarks were allegedly made or that they personally heard them.

KEY FACTS

- SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 — Sections 3(1)(r)/(s), inserted via the 2016 Amendment Act.
- "Public view" is a mandatory ingredient for these specific sub-sections.
- Ruling delivered 20 Aug 2026 by Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta.
- Arose from an Allahabad High Court order that had refused to quash proceedings; Supreme Court reversed on this point.
- School teachers confirmed an altercation but not presence during, or hearing of, the alleged casteist remarks.
- IPC/BNS charges against the school manager, if any, continue independently.
- Precedent lineage: *Swaran Singh* (2008) and *Hitesh Verma* (2020) — both narrowly construed "public view."
- The Act's Rule 7 mandates Deputy SP-level investigation and trial before Special Courts, distinct from ordinary procedure.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Balancing the POA Act's protective intent against safeguards against misuse via strict statutory construction of "public view."
- Judicial consistency: the 2026 ruling aligns with, rather than dilutes, existing precedent on this ingredient.
- Evidentiary standard at the quashing stage versus the trial stage under criminal procedure.
- Distinction between "no POA Act offence" and complete absence of caste-based harm — parallel IPC/BNS provisions still apply.
- Policy debate: should "public view" be statutorily widened to cover institutional/workplace settings with an inherent power imbalance?

Memory Hook: Public View ≠ Public Knowledge. A closed-door insult may still be cruel — but under 3(1)(r)/(s), it is not a POA Act "atrocities" unless witnesses could actually see or hear it happen.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021 — constitutional provisions for protection of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about Section 3(1)(r) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:

1. It was inserted through the 2016 Amendment.
2. The offence is complete regardless of whether the utterance occurs in public view.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). "Public view" is a mandatory ingredient, so statement 2 is incorrect.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): "Public view" as a statutory ingredient under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act has been narrowly construed by courts. Critically examine the implications for victims of caste-based abuse in private or institutional settings.

GS2

Polity

PYQ-2021

#POAACT

#PublicView

SAHYOG Both rulings this week test the same underlying skill — statutory interpretation under strict construction. Sahyog Mentorship's Weekend Judgment Clinic covers exactly this pattern for GS2 answer-writing.

§3 International Relations

21 AUGUST 2026

GS2 · IR

12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting Concludes in Pune — India Proposes a BRICS DPI Repository

WHY IN NEWS

The 12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting concluded in Pune on 21 August 2026, chaired by Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, capping a five-day (17–21 August) BRICS Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Track under the theme "Innovate, Cooperate and Transform (ICT) for a Resilient Future." Member states adopted future cooperation priorities across four focus areas, and India proposed a "BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Repository" to formalise the sharing of DPI models across the bloc.

BACKGROUND

India holds the BRICS Presidency for 2026, and its ICT Track has run through the year focusing on digital-economy cooperation among the five founding members plus expanded partners. India's own DPI stack — Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, CoWIN — has been positioned internationally as a "digital public good" model, and India has previously pushed similar repository/framework ideas at G20 platforms to help other Global South countries replicate its DPI approach.

KEY FACTS

- 12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting, Pune, concluded 21 Aug 2026, chaired by Jyotiraditya M. Scindia.
- Concludes the five-day (17–21 Aug 2026) BRICS ICT Track.
- Theme: "Innovate, Cooperate and Transform (ICT) for a Resilient Future."
- Four focus areas: Sustainable & Resilient ICT Ecosystems; Cybersecurity & Trustworthy ICT; Digital Skilling & Capacity Building; Innovation, Startups & Entrepreneurship.
- Outcome: adoption of future cooperation priorities across these four areas.
- Delegates visited the Digital BRICS Forum Expo in Pune.
- India proposed a "BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure Repository" to formalise DPI-model sharing.
- India holds the BRICS Presidency for calendar year 2026.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's DPI diplomacy: using its domestic digital-stack success as a soft-power/Global-South leadership tool.

