

SENSEX CLOSES ON CAUTIOUS NOTE

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Indian stock markets ended lower on Friday, January 30, 2026, snapping a three-session winning streak as investors adopted a cautious stance ahead of the Union Budget 2026, set to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday, February 1. The benchmark Sensex closed down around 297 points (0.36%) at approximately 82,270, while the Nifty 50 settled about 98 points (0.39%) lower at 25,321, hovering near the 25,200-25,300 range throughout much of the session with intraday swings.

The session saw persistent selling pressure in key sectors, particularly metals, energy, and IT, which acted as major drags on the indices. The Nifty Metals index plunged nearly 5%, with stocks like Hindalco, Tata Steel, and others extending losses amid broader weakness in commodity prices. Metals faced additional headwinds from a sharp correction in precious metals: gold and silver prices on the MCX experienced significant pull-backs after parabolic rallies earlier in the year, with silver dropping steeply (up to 8-12% in volatile trade) from record highs near Rs 4,20,000 per kg, and gold correcting from peaks around Rs 1.8 lakh per 10 grams. This followed global factors including a stronger US dollar and profit booking after over 40% surges in some metals.

Healthcare and industrials managed modest gains, providing some support. Individual stock movements were driven largely by quarterly earnings reactions. Positive performers included Strides Pharma, which surged up to



10% after reporting margin expansion (150 basis points YoY), flat revenues, and reiterating its US business outlook, along with Dixon Technologies (gaining on deal hopes) and ITC (buoyed by strong core business and better-than-expected cigarette volume growth). MARTECH also saw margin expansion to 22% with optimistic FY26 guidance.

On the downside, Swiggy shares took a hit amid growth concerns from a discount war, while Manappuram Finance slid due to ongoing microfinance stress. Other earnings disappointments included flat-ish performance from names like RC (with slower loan book growth) and HUDCO (profit decline despite strong loan expansion). Nalco and other metal stocks remained under pressure.

Market sentiment remained tempered with limited expectations for major announcements in the upcoming budget, given recent significant reforms. However, there

is anticipation for potential tweaks to long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax rules—such as revisions to exemption limits or rates—to attract foreign capital and boost investor confidence. Discussions also highlighted hopes for increased defense spending (potentially 10-15% or higher), continued capex growth, and further deregulation or principle-based reforms to support fiscal stability and growth.

Other notable developments included promoter explorations to sell stake in Rosari Biotech (driving early interest and stock gains), and global cues such as US President Donald Trump's upcoming announcement on the next Federal Reserve chair replacement amid ongoing criticisms of current policies. As markets head into the weekend pause before the budget presentation, focus shifts to potential policy surprises that could influence sentiment in the coming sessions.