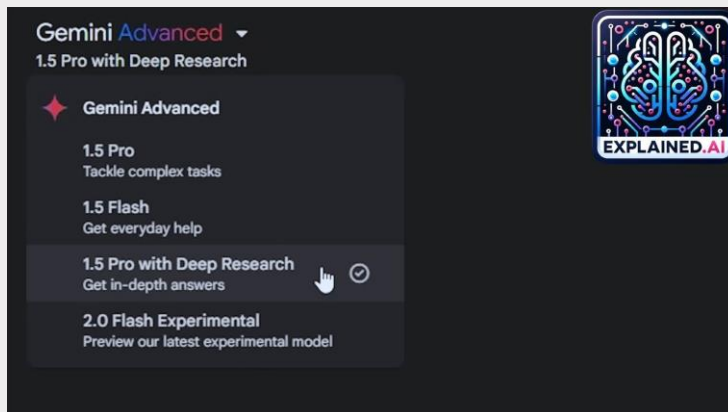


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1. Google Deep Research: What is it, how is it different from other AI tools?**Introduction**

In the past few weeks, there has been a flurry of launches in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Google too has introduced a range of tools, along with its Gemini 2.0 Flash Experimental. Among its notable launches was its tool Google Deep Research, which it has claimed to be the best research product in the market and a step above the existing AI research

tools.

Google rolled out Deep Research to Gemini subscribers on December 11. The tech giant describes Deep Research as its new agentic feature in Gemini. Google's research tool offers a range of customisations, ease of access, and precision, more than ChatGPT Search and Perplexity AI.

What is Google Deep Research?

Google, in its blog post, said that Deep Research uses AI to explore complex topics on a user's behalf and comes up with answers in an easy-to-read manner. According to Google, the tool is a first look at how Gemini is getting better at tackling complex tasks to save users' time.

Deep Research can be a user's personal AI research assistant. "Under your supervision, Deep Research does the hard work for you. After you enter your question, it creates a multi-step research plan for you to either revise or approve. Once you approve, it begins deeply analysing relevant information from across the web on your behalf," reads the post on Google's blog.

How does it work?

Deep Research can be best described as a research team that can analyse over 50 websites, compile findings, and create easy-to-read reports with citations—all at once. While ChatGPT straight away does the research and presents the results, Google Deep Research shows the user a research plan allowing them to edit it to get the desired results.

Gemini Advanced users can head to the top left-hand side, click on the drop-down menu, and select 1.5 Pro with Deep Research. When a user inputs a research query, the tool will build a step-by-step research plan. It will also allow you to edit the plan if needed. The tool conducts research by scouring multiple websites at the same time. The progress of the output can be tracked by the purple indicator.

It creates a report complete with citations, and this can be later exported to Google Docs, where you can also interact with the report. The output generated can potentially be equivalent to a report that consulting firms make by spending days and hours.

How to make the best of it?

In order to make the best of the Deep Research tool, users are advised to keep their prompts simple and clear. They should be specific about the expected outcomes, they should double-check sources if needed, and they should use the edit plan feature to customise the research parameters. Keeping pre-made templates can come in handy for the research work using this tool.

The tool takes a user's questions and assesses its subcomponents, searches the web in real time, offers citations, and creates reports. Users can also leverage access across their Gmail, Drive, Docs, and YouTube to get more personalised insights. Based on its broad use cases and features, Deep Research can be the ideal tool for small companies looking for market research and competitor analysis.

As of now, it is free for the first month. However, it may be priced at \$20 a month when it is combined with Gemini Advanced. Google also has plans to make Deep Research available in the mobile app in early 2025.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

2. The Torres investment scam in Mumbai, how it operated

Mumbai Torres investment scam

The Mumbai police Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on Thursday (January 10) searched six locations in the Torres Ponzi scheme case and seized around Rs 3 crore and various incriminating documents linked to the alleged investment fraud.

Torres, a jewellery store with showrooms in six locations across Maharashtra, is accused of offering high-returns investment opportunities to investors and later duping them. On Tuesday, police filed an FIR mentioning a case of fraud against 66 different investors, for Rs 13.48 crore. However, an estimated 1.25 lakh people may have invested their money and lost around Rs 1,000 crore altogether. Here is what to know.

What is the Torres Ponzi scheme fraud?

Incorporated in April 2023 and registered in Mumbai, Platinum Hern Pvt Ltd. operated Torres with showrooms in Mumbai's Dadar, Grant Road, and Kandivali, Thane's Kalyan, Navi Mumbai's Sanpada and Palghar's Mira Road.

According to the police, the company encouraged people to invest by buying jewellery, mainly moissanite stones (American diamonds), and earn a weekly interest ranging between 3-7% for one week. Initially, to gain their trust, the company regularly gave promised returns to investors. They also induced investors to reinvest the profit.



Their core modus operandi was a blend of a Ponzi scheme and multi-level marketing. In a Ponzi scheme, people are promised high returns and initially, these are delivered on, as the criminals onboard more people. Thus, the money from the new set of people is used to sustain

the fraud. In MLMs too, schemes promise quick money through selling products, but it primarily rests on the enrolment of new members. A fee is taken from new joiners and the top-level people get the biggest cut.

In the case of Torres, after regularly giving payouts till November 2024, the company suddenly shut its doors in the last week of December, leaving investors in the lurch.

What Ponzi schemes were floated to lure victims?

Company executives would conduct seminars in lavish settings and attract investors. They mainly floated four schemes: invest in gold or silver for a weekly interest of 2% and 3%, respectively, in Moissanite stones in silver for 4% interest, and only in Moissanite stones for an interest of 5-6%.

