BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE REPORT

The opening month of 2026 marked a continuation of the structural shifts that emerged throughout the previous year. Across blockchain infrastructure, financial markets, cybersecurity, and private capital allocation, January's developments reflected a maturing ecosystem increasingly oriented toward sustainable value creation rather than speculative positioning. This report examines the key developments across these domains and identifies actionable implications for operators, investors, and leadership teams navigating an environment defined by selectivity and strategic discipline.

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Executive Summary

Executive Snapshot — February at a Glance

Crypto:
Markets entered a consolidation phase. Bitcoin drifted lower amid ETF outflows and a risk-off macro backdrop, while regulatory momentum in the U.S. quietly accelerated. This was less panic — more recalibration.

Global Finance:
Geopolitical tension and tariff noise added volatility, yet global growth projections remain resilient. Technology leadership re-emerged in some regions, while others experienced sharp sector corrections.

Cybersecurity:
The industry is shifting from reactive defence to long-term resilience. AI-driven threats and post-quantum readiness are no longer theoretical — they are active strategic priorities.

Venture Capital / Private Equity / Family Offices:
Private capital remains active. Fundraising continues, disciplined underwriting dominates decision-making, and family offices are leaning further into venture and alternative strategies.

UAE & Dubai Market Pulse

Crypto (UAE):
Dubai continues reinforcing its position as a global digital asset hub. Regulatory clarity through VARA remains a structural advantage, with continued licensing activity and ecosystem expansion across exchanges, custodians, and Web3 infrastructure players. While global crypto markets consolidated in February, regional sentiment remained constructive, with Dubai maintaining its reputation as a jurisdiction of choice for crypto-native founders and funds relocating from Europe and Asia.

Global Finance (UAE):
The UAE economy continues to demonstrate resilience. Non-oil sector expansion remains strong, supported by tourism, real estate activity, and growth in financial services. Dubai's property market maintained healthy transaction volumes, particularly in premium and off-plan segments. Capital inflows from high-net-worth individuals and international businesses relocating to the region remain a structural tailwind.

Cybersecurity (UAE):
As digital transformation accelerates across government and enterprise sectors, cybersecurity spending continues to scale. Financial institutions, logistics firms, and critical infrastructure operators are actively investing in AI-driven security monitoring and cloud-native protection frameworks. With the UAE positioning itself as a smart nation leader, cyber resilience is increasingly treated as strategic infrastructure.

Venture Capital / Private Equity / Family Offices (UAE):
The GCC private capital ecosystem continues to mature. Sovereign wealth entities and large family offices remain active across global and regional investments, with a growing appetite for AI, fintech, climate innovation, and digital infrastructure. Dubai's role as a capital coordination hub is strengthening, bridging European, Asian, and African deal flow. Family offices in particular are increasing direct participation rather than relying solely on fund allocations.

Regional Outlook:
Dubai's macro trajectory remains structurally strong. Strategic positioning, regulatory clarity, and capital inflows continue to differentiate the UAE from many global peers experiencing political and fiscal strain.

Blockchain Bulletin

Cryptocurrency	Symbol	Price December	Price January	Price February	Estimate % of Change
Bitcoin	BTC	$87,508.83	$87,869.19	$65,142.88	**−25.4%**
Ethereum	ETH	$2,967.04	$2,870.19	$1,894.19	**-33.8%**
Cardano	ADA	$0.33	$0.35	$0.27	**−22.9%**
XRP	XRP	$1.84	$1.88	$1.36	**−27.7%**
Solana	SOL	$124.48	$122.32	$81.40	**−33.4%**
Binance	BNB	$863.26	$872.10	$595.25	**−31.9%**

February marked a cooling period across digital assets. Bitcoin hovered in the mid-$60,000 range after failing to sustain prior highs, reflecting broader macro risk aversion rather than internal structural weakness. ETF flows — which had been a major tailwind through late 2025 — reversed during February, with notable outflows signalling institutional caution.

Ethereum followed a similar trajectory, trading under pressure despite steady ecosystem activity across DeFi and Layer-2 networks. The divergence between network growth and token price performance became increasingly visible — a recurring theme in maturing digital asset markets.

Macro conditions played a significant role. Renewed trade tensions and policy uncertainty contributed to volatility across risk assets, and crypto did not escape the spillover. However, this was not a liquidity crisis nor a disorderly unwind. Leverage normalised, volatility moderated, and the market behaved more like a traditional risk asset undergoing consolidation.

Importantly, February also saw quiet but meaningful progress on U.S. digital asset legislation. Stablecoin frameworks and broader market structure discussions gained traction. Regulatory clarity — while not yet fully realised — is increasingly shaping the medium-term outlook.

Key takeaway:
February was less about collapse and more about reset. The next directional move in crypto will likely hinge on regulatory clarity and renewed institutional flows.

THE BUZZ

'A very unfortunate ruling:' Trump slams Supreme Court and makes a new case for tariffs in State of the Union address

President Trump on Tuesday night offered a strong defence of tariffs during his State of the Union address and proclaimed that no changes are in the offing as "the deals are all done."Read more HERE

Bitcoin Pares Gains During Trump Speech After Topping $66,000

Bitcoin trimmed part of its early Asia gains during US President Donald Trump’s State of the Union address to Congress on Wednesday after a morning jump that defied sustained pressure. Read more HERE

Forget Nvidia, This Is the Stock to Buy For the AI Boom’s Next Leg Up

LUMENTUM

Lumentum (LITE) reported Q2 revenue of $665.5M, up 65.5% year over year. Over 60% came from cloud and AI. Read more HERE

Chinese Hackers Use Anthropic's AI to Launch Automated Cyber Espionage Campaign

State-sponsored threat actors from China used artificial intelligence (AI) technology developed by Anthropic to orchestrate automated cyber attacks as part of a "highly sophisticated espionage campaign" in mid-September 2025. Read more HERE

