

THE COMSOC GAZETTE



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FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

STOCK MARKET

STARTUPS

ECONOMY

GEOPLITICS

SCIENCE AND TECH

COMSOG GENIE



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01 KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK SHARES RALLY OVER 2% AFTER RBI LIFTS BAN

Kotak Mahindra Bank's share prices rose by 2.25% to a value of Rs 1,987.70 after the Reserve Bank of India lifted restrictions on the private lender, allowing the company to onboard new customers via online channels. The lender of last resort banned Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and the issue of new credit cards. The private lender reported a 10% growth year on year (YoY) in its net profit at Rs 3,305 crore in Q3 FY25, compared to Rs 3,005 crore reported in the same period a year ago. The net interest income (NII) stood at Rs 13,427.58 crore for Q3 FY25, an increase of 14% YoY.

Compared with the banking index, Nifty Bank has wiped out 1.5% of investors' wealth in the last five trading days. It has risen 3.4% in the last month while declining 0.3% in the previous six months. However, the index has given a return of more than 9% in the last one year.



02 COMPARING 2 NEW IPOs IN THE INDIAN MARKET- HEXAWARE TECHNOLOGIES VS QUALITY POWER

The last week has seen the introduction of 2 major IPOs in the market- Hexaware Technologies and Quality Power Electrical Equipments. Hexaware Technologies IPO is a Rs. 8750 crore issue that opened for bidding on February 12, whereas Quality Power IPO is a Rs 858.70 crore IPO that opened on 14 February.



Hexaware Technologies is an IT services and digital solutions company, helping businesses with AI, cloud computing, automation, etc. Meanwhile, Quality Power is in the power infrastructure sector, manufacturing high voltage equipment for energy transmission/ distribution.

The price band of Hexaware Technologies IPO is set between Rs 674 to Rs 708 per share. The minimum investment for retail investors is Rs 14,154. On the other hand, Quality Power IPO has a price band of Rs 401 to Rs 425 per share, with a minimum investment for retail investors at Rs 10,426.

The Indian market is seeing an exponential rise in IPOs, indicating positive investor sentiment and promising growth prospects for the future.

01 NISSAN-HONDA \$60 BILLION MERGER COLLAPSES OVER POWER STRUGGLE

Nissan's \$60 billion merger talks with Honda collapsed due to Nissan's reluctance to acknowledge its weak position, slow decision-making, as well as Honda's demand for Nissan to become a subsidiary of its company. Despite years of declining sales, management turmoil, and misjudging hybrid demand, Nissan insisted on near-equal treatment of both companies, being part of the merger. Honda pushed for deeper job and capacity cuts, however Nissan resisted factory closures to avoid severe financial losses.



The turning point came when Nissan announced a new EV (Electric Vehicle) plant in Kyushu, reinforcing its unwillingness to downsize. Shortly after this incident, Honda introduced a proposal which involved making Nissan a subsidiary, which Nissan found unacceptable. Renault, Nissan's top shareholder, also opposed the deal, calling it a hostile takeover on behalf of Honda.

With the scrapping of the merger, Nissan faces

mounting challenges, including declining market share, potential tariffs from the United States, and competition from Chinese EV makers. Now, it looks to join hands with new partners, such as Taiwan's Foxconn, which is open to collaboration but not acquisition.

02 GEOPOLITICS, AI, AND ESG: TOP PRIORITIES FOR INDIAN BUSINESS LEADERS

A recently launched KPMG report highlights that geopolitics and political uncertainty are now the biggest risks to business growth in India as well as globally, pointing towards a major shift from 2022. A survey of 1,300 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), including 125 from India, also found concerns related to volatile trade, rising interest rates, and disruptive technology.

ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) is becoming a key corporate strategy, with 54% of Indian CEOs embedding it into their businesses. Moreover, generative Artificial Intelligence is seen as both a cybersecurity enhancer and a new vulnerability, with 77% of Indian CEOs recognizing its risks.