- BRICS as a platform for South-South cooperation on cybersecurity and digital skilling, distinct from Western-led internet-governance frameworks.
- Institutional durability: do "future cooperation priorities" translate into binding commitments or remain communiqué language?
- Competitive dimension: BRICS' DPI push versus G20's own DPI initiatives — complementary or duplicative?
- Reconciling "trustworthy ICT" language with members' varying data-governance and surveillance regimes.

Memory Hook: The ICT Track's four pillars — remember SCDI: **S**ustainable ecosystems, **C**ybersecurity, **D**igital skilling, **I**nnovation/startups.

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021 — BRICS' institutional architecture and India's role within it.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Which of the following were among the four focus areas adopted at the 12th BRICS Communications Ministers' Meeting, 2026?

1. Sustainable & Resilient ICT Ecosystems
2. Digital Skilling & Capacity Building
3. Trade in Digital Services Dispute Resolution

Select the correct answer:

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

Answer: (a). "Trade in Digital Services Dispute Resolution" was not one of the four adopted focus areas.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): India has proposed a "BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure Repository." Discuss the strategic rationale behind India's DPI diplomacy within South-South cooperation platforms.

GS2

IR

#BRICS

#DigitalPublicInfrastructure

§4 Defence & Security

20-21 AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Defence/Space

DRDO Charts a Roadmap to Use ISRO's Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport — Private and MSME Access Widened

WHY IN NEWS

DRDO has announced it is drawing up a strategic roadmap to use ISRO's upcoming third launch pad at the Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport in Tamil Nadu, aiming to fuse ISRO's rapid small-satellite launch capability with DRDO's electronics, early-warning and satellite technologies for cost-effective tactical space assets. This comes as ISRO widens private-sector and MSME/startup participation at the complex, with a pre-Expression-of-Interest (EOI) conference registration deadline of 24 August 2026, a site visit scheduled for 10 September, and a pre-EOI meeting in Ahmedabad on 15 September 2026.

BACKGROUND

Kulasekharapatnam is ISRO's second full-fledged launch site after Sriharikota, purpose-built for high-frequency small-satellite (SSLV-class) launches to cut turnaround time and cost, with its third launch pad targeted for commissioning in FY2026-27. Widening private and MSME access follows India's broader space-sector reforms since 2020 — IN-SPACe as single-window regulator, liberalised FDI in select segments, and the rise of private players such as Skyroot and Agnikul. DRDO's interest reflects a growing trend of dual-use space infrastructure, with defence agencies leveraging civilian launch capacity instead of building parallel facilities.

KEY FACTS

- Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport, Tamil Nadu — ISRO's dedicated small-satellite launch complex.
- Third launch pad commissioning targeted for FY2026-27; small-satellite launches expected from 2027.
- DRDO roadmap combines ISRO's launch cadence with DRDO's electronics/early-warning/satellite technologies.
- Private-sector, MSME and startup participation being widened at the complex.
- Pre-EOI conference registration deadline: 24 August 2026.
- Site visit: 10 September 2026; pre-EOI meeting: Ahmedabad, 15 September 2026.
- IN-SPACe is the single-window regulator enabling private space-sector participation.
- Sriharikota (SDSC-SHAR) remains ISRO's primary spaceport; Kulasekharapatnam is the second.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Dual-use infrastructure strategy: defence leveraging civilian space assets instead of duplicating capacity — cost and time efficiency.
- Implications for India's "tactical space asset" doctrine — faster, cheaper early-warning/surveillance satellites.
- MSME/startup integration into strategic infrastructure, extending Atmanirbhar Bharat's defence-production logic to the space sector.
- Institutional coordination challenge: DRDO-ISRO-IN-SPACe-private-operator coordination needs clear liability, clearance and IP frameworks.
- Comparative angle: other spacefaring nations' private-military space-launch integration models.

