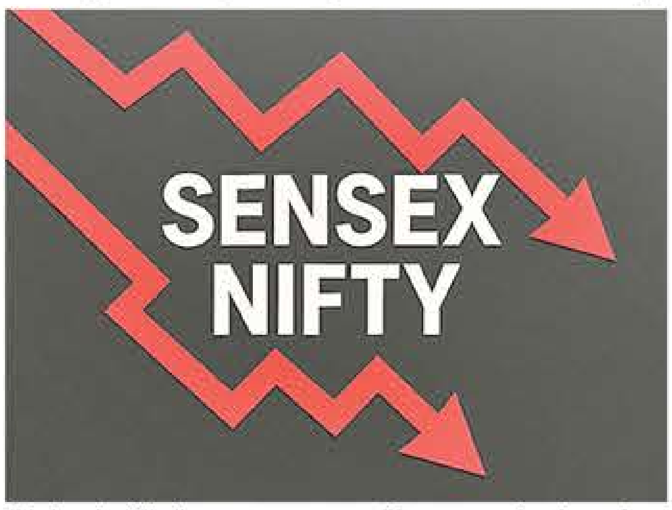
Market low amid West Asia crisis rerun

Sensex dips 150.63 points, Nifty sheds 53.35 points after US-Iran resume war



Mumbai: Indian equity benchmark indices ended a volatile trading session lower on Thursday as investor sentiment weakened amid escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia following fresh military action by the United States against Iran.

The Nifty closed 53.35 points, or 0.23 per cent, lower at 23,161.60, while the Sensex declined 150.63 points, or 0.20 per cent, to settle at 73,832.55. Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that the 23,300-23,400 zone now acts as an important immediate resistance area. "A sustained move above this range would be required to improve sentiment and support a recovery toward the 23,550 region," an analyst stated.

"On the downside, the index is currently hovering near the crucial 23,100 support zone. Holding above this level will be important to prevent further weakness," a market expert mentioned.

Market participants remained cautious after reports emerged that the United States had intensified its military offensive against Iran.

US President Donald Trump said Tehran had ample time to negotiate a deal with Washington but failed to do so.

He warned that Iran would now have to face the consequences, adding that the US would strike the country "very hard". Further adding to concerns, Iran announced the closure of the strategically important Strait of Hormuz following the US military strikes. The development raised fears of potential disruptions to global oil supplies and heightened uncertainty across financial markets. Among the Nifty constituents, Infosys and Eternal emerged as the top laggards, weighing on the benchmark index. The weakness in technology stocks also dragged the broader IT sector lower.

Broader markets witnessed sharper selling pressure, with the Nifty MidCap index ending 0.81 per cent lower and the Nifty SmallCap index declining 0.67%. On the sectoral front, the Nifty IT, Nifty Consumer Durable and Nifty Chemical indices recorded the steepest losses. In contrast, the Nifty Media, Nifty Private Bank and Nifty Pharma indices outperformed the broader market and managed to limit the overall decline.

Analysts said investors are closely monitoring developments in West Asia, as any further escalation could impact global crude oil prices and risk sentiment across equity markets.

After two days of gains, the Indian Rupee depreciated due to fresh dollar demand driven by forward maturities and a recovery in the dollar index amid safe-haven flows.

Earlier, domestic equity benchmarks traded lower in the morning session amid escalating tensions in West Asia and a sharp rise in crude oil prices. Sectorally, IT stocks led the decline, with the Nifty IT index tumbling more than 2 per cent. Nifty MidSmall IT & Telecom, Nifty Cement and Nifty Auto were also among the major laggards.

Healthcare stocks, however, bucked the trend. Nifty Pharma and Nifty500 Healthcare gained up to 0.50 per cent, while Nifty Media emerged as the top sectoral gainer, rising 0.78%.

Rupee slumps again

New Delhi: The rupee plunged 50 paise to settle at 95.75 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid heightened tensions in West Asia and a stronger greenback. Heavy FII outflows and weak sentiments at the domestic equity markets put further pressure on the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.55 against the greenback and traded in the range of 95.55 to 95.76 before settling at 95.75 (provisional), down 50 paise from its previous close. Earlier rupee dropped against the U.S. dollar, almost wiping out gains from the central bank's measures to attract dollar inflows, as weak Asian cues and persistent dollar demand from oil firms weighed.

No excise duty on petrol with 30% ethanol blending

New Delhi: The government has exempted petrol blended with higher levels of ethanol from excise duty, including fuel variants containing 22%, 25%, 27% and 30% ethanol, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Finance on Thursday.

As per the notification, excise duty has been set at nil for ethanol-blended motor spirit conforming to Bureau of Indian Standards specifications, covering blends where ethanol content ranges from 22% to 30% by volume. The exemption has been granted under Section 5A of the Central Excise Act, 1944, it said.

The revised structure includes E22, E25, E27 and E30 petrol, defined as mixtures of motor spirit (petrol) and ethanol in specified proportions, with applicable central, state, UT or integrated taxes on ethanol and duty-paid petrol components.

