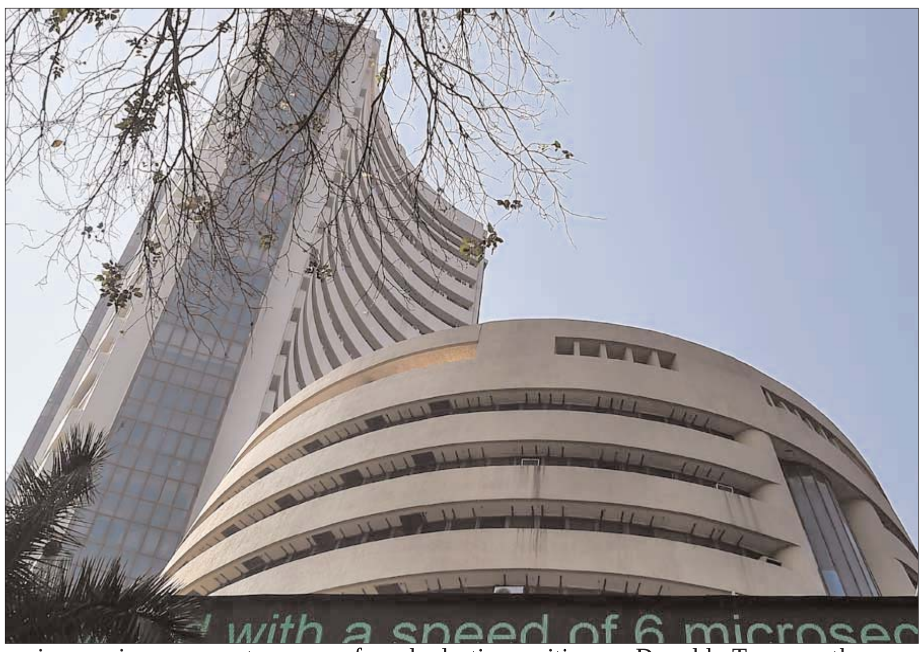
Indian stock indices extend gains over US trade deal, positive global cues

MUMBAI, FEB 10: Indian stock indices settled higher on Tuesday, extending gains from the previous session, with analysts attributing it to the interim trade deal with the US, the possible return of foreign institutional investors, and positive cues from other Asian markets.

Sensex closed at 84,273.92 points, up 208.17 points, up 0.25 per cent. Nifty closed at 25,935.15 points, up 67.85 points or 0.26 per cent.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said Domestic equities continued their upward momentum, supported by the US trade agreement and positive cues from key Asian markets. "A strong resurgence in FII inflows, coupled with rupee appreciation, is further bolstering the investor sentiment, although intermittent profit-booking was visible across sectors. With tariff-related concerns largely easing, the near-term market trajectory will hinge on Q3 earnings, which have been mixed and below expectations so far. Investors are now focused on the combined impact of recent fiscal and monetary measures to



revive earnings momentum in the coming quarters," Nair added. Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, a SEBI - registered online trading and wealth tech firm, said Indian equity markets closed the session on a cautious, rangebound note, as profit booking in banking, IT and healthcare stocks emerged as a key drag on the indices, keeping overall sentiment subdued. "In the absence of strong global or domestic triggers, investors preferred selective positioning over aggressive buying," Ponmudi R said. The US and India recently issued a joint statement that they have reached a framework for an Interim Agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade (interim agreement). Both countries decided to address non-tariff barriers affecting bilateral trade. After a phone call between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump, the announcement of the conclusion of negotiations on the much-awaited trade deal was made. The Trump administration had imposed tariffs on major exporters to the US, including India and China. There was a 50 per cent tariff on goods from India entering the United States since August 2025. The tariffs have now been reduced to 18 per cent following the leaders' recent phone call.

Gold ETFs inflow doubles to Rs 24,040 cr in Jan; marginally surpasses equity

NEW DELHI, FEB 10: Gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) recorded a sharp surge in inflows in January, attracting Rs 24,040 crore — more than double from Rs 11,647 crore in the preceding month — as yellow metal prices climbed amid rising geopolitical risks.

For the first time, inflows into gold ETFs marginally surpassed those into equity mutual funds, which saw investments of Rs 24,028.6 crore during the month, according to data released by Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) on Tuesday.

