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## Current Affairs

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Retired IPS Officer Prashant Kumar appointed as Chairman of UPESSC



### 1. Retired IPS Officer Prashant Kumar appointed chairman of UPESSC

- Distinguished Law Enforcement Career:** A 1990-batch IPS officer, Prashant Kumar retired on May 31, 2025, after serving as the acting Director General of Police (DGP) of Uttar Pradesh. He is widely recognized for his "zero-tolerance" policy against organized crime and for leading over 300 successful police operations (encounters) during his tenure.
- Highly Decorated & Academic Background:** Kumar is one of India's most decorated officers, holding four President's Gallantry Medals. Beyond policing, he has strong academic credentials, including an MSc in Applied Geology (Gold Medalist), an MBA in Disaster Management, an MPhil in Defence and Strategic Studies, and an honorary D.Litt from Lucknow University.
- Tenure and Eligibility:** He has been appointed for a term of three years or until he reaches the age of 65, whichever comes first. His appointment was made by Governor Anandiben Patel under the UPESSC Act, 2023 (as amended in 2025).
- Mission to Restore Recruitment:** The UPESSC was formed by merging various recruitment boards to streamline teacher hiring. Since the resignation of the previous chair (Prof. Kirti Pandey) in September 2024, the commission's work had stalled. Kumar's primary goal is to restart delayed examinations for TGT, PGT, and Assistant Professor posts with improved transparency.
- Administrative Heavyweight:** Often referred to as "The Enforcer" in administrative circles, Kumar's appointment to an educational body is seen as a strategic move by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to bring strict discipline and "clean" recruitment processes to the state's massive education sector.



## 2. Nvidia Tops Hurun Global 1000 as World's Most Valuable Company

- **New Global #1:** Nvidia climbed two spots to claim the top position, overtaking tech giants Microsoft and Apple. As of the report's cut-off date (November 14, 2024), Nvidia's value was recorded at approximately \$4.6 trillion, marking a massive 49% increase over the last year.
- **AI-Driven Dominance:** The primary driver for this surge is the unprecedented global demand for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Nvidia's dominance in GPUs (Graphics Processing Units) and data-center computing has made it the backbone of the generative AI revolution.
- **Massive Wealth Creation:** Nvidia was the biggest "wealth creator" on the list this year, adding roughly \$1.5 trillion in value—more than the total valuation of many entire industries. Over the last five years (since the pandemic), it has added a staggering \$4.3 trillion to its market cap.
- **Shift in the "Top Three":** For the first time, Apple and Microsoft have been displaced from the top spot. Apple retained the second position (valued at \$4 trillion), while Microsoft—last year's number one—slipped to third place (valued at \$3.8 trillion).
- **Semiconductor Sector Boom:** Nvidia's rise highlights a broader trend where semiconductors have become one of the most valuable industries globally. Other chip-related companies like Broadcom (entering the Top 10 for the first time) and TSMC also saw significant gains, reflecting the strategic importance of hardware in the AI era.



## 3. Abhishek Singh accredited as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Benin

- **Concurrent Accreditation:** While serving as the next Ambassador to Benin, Abhishek Singh will continue in his primary role as the High Commissioner of India to Nigeria. He will remain based in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, while overseeing diplomatic relations with Benin.
- **Career Diplomat:** Singh is a 2003-batch officer of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). His career spans over two decades with significant experience in both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy across diverse geographies.
- **Regional Leadership:** In addition to Nigeria and Benin, he was also recently accredited (in November 2025) as India's Permanent Representative to the



Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), positioning him as a central figure in India's diplomatic outreach in West Africa.

- **Focus on Bilateral Ties:** His appointment to Benin is aimed at strengthening cooperation in key sectors such as trade, healthcare, education, and capacity building. India is one of Benin's largest trading partners, particularly in the export of rice and pharmaceuticals.

