

THE COMSOC GAZETTE



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FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

STOCK MARKET

STARTUPS

ECONOMY

GEOPLITICS

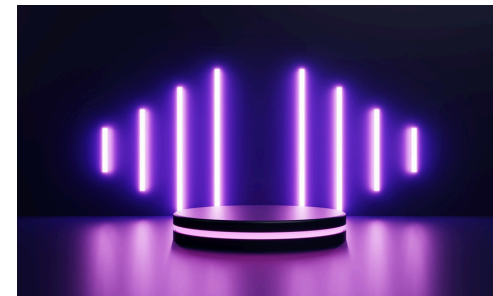
SCIENCE AND TECH

COMSOG GENIE



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FINANCIAL FORESIGHTS

01 DID PAKISTAN TAKE MONEY FROM THE IMF AGAIN?

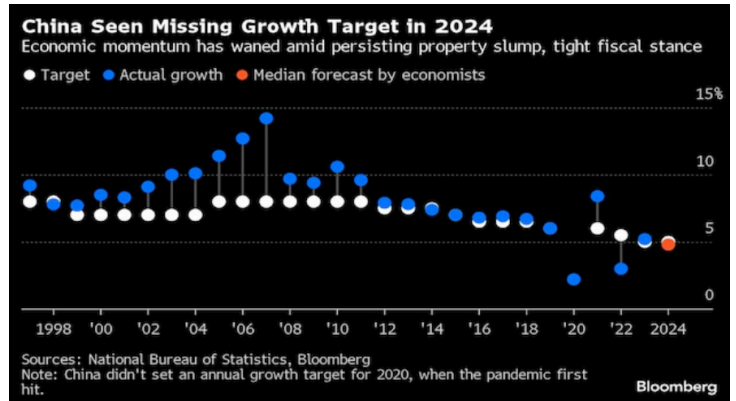
Pakistan has successfully secured "significant financing assurances" from key allies—China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In addition to these commitments, the three nations have agreed to roll over \$12 billion in bilateral loans, as reported by Reuters.

On September 26, the IMF's Executive Board approved a \$7 billion, 37-month loan agreement for Pakistan. The loan package, designed to bolster Pakistan's macroeconomic stability, mandates the implementation of sound policies and reforms. As part of this agreement, Pakistan will receive an immediate disbursement of \$1 billion.

This marks Pakistan's 23rd IMF programme since 1958. However, despite its history of bailouts, Pakistan's recent economic performance has drawn attention. IMF officials noted that since mid-2023, Pakistan has achieved a "remarkable economic turnaround," underscoring its resilience in navigating its economic challenges.

02 CHINA ACKNOWLEDGES THE PROBLEM FINALLY

In a significant admission, Chinese President Xi Jinping and other top leaders recognised the challenges facing the world's second-largest economy during a meeting of the Politburo on Thursday, September 26, 2024. The leadership acknowledged emerging "problems" and reaffirmed their commitment to addressing on-going issues in sectors like housing, which a persistent crisis has plagued.



As part of efforts to stimulate the economy, Beijing rolled out a series of new policy measures aimed at reviving growth. Despite setting an annual growth target of 5%, analysts remain cautious about the government's optimism, citing multiple headwinds.

According to the state-run Xinhua news agency, the Politburo emphasised the need to view the economy "comprehensively, objectively, and calmly," urging both policymakers and citizens to strengthen confidence while confronting current challenges.

In a bid to reinvigorate the struggling real estate sector, the government pledged to adjust housing purchase restrictions and explore new models of real estate development. This move is seen as a critical step in responding to public concerns over the ongoing economic slowdown, which has also impacted domestic consumption and investment. With these latest actions, China's leadership signals that while difficulties remain, there is a focused effort to steer the economy back toward sustainable growth. How effective these measures will be, however, remains a topic of debate among experts.

01 SWIGGY TO DELIVER AN EXCELLENT IPO?

Food delivery giant Swiggy has received the green light from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch its much-anticipated initial public offering (IPO). This move comes as Swiggy prepares to enter the public market, following in the footsteps of its rival, Zomato.

Backed by prominent investors such as Prosus, SoftBank, and Accel, Swiggy was valued at \$9.3 billion as of August 2023. The company took the confidential pre-filing route on April 30, 2024, meaning specific details about the IPO remain under wraps. However, reports indicate that Swiggy aims to raise Rs 11,000 crore, with a fresh issue component of Rs 5,000 crore.