The record inflows in gold ETFs in January was "driven by the superior one-year performance of gold and silver relative to other major asset classes", said Umesh Sharma, CIO Debt, The Wealth Company Mutual Fund.

According to Varun Gupta, CEO of Groww Mutual Fund, the strong inflows reflect the increasing financialisation of gold as an invest-

ment asset.

The trend highlights a shift in investor behaviour, with gold increasingly being viewed as a core portfolio component rather than a tactical allocation.

Investor appetite for gold remained robust, driven by its appeal as a safe-haven and diversification tool, said Nehal Meshram, Senior Analyst at Morningstar Investment Research India.

"Part of the strength likely reflects fresh allocations at the start of the year, as investors rebalance portfolios and add hedges after a volatile period across risk assets. Gold ETFs continue to benefit from their positioning as a regulated, liquid, and cost-efficient way to hold gold versus physical formats, making them an easy 'add-on' allocation during uncertain macro phases," Meshram added.

With latest additions, total inflows into gold ETFs have reached around Rs 61,000 crore in the current financial year. The recent rally in gold and silver prices has also led to a sharp rise in demand for gold and silver ETFs, as investors look for diversified avenues to gain exposure to precious metals.

However, equities continue to remain the preferred asset class for long-term wealth creation, said A Balasubramanian, Managing Director and CEO of Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC.

Gold prices touched a lifetime high last month, with the metal scaling Rs 1.8 lakh per 10 grams.

Reflecting the sustained inflows, assets under management (AUM) of gold ETFs rose to Rs 1.84 lakh crore at the end of January, from Rs 1.28 lakh crore a year earlier.

Measured allocations to gold and silver ETFs indicate a balanced approach by investors toward diversification and portfolio stability, said AMFI CEO Venkat N Chalasani.

Apart from gold ETFs, other ETFs, including thematic and index-linked products, also witnessed higher participation, attracting Rs 15,006 crore last month compared to Rs 13,199 crore in December.

From Indian farms to German shelves, organic exporters eye EU opportunity

NUREMBERG, FEB 10: With India and the EU announcing the conclusion of a trade agreement, exhibitors from as many as 20 Indian states, including Assam, Meghalaya, and Kerala, are here to showcase their organic food products at the world's leading trade fair Biofach Germany, the commerce ministry said on Tuesday.

It is expected to help promote India's exports of organic goods in the European nations.

India and the European Union (EU) on January 27 announced the conclusion of a comprehensive free trade agreement. It is likely to be implemented this year.

The pact will provide huge opportunities for Indian exporters to enhance their presence in the 27 nation bloc.

India is the 'country of the year' at the four-day show, which will start from February 10.

The commerce ministry's arm Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) said that India's participation reflects the expanding footprint of Indian organic exports, increased global demand and growing participation from exporters, associations, and

FPO's (farmer producer organisations).

"Exhibitors from more than 20 States/UT's are participating here," it said.

It included Delhi, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand.

About 67 co-exhibitors including exporters of organic products, FPOs, cooperatives, organic labs, state government organisations, and commodity boards will showcase products like Rice, Oilseeds, Herbs, Spices, Pulses, Cashew, Ginger, Turmeric, Large Cardamom, Cinnamon, Mango Puree, and Essential Oils amongst others.

"With a rapidly growing organic market, India remains committed to offering high-quality, sustainably produced products that meet international standards," it said.

As per reports, India's organic product exports are estimated at Rs 5,000-6,000 crore and are expected to rise to Rs 20,000 crore over the next three years. The global demand for these products is about Rs 1 lakh crore, which is expected to increase to Rs 10 lakh crore in the coming years.

The government has taken a series of steps to boost production and exports of organic products from India. A new edition of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) has been rolled out with new regulations which are aimed at enhancing clarity and transparency in organic product standards as well as aligning with global standards.

Key features of the eighth edition of NPOP include farmer-friendly regulations, streamlined certification, enhanced transparency and revamped traceability system.

The eighth edition aims to

Tobacco Board urges Finance Minister to revisit tax hike in interest of farmers, workers

NEW DELHI, FEB 10: Tobacco Board, under the administrative control of the Department of Commerce, has written a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighting the adverse impact of the unprecedented increase in excise duties on cigarettes on the industry, as well as on millions of farmers and workers.