#### 4. Singapore Changi Airport Wins World's Best Airport Title 2025

- **Record-Breaking 13th Win:** Changi Airport has now won the "World's Best Airport" title a record 13 times. It regained the top position after being ranked second in 2024, overtaking Qatar's Hamad International Airport.
- **A "Destination" Airport:** The award highlights Changi's unique ability to serve as more than just a transit hub. Its Jewel Changi complex—featuring the Rain Vortex (the world's tallest indoor waterfall), lush indoor forests, and over 280 retail and dining outlets—is a major factor in its high customer satisfaction scores.
- **Multiple Accolades:** In addition to the top overall prize, Changi won several category-specific awards in 2025, including World's Best Airport Dining and the inaugural award for World's Best Airport Washrooms, reflecting its attention to even the smallest details of the passenger experience.
- **Asian Dominance:** The 2025 rankings underscore a broader trend of Asian excellence in aviation. Three of the top five airports globally are located in Asia: Singapore Changi (#1), Tokyo Haneda (#3), and Seoul Incheon (#4).
- **Indian Context:** While Changi led globally, Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) was once again named the Best Airport in India & South Asia, moving up to the 32nd position globally. Other regional winners included Bengaluru (Best Regional Airport) and Hyderabad (Best Airport Staff).



#### 5. Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE 2025 commenced

- **Location and Duration:** The exercise is being conducted in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from December 18 to 30, 2025. This follows the inaugural edition (Desert Cyclone-I) which was held in the deserts of Rajasthan, India, in early 2024.
- **Participating Units:** The Indian Army contingent consists of 45 personnel, primarily from a battalion of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment. The UAE Land Forces are represented by a contingent of similar strength from the 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion.





- **Focus on Urban Warfare:** The primary objective is to enhance interoperability in urban environments. Training focuses on sub-conventional operations, including Fighting in Built-Up Areas (FIBUA), which is critical for modern peacekeeping and counter-terrorism missions.
- **Advanced Tactical Drills:** Over the two-week period, troops will engage in high-intensity drills such as heliborne operations, detailed mission planning, and—for the first time in this series—the integration of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and counter-UAS techniques.
- **Strategic Diplomacy:** The exercise is conducted under a United Nations mandate for peacekeeping operations. It serves as a cornerstone of the deepening strategic partnership between India and the UAE, following high-level visits by the UAE Land Forces Commander and Presidential Guard to India earlier in 2025.

#### 6. Govt. Extends Tenure of SBI MD Ashwini Kumar Tewari

- **New Tenure and Superannuation:** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has extended Tewari's term beyond its previous end date of January 27, 2026. He will now serve until December 31, 2027, which coincides with his date of superannuation (retirement).
- **Leadership Stability:** This is the second extension granted to Tewari (the first being in 2024). The move is seen as a strategic decision by the Ministry of Finance to ensure "leadership continuity" at India's largest public sector bank during a period of significant digital expansion and financial reforms.
- **Portfolio Responsibilities:** As one of the four Managing Directors at SBI, Tewari currently oversees the critical Corporate Banking and Subsidiaries portfolio. This includes supervising large-scale commercial credit and managing non-bank businesses like SBI Card, Mutual Funds, and Life Insurance.
- **Career Banker Background:** Tewari is a veteran of the SBI group, having joined as a Probationary Officer in 1991. Before becoming MD in 2021, he served as the MD & CEO of SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd. and held international leadership roles, including Country Head of SBI's US operations.



#### 7. Anantjeet Singh & Darshna Rathore win Senior Skeet Mixed Team Gold

- **Defeating the Favorites:** Representing Rajasthan, Anantjeet and Darshna defeated the Uttar Pradesh pair—comprising two-time Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Areeba Khan—in a tense final with a score of 45–43.
- **Individual Performance:** In the gold medal match,



Darshna Rathore led the scoring for the winning team with 24 hits, while Asian Games silver medalist Anantjeet Singh Naruka contributed 21 hits.