Industry insiders suggest that Swiggy is targeting a November IPO launch. Before hitting the market, the company must release its updated draft red herring prospectus (UDRHP) to the public for 21 days, allowing stakeholders to provide feedback on the offer document. Following this period, Swiggy can move forward with the IPO.

If all proceeds smoothly, Swiggy will become the second food delivery company to list on Indian stock exchanges, following Zomato's successful listing. Zomato, valued at Rs 2.6 trillion, has seen its stock price surge by 2.3 times this year alone.

What makes Swiggy's IPO particularly notable is that it will be the first to utilise the confidential filing route in India, introduced in 2022. This method allows companies to keep their draft prospectus private until they finalise listing plans, providing protection against public scrutiny and

potential litigations.

Swiggy's public debut is expected to be a major event in the Indian startup ecosystem, further fueling the competition in the food delivery sector.



02 IS INDIA SAVING THE GEOPOLITICAL CLIMATE?

As geopolitical tensions intensify and global stock valuations soar, markets worldwide face heightened risks. Speaking at the Jefferies India Forum 2024, Christopher Wood, global head of equity strategy at Jefferies emphasised that while foreign investors remain cautious due to high valuations, India's fiscal deficit is more sustainable compared to G7 nations, as it is driven by infrastructure spending rather than welfare payments. He also noted that India's markets are increasingly decoupling from Wall Street, with domestic investors playing a larger role in stabilising the economy.

Despite the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and tensions in West Asia, Wood expressed confidence in India's ability to weather global market volatility, citing its strong domestic fundamentals as a key protective factor.

01 TAKING A GAMBLE ON DREAM11?

In a strategic move to comply with regulatory frameworks, Tencent Holdings Ltd. is preparing to divest its entire stake in Sporta Technologies Ltd., the parent company of Dream11. According to a report by Mint, Singapore-based TIGA Investment Pte Ltd. will acquire Tencent's stake for more than \$150 million.

The decision comes amidst regulatory pressures stemming from Press Note-3 (PN-3), which imposes restrictions on investments from neighbouring countries, particularly in light of border tensions with China.

The acquisition by TIGA Investment Pte Ltd. has already secured clearance from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) through an expedited approval process. CCI's review found no horizontal overlaps, vertical linkages, or complementary business activities between the parties involved, indicating minimal adverse impact on competition within India.

However, the move underscores Tencent's strategic realignment in response to evolving regulatory landscapes.



02 CRASHES WITH SPICEJET AND ENGINE LEASE FINANCIAL CORPORATION RESOLVED

SpiceJet has taken a significant step toward resolving its financial challenges by settling a long-standing \$16.7 million dispute with Engine Lease Finance Corporation (ELFC).

Representatives from both SpiceJet and ELFC are in the process of formalising the agreement, which will conclude all ongoing legal disputes between the two entities. As part of the settlement, SpiceJet has informed stock exchanges that the existing litigation will be withdrawn. This development serves as a milestone in the airline's broader efforts to restructure its operations and focus on long-term growth.

ELFC, the world's largest independent engine leasing company, had leased eight engines to SpiceJet in 2017. The dispute arose over unpaid dues amounting to approximately \$16 million, including interest and rental, with missed payments dating back to April 2021. The matter escalated to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), where SpiceJet initially objected to ELFC's petition, citing technical defects. However, after ELFC corrected the issues, the tribunal issued a formal notice to SpiceJet.

In parallel with its legal settlements, SpiceJet is actively seeking to stabilise its finances. The airline recently announced plans to raise Rs 3,000 crore by issuing 48.71 million equity shares to qualified institutional buyers at Rs 61.60 per share. This move is part of its broader strategy to address debt and focus on future growth.

01 INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES REACH RECORD HIGH OF \$692.3 BILLION

India's foreign exchange reserves have increased by \$2.8 billion, reaching a new peak of \$692.3 billion. This surge reflects a robust position in the economy, bolstered by factors such as stable capital inflows and effective management of foreign investments. The rise in reserves is seen as a significant buffer against external shocks and enhances the country's ability to manage its currency value amid global economic uncertainties. Analysts highlight that higher forex reserves improve investor confidence and provide a safeguard against currency volatility. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) plays a crucial role in managing these reserves, which consist of foreign currency assets, gold reserves, and Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This milestone underscores India's growing economic resilience and the effectiveness of its financial policies in the current global landscape.