Regarding workplace trends, 89% of Indian CEOs plan to reward employees who return to the office, while 54% expect a full in-office model in three years. Additionally, 56% agree that diversity performance scrutiny will increase. Despite AI concerns, 61% of Indian CEOs are confident in their organization's cybersecurity resilience, compared to 52% globally.

01 INDIA'S ECONOMIC SPRINT: SMART POLICIES AND STRONG FUNDAMENTALS DRIVE GROWTH

India is poised to retain its position as the world's fastest-growing economy, as emphasized by FM Nirmala Sitharaman.

Private consumption expenditure rose by 7.2% in FY25, reaching its highest level since 2002-03. Over the past three years, GDP growth has averaged 8%, with only a few quarters dipping below 5.4%. The government has focused on substantial investments in infrastructure, agriculture, MSMEs, and exports, rural development and employment generation.

The budget allocates ₹15.48 trillion for capital investments, maintaining the fiscal deficit at 4.4%. Inflation remains within the 2-6% target range, although the rupee depreciated by 3.3% against the dollar from October 2024 to January 2025. Meanwhile, unemployment has nearly halved from 6% to 3.2% since 2017-18, alongside increased state financial support and a roadmap to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 50% by 2030-31. India's economic trajectory remains strong, despite the challenges posed by global uncertainties.



02 INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT SHRINKS, BUT RISING OIL COSTS POSE A CHALLENGE

According to Union Bank of India, India's trade deficit declined from \$21.94 billion in December 2024 to \$20.88 billion in January 2025. This is mainly due to a drop in gold imports since purchases became less alluring due to skyrocketing global prices. Additionally, domestic demand has decreased as the wedding and festival season ended. Crude oil, however, offers a different picture, even though imports of gold have declined.



Imports of crude oil climbed by 6% due to the increase in Brent crude prices, which went from \$73.13 per barrel in December to \$78.35 per barrel in January. Imports from Russia surged by 13%, whereas those from Iraq declined by 8%.

Another challenge is the decline in petroleum product exports, which have been impacted by weak demand in developed economies and logistical disruptions along key shipping routes. While the narrowing trade deficit is a positive development, India's heavy reliance on crude oil and exposure to global price volatility remain key concerns. Strategic economic planning will be essential to maintaining stability and adapting to evolving global market conditions.

THE GLOBAL CHESSBOARD

01 RISING PROTECTIONISM AND GLOBAL TRADE TENSIONS

The global trade landscape is increasingly characterized by rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions, leading to significant uncertainty. Recent U.S. initiatives, such as the imposition of reciprocal tariffs on countries that levy duties on American imports, have heightened fears of a global trade war. These measures, aimed at addressing trade imbalances, risk accelerating inflation and disrupting international supply chains. The European Union has expressed intentions to negotiate to avoid escalating conflicts but is also considering reinstating countermeasures. Trade experts caution that implementing reciprocal tariffs could be complex, potentially involving intricate and varied duty rates across different nations. This environment of heightened protectionism and geopolitical tension contributes to a climate of uncertainty, compelling businesses to navigate an increasingly complex global trade environment.

02 CHALLENGES IN THE QUICK-COMMERCE SECTOR

The quick-commerce (q-commerce) industry, which focuses on rapid delivery services, is facing sustainability challenges. In India, the sector has experienced rapid growth, expanding from \$100 million in sales in 2020 to an estimated \$6 billion in 2024. However, industry experts argue that this growth is heavily reliant on private equity and venture capital funding, raising concerns about its

long-term economic viability. Major corporations, including Walmart-backed Flipkart, Amazon, and Reliance Industries, have entered the market, offering instant deliveries. Despite this expansion, there are warnings that investors may be engaging in speculative practices, betting on overvalued assets without clear paths to profitability. This situation suggests that the current quick-commerce frenzy may be unsustainable in the long term, prompting calls for a more cautious and strategic approach to growth in this sector.

