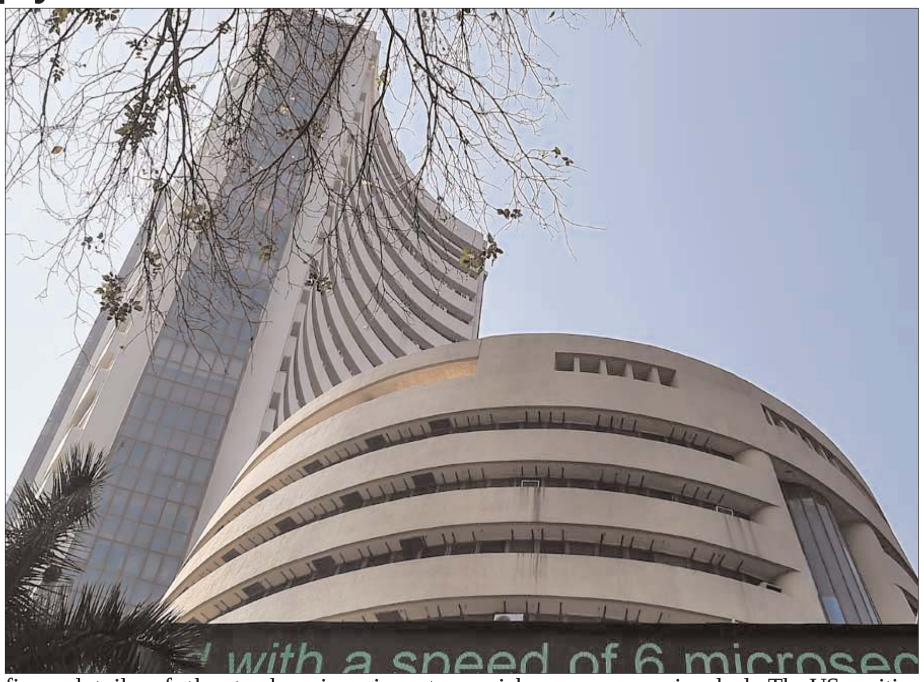
Sensex, Nifty close almost unchanged in choppy trade; IT shares decline



MUMBAI, FEB 11: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed on a flat note in a choppy session on Wednesday as gains in PSU banks and auto shares were offset by losses in IT stocks.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 40.28 points, or 0.05 per cent, to close at 84,233.64. During the day, it hit a high of 84,487.34 and a low of 84,081.25.

The NSE Nifty inched up 18.70 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 25,953.85.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Eternal, ITC, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv and Tata Steel were among the laggards.

On the other hand, State Bank of India, Maruti Suzuki India, IndiGo, Trent, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Hindustan Unilever, and Bharat Electronics Ltd were among the gainers.

"Domestic equities may enter a brief consolidation phase following this week's strong rally driven by the US-India trade deal. Market attention has shifted back to mixed Q3 results, upcoming monthly inflation data, and finer details of the trade agreement, which is reportedly nearing finalisation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

He added that strength in the auto and healthcare sectors reflects better-than-expected earnings, while IT underperformed amid a global selloff linked to AI-related volatility. Broader markets lagged, with Midcap and Smallcap indices posting modest declines.

"Globally, sentiment stayed cautious due to weak US retail sales and persistent AI-related disruptions, keeping investors risk-averse ahead of key US employment data.

"Meanwhile, domestic markets have begun to benefit from improving FII flows, which have turned positive and are expected continue due to upside in GDP forecast and moderation in India's valuations," Nair said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Hong Kong's Hang Seng, and Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended higher. Japanese markets were closed on account of National Foundation Day.

European markets were trading mostly lower in mid-session deals. The US equities market ended lower on Tuesday.

Brent Crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.44 per cent to USD 69.78 per barrel.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 69.45 crore on Tuesday, while domestic institutional investors outpaced the FIIs, by acquiring stocks worth Rs 1,174.21 crore, according to exchange data. On Tuesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 208.17 points to close at 84,273.92, while the 50-share NSE Nifty rose 67.85 points to finish at 25,935.15.

Rupee falls 14 paise to close at 90.70 against US dollar

MUMBAI, FEB 11: The rupee depreciated 14 paise to close at 90.70 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on dollar demand from importers and geopolitical tensions.

Forex traders said the rupee is trading with a slight negative bias amid geopolitical tensions and elevated crude oil prices. Dollar demand from importers may also pressurise the rupee. However, FPI inflows may support the local unit at lower levels.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.56 against the US dollar, and touched a low of 90.75 and a high of 90.46 against the greenback in intraday trade. The rupee eventually settled at 90.70, registering a fall of 14 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee pared initial losses and settled on a positive note, higher by 10 paise at 90.56 against the US dollar.