Memory Hook: Sriharikota is ISRO's first home; Kulasekharapatnam is the smaller, faster second home, built for quick SSLV-class launches.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2023 — India's achievements in space technology and private-sector participation.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. The Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport is located in Tamil Nadu.
2. It is designed primarily for large geostationary satellite launches similar to GSLV Mk-III missions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). It is designed for small-satellite/SSLV-class launches, not GSLV-class geostationary missions.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the strategic and economic rationale behind DRDO's interest in leveraging ISRO's Kulasekharapatnam Spaceport for defence-related satellite launches.

GS3

Defence

Space

PYQ-2023

#Kulasekharapatnam

ONGOING, REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS3 • S&T

Red Balloon Aerospace: Building India's Indigenous Near-Space Infrastructure — the 5th Nation with Super-Pressure Balloon Capability

WHY IN NEWS

Red Balloon Aerospace, a Vijayawada-based spacetechnology startup founded in 2025, is building India's indigenous "near-space" infrastructure layer using stratospheric airships, aerostats and super-pressure balloons. Its VISTA super-pressure balloon launch from Indira Gandhi Stadium, Vijayawada, in May 2026 placed India among only five countries — alongside the US, France, Japan and China — with indigenous super-pressure balloon capability. The company's flagship platform, HELIX, is an autonomous stratospheric airship for persistent near-space operations, developed alongside VISTA and ALTIS as a modular platform family.

BACKGROUND

"Near space" — the stratospheric layer roughly 20–100 km above Earth, above regular aviation altitude but below satellite orbits — offers persistent, low-cost coverage for communications and surveillance that neither aircraft nor satellites can match economically. Globally, near-space platforms (such as Google's defunct Project Loon and various High-Altitude Pseudo-Satellite programmes) have been explored as low-cost alternatives to satellite constellations for rural connectivity and disaster response. India's entry into indigenous super-pressure balloon capability follows years of dependence on foreign-designed balloons for its own scientific ballooning programme run through TIFR's National Balloon Facility, Hyderabad.

KEY FACTS

- Red Balloon Aerospace — spacetechnology startup, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh; co-founded in 2025.
- Platforms: HELIX (autonomous stratospheric airship), VISTA (super-pressure balloon), ALTIS — a modular near-space family.
- VISTA launched from Indira Gandhi Stadium, Vijayawada, in May 2026 — India's first indigenous super-pressure balloon flight.
- India becomes the 5th country (after the US, France, Japan, China) with indigenous super-pressure balloon capability.
- Applications: communications/V2X, disaster response, remote connectivity, domain awareness.
- The company designs its envelope film and reinforcing structure in-house.
- Progressed from the start of operations (Nov 2025) to first flight in under a year.
- Distinct from India's existing TIFR National Balloon Facility (Hyderabad), which uses conventional, non-super-pressure balloons.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Near-space as an emerging "fourth layer" of strategic infrastructure — between aviation and satellite orbit.
- Atmanirbharta in space-adjacent technology, reducing dependence on foreign balloon platforms.
- Private deep-tech risk-taking in a capital-intensive field — implications for India's New Space policy ecosystem.
- Dual-use ambiguity: the "domain awareness" application raises civil-military technology-overlap and export-control questions.
- Comparative context: near-space platforms as a cheaper alternative to LEO satellite constellations for last-mile rural connectivity.

Memory Hook: Near space is the "20–100 km gap" — too high for planes, too low for satellites. Only five nations now own a balloon that can sit there on purpose: US, France, Japan, China, India.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2023 — India's achievements in the field of space technology.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements:

1. Red Balloon Aerospace's VISTA is a super-pressure stratospheric balloon.
2. India is now the third country in the world with indigenous super-pressure balloon capability.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). India is the fifth country with this capability, not the third.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): "Near-space" is emerging as a distinct strategic domain between aviation and satellite orbit. Discuss its potential applications and the significance of India's recent indigenous capability in this domain.

GS3

S&T

Space

PYQ-2023

#NearSpace

NEEB 300+ Space-sector dual-use questions (Kulasekharapatnam, near-space) are exactly the "connect two current stories" pattern drilled in NEEB 300+'s Live PYQ Writing sessions this week.