Top banks offer NRIs up to 6.6% on foreign currency deposits

Mumbai: India's top financial banking services providers -- State Bank of India (SBI), Bank of India (BoI), and Yes Bank -- have sharply raised interest rates on Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) or FCNR(B) deposits following the Reserve Bank of India's recent measures to attract foreign currency inflows, with lenders now offering Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) returns of up to 6.6 per cent on US dollar deposits. The banks have revised their FCNR(B) deposit rates, a significant increase from earlier levels of around 3.35 per cent on long-term US dollar deposits.

The country's largest lender, SBI, has launched its FCNR(B) Advantage Deposit Scheme, under which deposits of up to $1 million will earn 5.25 per cent for tenures of three years to less than four years, 5.50 per cent for four years to less than five years and 5.75 per cent for five years.

For deposits above $1 million, SBI is offering up to 6 per cent interest for a five-year tenure. According to SBI, premature withdrawal is not permitted during the first year of FCNR(B) deposits under the new scheme. Withdrawals after one year but before three years will earn 3.50 per cent interest for the period the deposit remained with the bank.

Similarly, Bank of Baroda has revised FCNR(B) rates across major foreign currencies, including the US dollar, British pound sterling, euro, Australian dollar and Canadian dollar.

No ban on Indian mangoes in Nepal

New Delhi: The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare on Wednesday dismissed reports claiming that Nepal had imposed a ban or suspension on the import of mangoes from India, describing such reports as "factually incorrect and misleading". In an official statement, the Ministry said the Nepal government, through its Plant Quarantine and Pesticide Management Centre, which serves as the country's National Plant Protection Organisation, has clarified that no ban has been imposed on Indian mango imports. Nepal confirmed on June 10 that imports of Indian mangoes continue to be permitted, subject to compliance with prescribed phytosanitary requirements.The clarification comes amid reports suggesting that Nepal had halted imports of Indian mangoes, raising concerns among exporters and traders.

TCS plans to empower 50,000 associates with AI claude

New Delhi: Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Thursday announced a global strategic partnership with US-based AI firm Anthropic and said it will enable 50,000 associates across functions to use Claude as part of its enterprise-wide AI adoption strategy.

According to TCS, it will set up a dedicated business unit to deliver joint industry solutions and deep AI expertise on the Claude family of models through early access to Claude models. It further noted that the partnership aims to move AI projects beyond pilots in regulated industries.

"Combining TCS' governance, controls and implementation expertise will enable enterprises to deploy Claude confidently in production, not just in experimentation," the IT firm said.

Combining scaled internal deployment, joint go-to-market offerings, industry co-innovation, and workforce enablement, the partnership gives clients a practical path to enterprise-wide adoption and measurable outcomes, the company added.

US firm shuts India office, cuts 250 jobs

New Delhi: US-based real estate technology company Opendoor has begun winding down its India operations, with CEO Kaz Nejatian announcing that roles currently based in the country will be relocated closer to the company's customers in the United States. In a note shared with employees and the same posted on social media platform X, Nejatian said the company had started saying goodbye to its colleagues in India as part of a broader restructuring effort.

"Today we began to say goodbye to our colleagues in India as we wind down our India operations. Our customers are in America, and that's where operational work belongs," he wrote. According to the CEO, Opendoor had nearly 250 employees in India when it launched 'Opendoor 2.0' a few months ago.

Over the past several months, some of those roles had already been moved back to the US, and the company is now finalising the process of bringing the remaining operational positions closer to its customers.

India's labour reforms echo in Geneva

Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje at ILC in Geneva.

New Delhi: India has undertaken wide-ranging labour reforms guided by the principle of "Antyodaya" through consolidation of 29 Central Labour Laws into four Labour Codes — to simplify compliance, strengthen workers' welfare and create a modern and transparent labour ecosystem, according to Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje.

She led the Indian delegation at the 114th International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, Switzerland, and addressed the Plenary Session, congratulating the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on organising the Conference and appreciating its continued leadership in promoting social justice and decent work amid rapidly evolving global transformations.

At the conference, the minister said that youth employability in India has increased from 34 per cent in 2014 to over 56 per cent in 2025. Between 2017 and 2025, unemployment rate fell from 6 per cent to 3.1 per cent, and women's workforce participation surged from 22 per cent to 38.8 per cent, she added.

India's increasing female labour force participation and the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana to promote employment generation were also elucidated.

The minister held a bilateral meeting with Gilbert F. Houngbo, Director-General, ILO. She reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening its partnership with the ILO in advancing decent work, social justice and inclusive growth. She apprised the Director-General of the expansion of India's social protection coverage, which as per preliminary estimates of ILO has reached 68.4 per cent of the total population, corresponding to 1,001 million beneficiaries.

Karandlaje also held bilateral meeting with Christine Nkulikiyinka, Minister of Public Service and Labour of Rwanda. The discussions focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation in employment services, skilling, workforce planning and digital governance, according to the statement.