03 ADAPTATION STRATEGIES OF CHINESE E-COMMERCE GIANTS

Chinese e-commerce companies, such as Shein and Temu, are adapting to recent U.S. regulatory changes aimed at closing loopholes that previously allowed them to avoid paying duties on low-value shipments. In response, these companies are shifting more of their fulfillment operations to the United States. Shein has established warehouses in Indiana and an office in Washington, while Temu has begun incorporating U.S.-based vendors to handle local fulfillment. Experts believe that these adjustments will not significantly impact the competitive edge of these companies, which is driven by their efficient supply chains and ability to offer trendy, low-cost products. However, consumers may experience slight increases in prices and longer shipping times due to more formal customs clearance procedures. These strategic adaptations highlight the agility of Chinese e-commerce giants in navigating evolving regulatory landscapes to maintain their market positions.

SUSTAINABLE SYNERGIES

01 UAE'S BOLD STEP TOWARDS GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

The UAE has introduced the Blue Visa, a 10-year residency visa for those who are making a valuable contribution to environmental sustainability. The move was announced at the World Governments Summit 2025 in Dubai and is a collective initiative of the Ministry of Climate Change & Environment and the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs & Ports Security (ICP).

20 sustainability leaders, such as innovators, researchers, and business pioneers, will be granted the visa in its initial phase. The candidates can apply directly through the ICP or be nominated by UAE authorities. This initiative extends the UAE's current Golden and Green Visas, solidifying its commitment to international sustainability.



Climate Change & Environment, highlighted the visa's potential to drive national and international sustainability objectives. Made available 24/7 through the ICP's online system, the Blue Visa reflects the UAE's enthusiasm for luring and retaining international environmental expertise to build a future that is environmentally friendly.

02 SHAPING THE FUTURE: CAN AI DEVELOPMENT BE TRULY INCLUSIVE & SUSTAINABLE?

The Paris AI Action Summit (10th & 11th February 2025) witnessed 60 countries signing the Statement on Inclusive and Sustainable AI for People and the Planet (except the US and Britain). The summit focused on closing the digital divide, promoting sustainable AI, preparing the workforce and international cooperation.



A major concern addressed during the discussion was equitable AI access, with the 'Public Interest AI initiative' aiming to provide resources and training to underserved communities. Sustainability was another key focus, highlighting the need for energy-efficient AI to reduce environmental impact. Workforce readiness was also discussed, stressing reskilling programs to prevent displacement in an AI-driven economy.

The summit reinforced global AI governance efforts, aligning with past initiatives like the Bletchley Park and Seoul AI Summits (2023 & 2024 respectively). The establishment of the AI Foundation and Council of Sustainable AI marks a crucial step in shaping ethical AI policies. The next summit in India will further define international cooperation and AI's geopolitical trajectory.

01 BRAIN MECHANISM BEHIND FEAR SUPPRESSION UNVEILED

A group of qualified scientific teams at UCL's (University College London) Sainsbury Wellcome Centre have discovered the brain processes that control and guide inherent fear reactions which provide knowledge for developing PTSD and anxiety treatments. The recently launched Science publication reveals and meticulously explains how exposure to harmless threats enables animals to learn how to shut down fear-based reactions.

The research headed by Dr. Sara Mederos and Professor Sonja Hofer shows the ventrolateral geniculate nucleus (vLGN) functions as a vital area that stores fear-related learning data. The vLGN retains memory storage, although the initial learning process is supported by the visual cortex, thus contradicting standard notions about learning and memory functions. Brain molecules called endocannabinoids activate the vLGN neural activity through enhancement to reduce fear-related responses.

The discoveries have immense, significant potential applications for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and anxiety disorder treatment. Observing identical vLGN pathways existing in humans provides the opportunity to develop novel therapeutic treatment options when focusing on this area. Many groups of scientists have also been planning future research avenues in order to establish medical interventions that can control both vLGN functions and endocannabinoid chemical communication pathways.