§6 Economy

21 AUGUST 2026 (FLASH ESTIMATE)

GS3 · Economy

HSBC Flash PMI, August 2026: Services Rebound, Manufacturing Slips to a 5-Year Low — a Sectoral Divergence

WHY IN NEWS

The HSBC Flash Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for August 2026 showed India's composite output index rising to 54.6 (from July's final 54.3), even though this remains the second-weakest reading since March 2022, driven by a rebound in the Services PMI to 54.5 (from a 53-month low of 53.3 in July). The Manufacturing PMI, however, fell to 52.9 — its lowest since August 2021 and a third consecutive monthly decline from 53.5.

BACKGROUND

The Flash PMI, compiled by S&P Global for HSBC, is a monthly forward-looking survey of purchasing managers across manufacturing and services firms; readings above 50 indicate expansion and below 50 indicate contraction. It is one of the earliest monthly indicators of economic momentum, preceding official IIP/GVA data by several weeks. India's PMI has stayed in expansion territory for an extended stretch, but the widening gap between services strength and manufacturing weakness raises questions about the durability of the manufacturing-led, PLI-driven growth narrative.

KEY FACTS

- Composite Flash PMI, Aug 2026: 54.6 (July final: 54.3) — still the 2nd-weakest reading since March 2022.

- Services PMI: 54.5, up from a 53-month low of 53.3 in July — driving the composite rebound.
- Manufacturing PMI: 52.9 — lowest since August 2021; third straight monthly decline from 53.5.
- Goods output and new orders grew at their weakest pace in five years.
- Manufacturing employment fell for the first time in 2.5 years.
- Overall composite employment hit a joint-fastest pace since June 2025, driven by services hiring.
- Input cost pressures eased to a seven-month low, even as selling prices rose at the fastest rate since April 2026.
- Compiled by S&P Global for HSBC; PMI above 50 signals expansion, below 50 signals contraction.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Sectoral divergence: services-led growth versus manufacturing slowdown complicates the manufacturing-led growth and PLI-scheme narrative.
- Employment paradox: composite job growth at a multi-year high even as manufacturing sheds jobs — implications for job quality and formalisation.
- Cost-price dynamics: falling input costs but rising selling prices suggest margin rebuilding rather than consumer relief — an inflation-expectations signal.
- External-demand read: the weakest goods-order growth in five years may reflect global trade headwinds on export-oriented manufacturing.
- Policy implication: RBI's rate stance must now weigh a manufacturing slowdown against sticky services-driven momentum.

Memory Hook: PMI above 50 is like a heartbeat above resting rate. August 2026: Services' heartbeat quickened (53.3→54.5); Manufacturing's slowed to a 5-year low (52.9).

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2020 — distinguishing PMI from the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements regarding the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI):

1. A reading above 50 indicates expansion relative to the previous month.
2. It is compiled and released by the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). PMI is compiled by S&P Global (for HSBC in India), not the RBI.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Examine the divergence between India's services and manufacturing PMI readings in August 2026 and its implications for the sustainability of India's growth model.

GS3

Economy

PYQ-2020

#PMI

#Manufacturing

20 AUGUST 2026

GS3 • Economy/Energy

Reliance Proposes ₹2.73-Lakh-Crore Underground Coal Gasification Complex — Andhra Pradesh's Eluru District

WHY IN NEWS

Reliance Industries Limited on 20 August 2026 proposed an investment of approximately ₹2.73 lakh crore over 30 years to develop what could become India's first integrated Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) complex, on coal blocks in Andhra

Pradesh's Eluru district acquired through government e-auctions, presenting its roadmap to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

BACKGROUND

Underground Coal Gasification converts coal into combustible syngas directly underground, without large-scale excavation, making deep coal deposits (Eluru's seams lie over 600 metres down, where conventional mining is not viable) commercially usable. UCG fits within the Centre's National Coal Gasification Mission, targeting 100 million tonnes of coal gasified by 2030, alongside the Cabinet-approved Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects (outlay ₹37,500 crore) and an extended 30-year coal-linkage tenure for gasification-linked projects under the Non-Regulated Sector auction framework — together forming India's push to shift coal from fuel to feedstock for syngas, ammonia, methanol and fertiliser production.