The excise hike effective February 1 has resulted in a price increase of up to 60 per cent in real terms.

Steep tax increases heightened risk of accelerated illicit cigarette trade, which has emerged globally as a serious economic and governance challenge.

The unregulated market deprives governments of substantial tax revenues, undermines legitimate businesses, fuels organised criminal networks, and poses risks to public health and security.

"Considering the urgent industry situation and the significant impact on the farming community, I request you to intervene and revise the excessive duty rates on tobacco products," Tobacco Board Chairman Yashwanth Kumar Chidipothu said in a letter dated February 10.

The chairman, who is also a senior BJP leader, stated that he was writing on behalf of FCV (Flue-Cured Virginia) tobacco farmers who had approached it to express their

serious concerns over the tax hike.

He further reiterated that, as reported in the media, farmers have begun staging protests and submitting representations to their respective Members of Parliament.

"High tax and price differentials create strong incentives for smuggling, particularly when enforcement capacity is constrained. Weak border controls, fragmented oversight, and the absence of effective tracking and tracing mechanisms allow illicit operators to exploit policy gaps, while illicit cigarettes increasingly serve as a conduit for organised crime and money laundering," he said.

The consequences extend beyond revenue loss, with global evidence suggesting that billions in excise and tax revenues are diverted annually to the illicit economy, reducing funds available for public services, the representative said.

At the same time, legitimate manufacturers face shrinking market shares, job losses, and plant closures, while consumers are exposed to products that bypass health regulations, lack age-verification safeguards, and are often linked to other illegal goods such as counterfeit cigarettes, illicit vapes and nicotine pouches, he added.

The Tobacco Board Chairman stressed that addressing the illicit cigarette trade requires a balanced and coordinated policy approach, including strengthened enforcement, effective track-and-trace systems, coherent and enforceable regulations, and enhanced international cooperation.

"The unprecedented increase in excise duties on cigarettes has created serious distress across the tobacco value chain, affecting millions of farmers, workers and small shops who depend on this sector for their livelihoods," he said.

The tax hike is expected to severely depress farmer incomes, as the legal cigarette industry, the primary domestic buyer of FCV tobacco, is likely to sharply curtail its offtake, he said, adding, this would leave farmers unable to recover even the basic cost of cultivation, currently estimated at around Rs 200 per kilogram.

"There is widespread concern that market prices could collapse, pushing farmers into acute and potentially irreversible debt. Farmers point out that a 22 per cent tax increase in 2014 resulted in a price decline of Rs 20 to 30 per kilogram," he said. (PTI)

Oil exports have been a cash cow for Russia, but revenues are dwindling, thanks to sanctions

MOSCOW, FEB 10: Oil and gas exports have sustained Russia's finances throughout its war against Ukraine. But as the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion approaches, those cash flows have suddenly dwindled to lows not seen in years.

It's the result of new punitive measures from the U.S. and the European Union, U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff pressure against India, and a tightening crackdown on the fleet of sanctions-dodging tankers carrying Russian oil.

The drop in revenue is pushing President Vladimir Putin to borrow from Russian banks and raise taxes, keeping state finances on an even keel for now.

But those measures only increase strains in a war economy now plagued by slowing growth and stubborn inflation.

In January, Russian state revenues from taxing the oil and gas industries fell to 393 billion rubles ($5.1 billion) That's down from 587 billion ($7.6 billion) in December and from 1.12 trillion ($14.5 billion) in January 2025. That's the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic, says Janis Kluge, an expert on the Russian economy at German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

To pressure the Kremlin to halt fighting in Ukraine, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, from Nov. 21. That means anyone buying or shipping their oil runs the risk of being cut off from the U.S banking system – a serious concern for any multinational business.

On top of that, on Jan. 21 the EU began banning fuel made from Russia crude – meaning it could no longer be refined somewhere else and shipped to Europe in the form of gasoline or diesel fuel.

The head of the EU's executive commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on Friday proposed a full ban on shipping services for Russian oil, saying sanctions offered leverage to push Russia to halt the fighting. "We must be clear-eyed: Russia will only come to the table with genuine intent if it is pressured to do so," she said.