They gradually increased the interest rate towards the end of the year to extract more money from the investors. People were encouraged to invest in cash to get a weekly interest of 11.5% and bringing in new investors would earn existing investors a referral bonus. The EOW said that investors were given expansive incentives like cars, apartments, iPhones, jewellery, etc.

Mumbai police said the accused company had no permission from the RBI or any other government body to accept deposits for running investment schemes.

How did the fraud surface?

Investors started making inquiries when Torres defaulted in paying interest. The company claimed that technical issues with the company's system were responsible. Later, on the morning of January 6, some investors received information from the employees that the company had shut down.

One vegetable vendor named Pradipkumar Vaishya was among the first to rush to the showroom in Dadar. He informed others, and by the afternoon, hundreds of investors gathered outside Torres. Vaishya, who lost Rs 4.55 crore worth of investments made by his relatives and friends, filed an FIR.

What action has the police taken?

Four FIRs have been filed in the case. The police arrested the company's general manager Taniya Xasatova, alias Tazagul Karaxanovna Xasatova, director Sarvesh Ashok Surve, and store in-charge Valentina Ganesh Kumar. Xasatova is an Uzbekistan national, while Valentina is a Russian-origin Overseas Citizen of India, married to an Indian.

CEO Tausif Reyaz, alias John Carter, and director Victoria Kovalenko are wanted in the case and the police have issued Look Out Circulars against them. Besides this, another Ukrainian named Olena Stoian is also a wanted accused, suspected to be the mastermind accused of similarly pulling off another fraud in Turkey.

Who are the 'whistleblowers'?

The wanted CEO, Reyaz, has claimed to be the whistleblower. He claimed that he and CA Abhishek Gupta, along with the director Sarvesh Surve, acted as whistleblowers after three months of collecting evidence of the alleged financial irregularities in the company. They said

they submitted a 154-page report to the Mumbai police via emails and personal meetings with EOW officials on December 30, 2024, and January 2, 3 and 4, 2025.

They also claimed to have sent their complaints to the CBI, ED, Income Tax and other government offices. Surve is already arrested and in police custody, while Reyaz has not come forward, claiming he has received threats. Gupta is currently under police protection.

Torres, on the other hand, has blamed Reyaz and Gupta, claiming they induced a group of employees to commit the fraud. Torres also said they robbed the company's stores and shared CCTV footage to back their claims. Reyaz countered that the footage was generated using AI tools. The police, however, have said that no company officials have approached them with any complaint regarding the allegations.

What is the police investigating now?

Police were reportedly aware of alleged irregularities at the Torres company before December, but seemingly did not act on them. The Shivaji Park police summoned Torres officials in June, seeking an explanation, while the Navi Mumbai police in October served notices to the Sanpada branch over their business practices.

However, in both cases, police officers did not pursue the matter further. Torres claimed that they provided an explanation to the police after receiving notices. A senior officer of the Mumbai police has ordered an inquiry into the alleged negligence on the police's part.

Mumbai police EOW and police units of Navi Mumbai, Thane, and Mira Road are now scanning through Torres' investment schemes systems. Police are checking the money transactions and where the money went, to attempt its recovery and return to investors. They are checking if the money was sent abroad, as well as the whereabouts of the wanted people.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: Indian Express

3. President Murmu's invite for this year's Republic Day reception set to honour crafts from South

A Unique Celebration of Craftsmanship

To mark 75 years since the formation of the Republic of India, President Droupadi Murmu has introduced a unique twist to the customary "At Home" reception held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Republic Day. This year, invitees will receive not just the traditional embossed invitation card featuring the Lion Capital of Ashoka but also a specially curated box showcasing the rich crafts of southern India.

Highlighting Southern States

The box celebrates the artistry of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. Each craft item reflects the region's cultural heritage and aligns with the themes of sustainability and India's 5,000-year civilizational history. The initiative was conceptualized by President Murmu and executed with support from the National Institute of Design (NID), leveraging its campuses in Ahmedabad and Bengaluru.

Art in a box

President Droupadi Murmu's guests are set to receive a gift box containing the best of south India's GI-tagged crafts. **Here are some products featured in the hamper:**



Pochampally Ikat on a pencil pouch: This Telangana staple is known for its distinct geometric patterns and bold colours



Etikoppaka toys: The soft wood and lacquer toys from the eponymous village in Andhra Pradesh are valued for the use of natural dyes and themes depicting everyday life



Kalamkari on bamboo: These goodies will arrive in a bamboo box

decorated with Kalamkari motifs, pen-drawn with natural dyes



Kanchipuram silk as a pouch: The handloom silk, world renowned for its richness and elegance, makes its way from Tamil Nadu

What's Inside the Box?

The invitation box is a work of art itself, made from bamboo weave and adorned with Kalamkari paintings by Nimmalakunta artisans. The box includes:

- Ikat-Pochampalli Cover: A reusable cover showcasing Telangana's weaving tradition.
- Ganjifa Art Fridge Magnet: Inspired by Mysore's traditional playing cards.
- Kanjeevaram Silk Pouch: A nod to Tamil Nadu's famous silk craftsmanship.
- Etikoppaka Dolls: Wooden toys representing Andhra Pradesh's cultural heritage.
- Screwpine Leaf Bookmark: Handwoven by artisans from Kerala.

Crafted with Care

The curation and crafting process involved NID's Bengaluru campus, with artisans from all five States contributing to this vibrant tribute. Ashok Mondal, Director of NID Ahmedabad, emphasized that the project embodies the "One District One Product" scheme and features items with GI (Geographical Indicator) tags.

This thoughtful initiative adds a meaningful touch to the Republic Day celebrations, celebrating the diversity and heritage of India's southern States.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous

Source: The Hindu

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