- **Qualification Dominance:** The duo entered the final in top form, having led the qualification standings earlier in the day with a combined total of 143 hits (Anantjeet 73, Darshna 70).
- **The Venue:** The competition was held at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi, which is currently hosting the 68th edition of the National Championships for shotgun events.
- **Podium Finishers:** While Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh took Gold and Silver respectively, the Bronze medal was secured by Haryana (Raiza Dhillon and Ishaan Singh Libra), who defeated Madhya Pradesh 41–39 in the third-place playoff.

## 8. The Viksit Bharat–Gramin Bill, 2025 introduced

- **Replacement of MGNREGA:** The Bill seeks to repeal and replace the 20-year-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. It aims to shift rural employment from a purely "welfare-centric" model to a "development-centric" one aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.
- **Increased Employment Guarantee:** The Bill enhances the statutory guarantee of wage employment from 100 days to 125 days per financial year for every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.
- **Agricultural "Pause" Period:** To address the shortage of farm labor during busy seasons, the Bill introduces a provision for a 60-day pause in public works during peak sowing and harvesting periods. This ensures that labor is available for essential agricultural operations.
- **Focus on Durable Assets:** Unlike the sometimes fragmented works under MGNREGA, the new framework mandates that all projects be aggregated into the Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack. It prioritizes four thematic areas: water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood-related assets, and climate-resilient works.
- **Modern Governance & Tech:** The Bill institutionalizes a high-tech monitoring system, including biometric authentication for attendance, GPS/Geospatial tracking of worksites, and the use of AI-enabled analytics.



## 9. International Migrants Day observed on 18th December

- **2025 Theme:** "My Great Story: Cultures and Development": This year's theme, led by the International

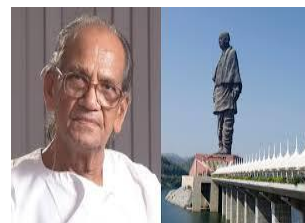


Organization for Migration (IOM), shifts the narrative from migration as a "problem" to migration as a human story. It emphasizes how individual journeys of mobility drive economic growth, spark innovation, and enrich the cultural fabric of both host and home countries.

- **Historical Significance:** The date marks the anniversary of the 1990 adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families by the UN General Assembly. The day was officially designated in 2000 to raise awareness about the increasing number of migrants worldwide.
- **A "Defining Force" of the Century:** UN reports for 2025 highlight that migration is no longer an outlier but a central economic pillar. Remittances to low- and middle-income countries are projected to reach a record \$685 billion this year, providing a critical lifeline that often exceeds foreign direct investment (FDI) in many developing nations.
- **Focus on Health and Safety:** The World Health Organization (WHO) and IOM used this day to call for "migrant-inclusive" health systems. In 2025, the focus is on removing legal and language barriers that prevent migrants—especially those in irregular situations—from accessing Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

## 10. Sculptor Ram Sutar, Designer of Statue of Unity passed away

- **The Mind Behind the Statue of Unity:** Sutar gained global fame as the chief sculptor of the Statue of Unity in Gujarat. Standing at 182 meters, the bronze tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel remains the world's tallest statue and is considered Sutar's crowning achievement.
- **Master of the "Gandhi Bust":** He is arguably the most prolific creator of Mahatma Gandhi's likeness. His specific design of a meditating Gandhi has been replicated and installed in over 450 cities across the globe, making his art a symbol of Indian diplomacy and peace worldwide.
- **A Century of Artistry:** Born on February 19, 1925, in Maharashtra, Sutar was a gold medalist from the prestigious Sir J.J. School of Art. His career spanned over seven decades, during which he created more than 200 monumental sculptures, including the GyarahMurti in Delhi and the Statue of Prosperity (Kempe Gowda) in Bengaluru.
- **Highly Decorated Legend:** For his immense contribution to Indian art and culture, he was honored with the Padma Bhushan (2016) and the Padma Shri (1999). He also received the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony and, most recently in 2024, the Maharashtra Bhushan, the state's highest civilian honor.



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