The latest sanctions are a step beyond the oil price cap imposed by the Group of Seven democracies under the Biden administration. The $60 per barrel cap, enforced through insurers and shippers based in G-7 countries, was aimed at reducing Russia's profits, not banning imports, out of concern over higher energy prices.

The cap did reduce government oil revenues temporarily, especially after an EU ban on most Russian seaborne oil forced Russia to shift sales to China and India. But Russia built a "shadow fleet" of aging tankers operating beyond the reach of the cap, and revenues rose again.

Trump on Feb. 3 agreed to lower tariffs to 18% from 25%, saying Indian President Narendra Modi agreed to halt Russian crude imports, and on Friday removed an additional 25% tariff imposed over continued imports of Russian oil.

Modi hasn't commented. Foreign affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said India's strategy was "diversifying our energy sourcing in keeping with objective market conditions." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov noted that Moscow was monitoring the statements and remains committed to our "advanced strategic partnership" with New Delhi.

In any case, Russian oil shipments to India have declined in recent weeks, from 2 million barrels per day in October to 1.3 million per day in December, according to figures from the Kyiv School of Economics and the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Data firm Kpler says "India is unlikely to fully disengage in the near term" from cheap Russian energy.

Ukraine's allies increasingly have sanctioned individual shadow tankers to deter customers from taking their oil – raising the number to 640 among the U.S., U.K. and EU. U.S. forces have seized vessels linked to sanctioned Venezuelan oil.

UK watchdog revokes Indian diaspora focussed MATV's broadcast licences

LONDON, FEB 10: The UK's media watchdog has revoked the broadcast licences associated with the Indian diaspora-focused MATV over breach of regulatory conditions, with the satellite channel to be taken off air with immediate effect.

The Office of Communications (Ofcom) issued the revocation notice on Friday after an investigation dating back to August 2024 concluded that the licences were "wrongfully held" by Middlesex Broadcasting Corporation Limited (MBCL).

While one licence was linked with MATV National as a satellite television service broadcasting Indian programming in Hindi, Urdu, English, Gujarati and Punjabi, the second was for MATV Music â€" also a satellite television service, which reportedly remained dormant.

"In the UK, broadcasting laws made by the UK Parliament state that broadcast licensees must have control over the licensed services â€" including editorial oversight over the programmes they show," Ofcom said in a statement.

"Our investigation concluded that MBCL, the licence-holder for the MATV National and MATV Music services, did not have editorial responsibility for MATV's output. As such, MBCL does not meet the legal requirement of having control over the licensed services.

and so these services were not being broadcast in accordance with licensing requirements.

"We have given MBCL significant time to come into compliance with the statutory rules. Those efforts have now been exhausted," it stated.

Further details of Ofcom's investigation claim that MATV Broadcasting Limited was providing the services without an appropriate licence granted by Ofcom, a criminal offence under the UK's Broadcasting Act 1990.

The investigators note reaching out to Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat, registered as the licensee's compliance contact, and found that he was simultaneously president of the Overseas Friends of the Bharatiya Janata Party (OFBJP) UK.

Ofcom pointed out that a person is prohibited from holding a licence if "they are a body which is controlled by an individual who is an officer of a body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a political nature".

The watchdog said that it was concerned that the OFBJP UK is "likely to be a body whose objects are wholly or mainly of a political nature".

In representations made to Ofcom, MATV sought to highlight a change in the company's leadership structure with Alpana Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat set to assume the controlling stake to meet the broadcast licence requirements.

"However, Ofcom is yet to receive formal notification of this from the licensee," it stated.

MATV believes the decision to take the channel off air is "politically motivated", claiming that OFBJP UK is not a political entity but a social one that supports Indian diaspora causes.

"MBCL was holding the licenses for broadcasting MATV National. MATV Music never went on air," said Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat, now the Europe in-charge of OFBJP, following an internal restructuring of the group last month.

"Ofcom's decision is politically motivated as they have linked me as a controlling person with political affiliation. Neither was I controlling MATV, nor did I have a controlling stake in MBCL.

OFBJP is not a political party, not even registered as a political party, and we don't have any legal political affiliation or get into any type of politics in the UK.

"We are a social body helping the Indian diaspora. But Ofcom has made a decision, even though I don't control these companies. We will do the needful for Ofcom to allow our channels to broadcast again in the UK," he said. (PTI)