03 THE SURGE FOR COLDPLAY TICKETS: A REFLECTION OF INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

The overwhelming demand for Coldplay's 2025 Mumbai concert tickets, which sold out in just 30 minutes, highlights India's rising disposable incomes and a shift towards premium consumption. With 1.3 crore people vying for 1.5 lakh tickets, the phenomenon indicates not only a strong appetite for luxury experiences but also the expanding middle class. Resale prices skyrocketed, with tickets originally priced at Rs 12,500 listed for over Rs 3 lakh. This reflects a broader trend of premiumization across sectors, as consumers splurge on luxury goods post-pandemic. While rural markets still face economic stress, urban households exhibit changing consumption patterns, favoring high-value items over basic necessities. The growth in the number of wealthy households and high-net-worth individuals underscores a significant economic shift, with consumption even among lower-income groups.

02 INDIA REDUCES EXPORT TAX ON PARBOILED RICE AMID ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENTS

The Indian government has reduced the export tax on parboiled rice from 20% to 10%, a significant change made a year after the initial tax was imposed to safeguard domestic supply due to production concerns. This decision follows the establishment of the Rice Federation Consulting Committee, aimed at addressing challenges in rice exports. The adjustment comes in the wake of below-average rainfall in 2023 and is expected to enhance India's competitiveness in the global rice market, particularly after the removal of the floor price for basmati rice, which may attract increased orders from Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. Despite these measures, India is facing rising retail inflation, which climbed to 3.65% in August. The Reserve Bank of India has expressed concerns about food inflation's impact on overall inflation trends, emphasizing the need for careful monitoring.

01 AUSTRIA'S UPCOMING ELECTION: A TURNING POINT FOR THE FAR-RIGHT

Austrians will vote on Sunday in a critical parliamentary election that may pave the way for the far-right Freedom Party to lead the government for the first time since World War II. Currently leading in the polls, the Freedom Party's anti-immigration and euroskeptic stance has gained traction amid rising political discontent, fueled by inflation and economic challenges linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The election follows a trend of increasing far-right influence across Europe, raising concerns among many Austrians. Key issues include the cost of living, immigration, and the relationship with Russia, with the Freedom Party arguing against severing ties with Moscow. Austria's Parliament will be elected via proportional representation, with at least 4% of votes needed for party representation. Preliminary results will be announced shortly after voting, but coalition negotiations could extend for weeks or months, depending on the outcome.

03 U.S.-LED COALITION TO CONCLUDE MISSION IN IRAQ BY 2025

The U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq will wind down its mission by September 2025, transitioning to a bilateral security partnership with Iraqi forces. The decision follows a joint agreement between the U.S. and Iraq amid increasing calls for the withdrawal of American troops, currently numbering around 2,500, who have played a critical role in combating a resurgent Islamic State (ISIS). Although the coalition is ending, U.S. forces will remain in Iraq, focusing on training and advising Iraqi units. The change aims to reassure Iran and Shiite militias that have pressured for a full withdrawal and U.S. officials indicated that the presence may shift to different bases. The U.S. and Iraqi governments emphasize that this transition aims to enhance Iraq's sovereignty while maintaining stability.

02 SHIGERU ISHIBA ELECTED AS JAPAN'S NEW PRIME MINISTER

Shigeru Ishiba, a former defense minister, has been chosen to lead Japan as prime minister, succeeding Fumio Kishida. Known for his straightforward approach and popularity among rank-and-file members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Ishiba secured his position with a runoff victory over Sanae Takaichi. Kishida's resignation follows months of low approval ratings due to inflation and political scandals. Ishiba's election marks a shift in leadership style, emphasizing open discussions and a desire for party revitalization. His platform includes rural revitalization and a phased exit from nuclear energy, although he offered limited economic solutions. Ishiba expressed intentions to engage China and renegotiate Japan's alliance with the U.S., aiming for a more equitable relationship. The election results reflect ongoing tensions within the LDP and the need to balance against opposition parties, as Japan faces significant demographic and economic challenges ahead.

01 ASTRONOMERS DISCOVER RECORD-BREAKING BLACK HOLE JETS SPANNING 23 MILLION LIGHT YEARS

Astronomers have identified the longest known black hole jet system, named Porphyron, stretching an astonishing 23 million light-years—over 20 times the size of the Milky Way. This discovery, made using radio telescopes like ASKAP and LOFAR, reveals how supermassive black holes launch jets that can travel nearly at the speed of light. Remarkably, Porphyron's jets maintain an almost perfectly straight trajectory for about 2 billion years, challenging existing theories on black hole dynamics. The galaxy at the center of this jet system, located 7.5 billion light-years away, raises questions about how such long-lived coherence is achieved despite the busy cosmic environment.