KEY FACTS

- Reliance's proposal (20 Aug 2026): approx. ₹2.73 lakh crore over 30 years for a UCG complex in Eluru district, Andhra Pradesh.
- Coal blocks acquired via government e-auctions; deposits lie at depths over 600 metres.
- UCG converts coal to syngas underground, avoiding large-scale surface excavation.
- National Coal Gasification Mission target: 100 million tonnes (MT) of coal gasified by 2030.
- Cabinet-approved Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects: outlay ₹37,500 crore.
- 30-year coal-linkage tenure extended for gasification-linked projects under the Non-Regulated Sector (NRS) auction framework.
- Targeted project completion around 2029, per Reliance's public statements on the broader plan.
- Would be India's first fully integrated UCG complex, if realised.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Energy security: converting "stranded" deep coal reserves into usable syngas feedstock, reducing import dependence on gas/ammonia/methanol.
- Environmental trade-offs: UCG carries risks of subsidence, groundwater contamination and fugitive methane emissions, requiring robust monitoring.
- Public-private coordination: state-level facilitation alongside Central schemes in resource-sector mega-projects.
- Portfolio diversification: Reliance moving from oil-refining/petrochemicals/telecom into extractive-energy transformation technology.
- Comparative context: UCG has been tried and abandoned in several countries after environmental incidents — India's regulatory framework will be tested.

Memory Hook: UCG is "Underground Coal Gasification" — think of lighting a stove underground: burn the coal in place, pipe out the gas, skip the mining.

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2015 — socio-economic and environmental problems associated with coal mining.

Probable Prelims MCQ:

Consider the following statements about Underground Coal Gasification (UCG):

1. It converts coal to combustible gas without large-scale surface excavation.
2. It is primarily suited for shallow coal seams under 100 metres in depth.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). UCG is suited for deep, otherwise-unmineable seams, not shallow ones.

Probable Mains Question (150 words): Discuss the potential and the environmental risks of Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) as a strategy to unlock India's deep, otherwise-unmineable coal reserves.

GS3

Economy

Energy

#UCG

#CoalGasification

REPORTED AUGUST 2026

GS3 · Economy

Paul Merchants Finance Becomes First NBFC with Dedicated Silver Loan Branches

WHY IN NEWS

Paul Merchants Finance has become the first Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) in India to open dedicated branches offering Silver Loans, operating under the Reserve Bank of India's Lending Against Gold and Silver Collateral Directions, 2025.

BACKGROUND

The RBI's 2025 Directions extended its long-standing gold-loan regulatory framework — covering loan-to-value ratios, valuation norms and auction procedures on default — to silver as an eligible collateral for the first time, responding to rising demand for credit against silver holdings amid record precious-metal prices and a large base of small borrowers and MSMEs holding silver as a savings instrument, especially in semi-urban and rural India.

KEY FACTS

- Paul Merchants Finance: first NBFC with dedicated Silver Loan branches.
- Operates under RBI's Lending Against Gold and Silver Collateral Directions, 2025.
- Silver added as an eligible loan-collateral category for the first time under this framework.
- Framework standardises loan-to-value ratios, valuation and auction-on-default norms for both gold and silver loans.
- Targets small borrowers and MSMEs, especially in semi-urban and rural India.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Financial inclusion: formalising credit access against an under-utilised household asset class for underserved borrowers.
- Regulatory evolution: RBI extending gold-loan-style prudential norms to a new asset class reflects adaptive, asset-specific regulation.
- Risk dimension: silver's higher price volatility versus gold requires tighter margin management by lenders.

Memory Hook: The Gold Loan Directions grew a silver lining in 2025 — same rulebook, new metal.

PYQ Linkage: General NBFC-regulation theme, connects to GS3 banking/financial-inclusion questions.

GS3

Economy

#NBFC

#SilverLoan

#RBI

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★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

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