"Indian rupee declined today on dollar demand from importers and geopolitical tensions. A surge in crude oil prices, too, weighed on the rupee. However, a weak US dollar and foreign inflows cushioned the downside. Dollar weakened on disappointing ADP non-farm employment and retail sales data from the US," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Forex traders said while markets initially welcomed the India-US trade deal, fresh concerns have emerged after the White House released its fact sheet.

The fact sheet highlights key terms of the agreement, including that India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products.

This includes dried distillers' grains, red sorghum, tree nuts, and fresh and processed fruit, certain pulses, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products, and India has committed to buying more American products and purchase over USD 500 billion of US energy, information and communication technology, agricultural, coal, and other products.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.26 per cent lower at 96.54.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.44 per cent higher at USD 69.78 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex dropped 40.28 points to settle at 84,233.64, while the Nifty was up 18.70 points to 25,953.85.

On Tuesday, foreign institutional investors purchased equities worth Rs 69.45 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

TMB to shift 50 pc workforce into sales roles in 2 yrs amid tech automation

MUMBAI, FEB 11: MUMBAI, Feb 11: Tamilnad Mercantile Bank will repurpose more than half its staff towards sales as it shifts focus from maintaining its long-standing customer relationships to increasing revenues, a top official said.

This will be done through the technology-led investments which lead to automation benefits in a lot of repeat jobs, its Managing Director and Chief Executive Salee S Nair told PTI, underlining that there will not be any layoffs.

Overall employee count is expected to rise by over 200 from the current strength of 5,000, said Nair, a career SBI banker who joined the south-based lender in August 2024.

"Two years down the line, about 50-60 per cent of the employees will get repurposed into sales. We will be training them for the new roles," he said, speaking on the sidelines of an event to announce its tie-up with tech major Oracle.

Nair recalled that after joining the bank, he found many processes were being done manually and the use of technology largely limited to the core banking solution.

This led to a bank-wide effort on revamping processes with the best of technology tools, he said, adding that the board sanctioned an outlay of Rs 250 crore for FY26. The spend will be similar in FY27 as well as it undertakes more efforts, and will go lower afterwards, he said, adding that at present, the technology-related spending will be over 10 per cent of the operating expenses but the proportion will come down.

He said the paperwork led to the usage of 150 offices just for storing the paperwork and added that over the last year, it has been reduced to 30 offices as it appointed two private document storing companies.

Similarly, on the processes front, TMB has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, solutions for human resources, customer relationship management and business processes, which will decrease the reliance on people. Nair said at present, human resources accounts for 47 per cent of the overall Rs 1,500 crore of expenditure for the bank.

Despite the gains from technology usage which has reduced the cost to income to 44 per cent, Nair did not revise the guidance on the cost-to-income ratio which stands at under 50 per cent.

When asked about the impact on the overall employee base, he said the bank will be expanding its employees by over 200 people on a net basis. Addition of 50 more branches over the present 614, and also as it undertakes other efforts like handholding customers with new technology.

A revised version of the internet banking service which nearly triples the number of transactions which can be undertaken to 170 will be launched soon, he said. The bank has also engaged consultants to come out with details of its branches of the future which focuses more on sales. The plans include unmanned counters for undertaking transactions at branches and alongside ATMs, and also lounges to explain products' details to customers for sales purposes.

When asked how the employees are receiving the efforts, Nair said they are enthused about the changes and added that the bank has been successful in converting 83 per cent of the workforce to sign up for the cost to company-based emoluments from the IBA package earlier.

One of the factors which helped the bank was the younger staff, Nair said, pointing out that the median age of the bank is 35 years.

Nair retained the loan growth guidance at 16-17 per cent for FY26, and the Net Interest Margin (NIM) at 3.9 per cent.

The bank will be focusing more on the small business segment, and also push the pedal on the unsecured advances going ahead, he said, admitting that it has been skeptical of the riskier unsecured segment till now.

It will also be accelerating home and car finance in FY27, he added.

Meanwhile, speaking at the same event, Oracle's country head for the applications Shailesh Singla said the business is growing at high double digits and segments like banking, financial services and insurance are witnessing doubling of revenues.

The company is adding two new clients in the BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Insurance) segment every month, he said, listing out that it already serves lenders like Indusind Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. (PTI)

UK watchdog revokes Indian diaspora focussed MATV's broadcast licences

LONDON, FEB 11: 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)