03 ESTROGENS WEAKEN IMMUNE RESPONSE, FUEL CANCER GROWTH: NEW INSIGHTS FROM DUKE RESEARCHERS

A study from Duke Cancer Institute reveals that estrogens not only promote the growth of breast cancers—especially those without estrogen receptors—but also impair the immune system's ability to combat tumors. The research indicates that estrogens reduce the effectiveness of immunotherapies, particularly in aggressive triple-negative breast cancers. However, the use of anti-estrogen drugs has shown promise in counteracting these negative effects, enhancing immunotherapy efficacy across various cancer types, including melanoma and colon cancers. The researchers focused on eosinophils, white blood cells that, when depleted by estrogens, contribute to increased tumor growth. This study underscores the potential of anti-estrogen treatments to bolster immunotherapy benefits.

02 BRAIN-INSPIRED MATERIALS COULD TRANSFORM COMPUTING EFFICIENCY

Researchers from Texas A&M University, Sandia National Lab, and Stanford University have developed a groundbreaking class of materials that mimic the behavior of axons, enabling efficient electrical signal propagation without degradation. These materials can spontaneously amplify electrical signals as they travel along transmission lines, potentially revolutionizing computing architectures and significantly reducing energy consumption in modern data centers. Unlike traditional metallic conductors that lose signal amplitude due to resistance, these axon-like materials leverage a unique electronic phase transition that dramatically enhances conductivity as signals pass through. This innovative approach not only addresses energy efficiency challenges in computing but also opens exciting pathways for more advanced and sustainable technologies in various fields.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION

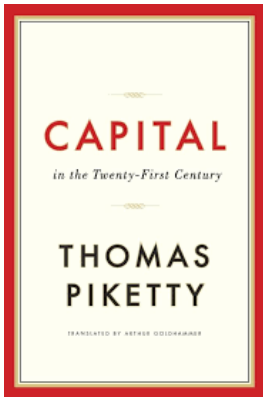
THANK YOU FOR SMOKING (2005)

This satirical comedy follows Nick Naylor, a smooth-talking spokesman for the tobacco industry, played by Aaron Eckhart. Naylor uses his charm and persuasive skills to promote smoking while juggling moral dilemmas and media scrutiny. The film critiques the art of spin and the ethics of marketing controversial products



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

CAPITAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



Thomas Piketty's "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" examines the evolution of wealth and income inequality over the past few centuries. Combining historical data with economic theory, Piketty argues that capitalism inherently leads to inequality and that this imbalance threatens social and economic stability. He advocates for progressive taxation and other reforms to address these disparities and promote economic fairness. The book is a critical analysis of wealth distribution and its implications for modern societies.

PODCAST RECOMMENDATION

MARKETING OVER COFFEE

"Marketing Over Coffee" is a podcast that bridges the gap between traditional and digital marketing. Hosted by John Wall and Christopher S. Penn, it offers actionable insights on marketing strategies and tools. The show blends expert interviews with practical advice, providing listeners with valuable tips for improving their marketing efforts.

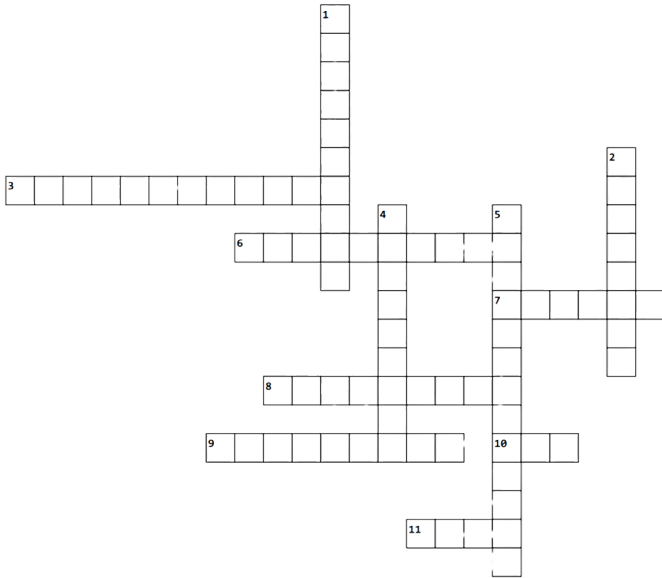


STOCK PICKS

NATIONAL THERMAL POWER CORPORATION

NTPC shares recently broke above ₹417 and closed at ₹436, though they slipped to ₹430 during Thursday trades. Experts suggest adding NTPC shares to portfolios due to strong demand in the power sector and the company's Capex expansion plans, which are crucial for India's economic growth. They recommend current shareholders accumulate more, viewing the price dip as a bottom-fishing opportunity. NTPC's role in India's energy transformation makes it a favourable stock for long-term investors.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