02 ANCIENT LUNAR IMPACT CLEARS PATH FOR NASA'S ARTEMIS MISSION

Scientists discovered that a powerful asteroid impact on the Moon occurred 3.8 billion years ago which restructured its surface. The asteroid hit the southern area and released debris with explosive power equal to 130 times Earth's nuclear stockpile thus creating fissures that matched the dimensions of the Grand Canyon.



The asteroid's impact debris cleared the Artemis exploration site protecting astronauts from collecting material from the South Pole-Aitken Basin which dates to a much earlier time. Scientists determined the asteroid's age which stands at 4.3 billion years, helping them understand how long Earth needed before asteroids slowed down to permit the emergence of life.

The Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter provided NASA with data to model the impact. Researchers discovered that the debris originating from the younger Schrödinger Basin moved away from the planned Artemis exploration site. The verification enhances the mission's purpose to reveal the earliest chronology of Earth and Moon.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION

THE BIG SHORT (2015)

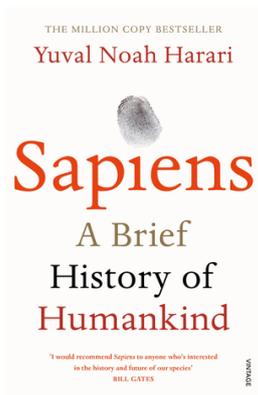
The Big Short is a gripping drama that delves into the events leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. The film follows a group of investors who go against the grain and decide to bet against the housing market, uncovering the corrupt practices that triggered a financial collapse, profoundly impacting the global economy. With a stellar cast, sharp wit, and keen insights, this film is a must-watch for anyone interested in finance and economics!



BOOK RECOMMENDATION

“SAPIENS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUMANKIND” BY YUVAL NOAH HARARI

This comprehensive book by Yuval Noah Harari offers a thought-provoking exploration of the evolution of humankind. From the emergence of Homo sapiens to the modern world, Harari insightfully combines elements of science, history, and anthropology to explain how various factors such as money and religion have shaped our societies, beliefs, and behaviours. *Sapiens* encourages readers to reflect on what it truly means to be part of this world and consider what lies ahead. If you're curious about our past and how it has shaped the present, this book is a must-read!



PODCAST RECOMMENDATION

THE INDICATOR FROM PLANET MONEY

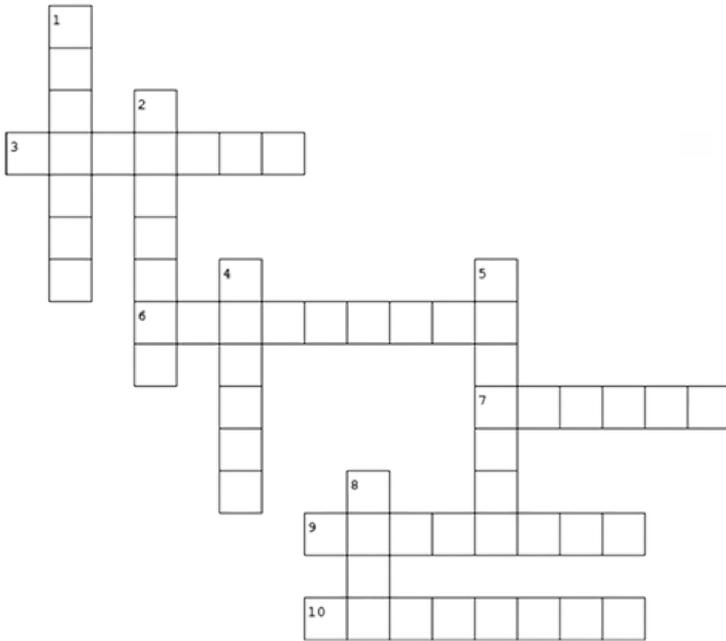
This podcast is designed for those who are passionate about learning new topics related to the field of commerce. Hosted by Cardiff Garcia and Stacey Vanek Smith, the podcast covers various aspects of business, finance, and economics, breaking down complex concepts in an engaging and comprehensible manner. Different episodes feature a range of industry experts who elaborate on real-life examples from the world of commerce, making it highly informative and valuable for all age groups.



MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. “Leanin (Ultra Slowed)” by Cormill
2. “Experience” by Ludovico Einaudi
3. “Cornfield chase”/“S.T.A.Y.” by Hans Zimmer
4. “I Don’t Want To Set The World On Fire” by The Ink Spots
5. “Counting Stars” by OneRepublic

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

3. A pricing strategy offering basic services for free while charging for premium features.
4. Additional benefits derived from increasing production.
6. Taking advantage of price differences in different markets for profit.
7. The ease of converting assets into cash.
9. An economic system characterized by private ownership and free markets.
10. The systematic reduction of asset value over time.

DOWN

1. Pertaining to the authority of a state to govern itself or another state.
2. A risk management strategy used to offset potential losses.

ANSWERS IN THE NEXT EDITION

5. Gradual reduction of debt or intangible asset value over time.
8. The global market for trading national currencies against one another.

Answers of the previous edition

Across

4. Blockade
6. Sanctions
8. NATO
10. Summit
11. Treaty

Down

1. QUAD
2. EMBARGO
3. BRICS
5. Ceasefire
7. OPEC
9. ALLY

VOCABULARY

1. **Inimitable** - Matchless.
2. **Promulgate** - State or announce.
3. **Contusion** - An injury in which the skin is not broken.
4. **Psychosis** - Severe mental disorder in which contact with reality is lost.
5. **Stalemate** - A situation in which no progress can be made.
6. **Effeminate** - Lacking traits typically associated with men or masculinity.
7. **Expiate** - Make amends for.
8. **Beatific** - Resembling or befitting an angel or saint.
9. **Awl** - A pointed tool for marking surfaces or for punching holes.
10. **Tureen** - Large deep serving dish with a cover.

JARGONS DECODED

Growth Hacking

Growth hacking involves strategies businesses use to rapidly expand their customer base and maximize revenue with minimal expense. It emphasizes continuous experimentation across marketing channels—like advertising, content, and product marketing—to find the most efficient methods. For example, Airbnb leveraged Craigslist to reach users seeking affordable accommodations, tapping into an existing market at minimal cost.

Zero Party Data

Zero-party data is the information which customers willingly share with a brand. With stricter privacy regulations, third-party data (collected externally) and even first-party data (based on observed behavior) are declining. Zero-party data is valued for its accuracy and ability to enable highly customized experiences. Examples include personal details, preferences, and feedback from surveys or polls.

MYTH BUSTERS

Lower prices always attract more customers

While it is believed that lower prices help businesses expand their customer base and boost sales, it's important to recognise that competing solely on price can erode profit margins and create a cheap perception of the brand. Many businesses, such as Apple, BMW, and Rolex, are considered status symbols, valued by customers for their quality, exclusivity, and the unique experience they offer rather than their price.

Once loyal, always loyal

It is often believed that consumers remain loyal to a business for life. However, businesses must recognise that the modern market is highly dynamic, and consumers can easily switch to new products with minimal costs. Therefore, consumer loyalty must be continually earned and maintained by closely monitoring competitors and adapting to evolving consumer tastes and preferences.

FORTUNE'S FABLES

Sweetgreen is a startup founded in 2007 by three friends—Jonathan, Nicolas, and Nathaniel—who opened a small salad shop in Washington, D.C. They aimed to promote healthy eating and transform the fast food industry by using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Despite initial challenges, including a lack of industry experience, their dedication to quality and customer connection helped them create a unique brand centred on sustainability and community. Now, Sweetgreen spans multiple locations across the United States, leveraging technology to grow its customer base through a mobile app. This story illustrates how even a small business can flourish by building strong customer relationships and prioritising innovation and quality.

You carry the passport to your own
happiness.

—Diane Von Furstenberg

Thank you for reading!

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