3. A person who sets up a business(es), taking on the financial risks in hope of profit (1 word)
6. A person who is the exclusive owner of a business. they are entitled to keep all profits for themselves after tax has been paid, but has unlimited liability (2 words)
7. Value is the share price of a share when it is floated on the secondary market (2 words)
8. The availability of liquid assets to a market or company (1 word)
9. You can earn an income from shares by either selling stock, or receiving (1 word, plural)
10. The Australian share market (abbreviated)
11. Compensation for work, typically paid hourly or weekly (1 word)

DOWN

1. A market with a decline and a drop in share prices and demand (2 words)
2. The name for the Hong Kong stockmarket index (2 words)
4. The 4 P's of marketing include price, placement, product and (1 word)
5. The market where the initial shares of a public company are first floated (2 words)

ANSWERS IN THE NEXT EDITION

Answers of the previous edition

Across

2. Deficit
4. Capitalism
6. Consumer
8. Price
10. Market

Down

1. ROI
3. Inflation
5. Matching Principles
7. Profit or Return
9. M2

VOCABULARY

1. **Matrix**- an enclosure within which something originates or develops
2. **Xenophobia**- a fear of foreigners or strangers
3. **Benign**- kind in disposition or manner
4. **Ineluctable**- impossible to avoid or evade
5. **Beacon**- a fire that can be seen from a distance
6. **Impetuous**- characterized by undue haste and lack of thought
7. **Vexation** - anger produced by some irritation
8. **Benevolent**- showing or motivated by sympathy and understanding

JARGONS DECODED

Micro-Moments

Micro-moments are instances when consumers turn to their devices for quick answers, decisions, or purchases. These moments are often spontaneous and driven by specific needs, such as "I want to know," "I want to go," "I want to buy." Brands that are able to capture these micro-moments by providing relevant content or services can drive conversions and customer loyalty in the highly competitive digital landscape.

Ethical Commerce

Ethical commerce refers to businesses prioritizing sustainable practices, fair trade, and social responsibility throughout their operations. This includes sourcing eco-friendly materials, ensuring ethical labor practices, and minimizing environmental impact. Consumers are increasingly gravitating toward brands that demonstrate ethical values, and businesses adopting ethical commerce can enhance their brand reputation and attract a socially conscious customer base.

MYTH BUSTERS

Outsourcing always saves money

Outsourcing is often seen as a way to cut costs, but it does not always lead to savings or efficiency. Poorly managed outsourcing can result in quality control issues, delays, communication challenges, and hidden costs. It's essential to carefully evaluate outsourcing decisions based on strategic alignment and skills required. Sometimes, investing in internal capabilities can yield better results than outsourcing certain operations.

Brick-and-mortar stores are dead

While e-commerce has significantly grown, brick-and-mortar stores are far from dead. In fact, many consumers still prefer in-person shopping experiences, particularly for items where they want to touch, feel, or try out products. Physical stores also serve as brand hubs, offering immersive experiences and building stronger customer relationships. The future of retail may involve a hybrid approach, blending online and offline shopping through omnichannel strategies.

FORTUNE'S FABLES

CHOBANI

Chobani, founded by Hamdi Ulukaya, has revolutionised the yogurt industry with its focus on quality and accessibility. Launching with a mission to bring authentic Greek yogurt to the American market, Chobani faced significant obstacles, including fierce competition and scepticism from industry leaders. Despite these challenges, Ulukaya's dedication to his vision and commitment to using only natural ingredients propelled the brand to success. Chobani's emphasis on community and fair labour practices, including providing good wages and benefits to employees, resonated with consumers who value ethical business practices. Today, Chobani is a leading name in yogurt, known for its innovation and commitment to quality. The brand's rise reflects not only its ability to disrupt a market but also its dedication to creating a positive impact through sustainable practices and community engagement. Chobani's journey exemplifies the power of perseverance and integrity in building a successful, values-driven company.

**“Do not go where the path may lead, go
instead where there is no path and
leave a trail.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Thank you for reading!

**Hope you enjoyed the content.
Stay tuned for the next edition!**