FINANCIAL TRENDS

Resilient Growth Under Political Pressure

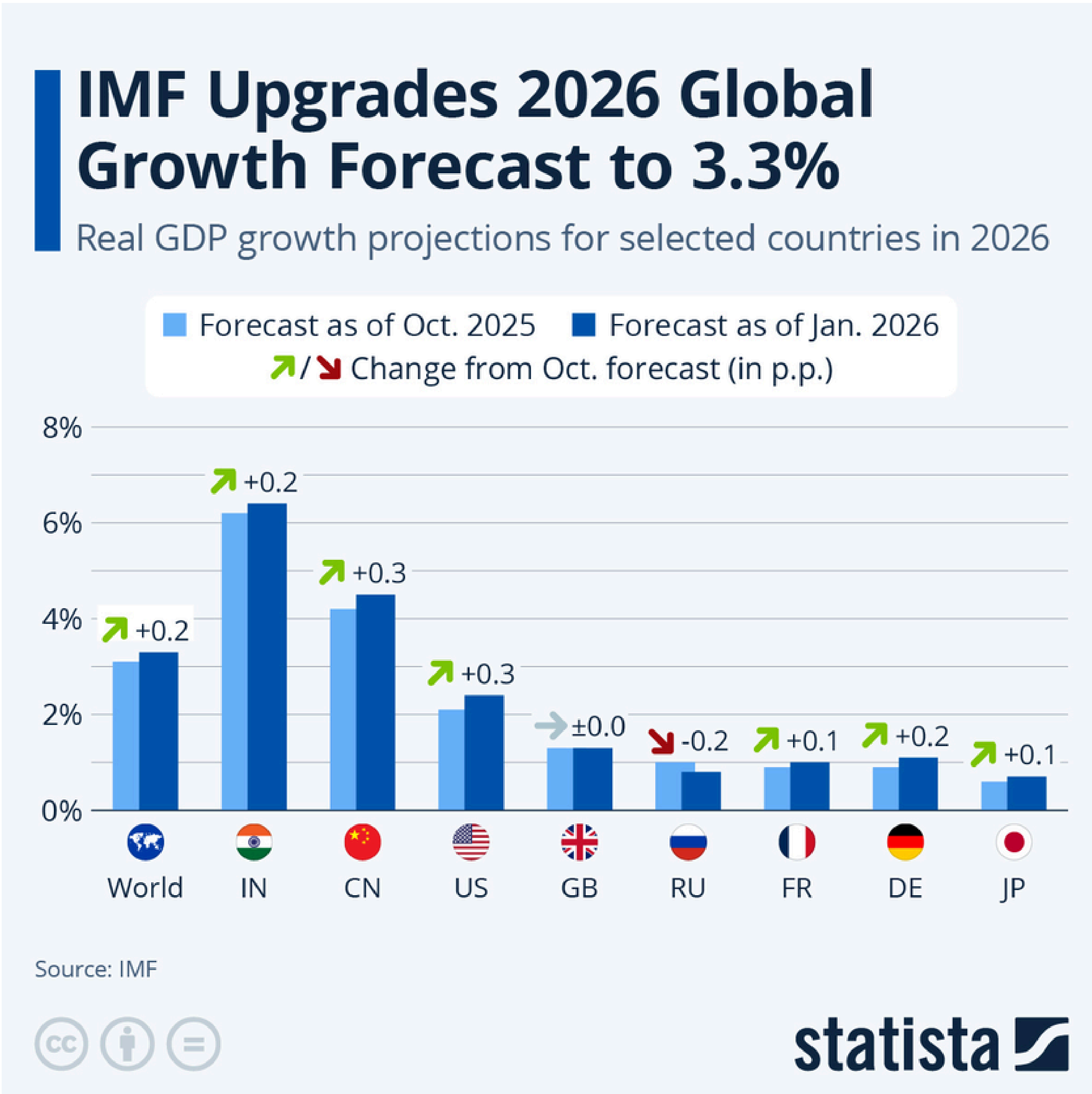
Global markets in February operated in a complex environment. Trade policy noise re-emerged, tariffs added uncertainty, and central banks maintained cautious language around inflation and rates. Yet beneath the volatility, economic resilience persisted.

Technology equities in parts of Asia showed strength, buoyed by AI-related optimism and capital rotation into innovation themes. Meanwhile, other regions experienced sharp sector corrections — notably within IT and export-sensitive industries — reflecting how concentrated exposure can amplify macro stress.

Inflation data globally remains mixed. While headline numbers have moderated from peak levels, core pressures in several economies suggest central banks are not yet ready to pivot aggressively. Rate normalisation remains data-dependent, keeping markets reactive.

Encouringly, global GDP forecasts for 2026 remain near ~2.8–3.0%, supported by resilient U.S. consumption and strong growth in India. Despite geopolitical friction, the base case remains expansion — albeit slower and more uneven than prior cycles.

Key takeaway:
Volatility persists, but recession risk has not meaningfully escalated. Selective positioning and sector awareness matter more than broad directional bets.



IMF Upgrades 2026 Global Growth Forecast to 3.3%
Real GDP growth projections for selected countries in 2026
Forecast as of Oct. 2025
Forecast as of Jan. 2026
/ Change from Oct. forecast (in p.p.)
8%
6%
4%
2%
0%
+0.2
+0.2
+0.3
+0.3
±0.0
-0.2
+0.1
+0.2
+0.1
World
IN
CN
US
GB
RU
FR
DE
JP
Source: IMF
statista

THE CYBER PULSE

Strategic Hardening in the AI Era

February did not deliver a single “WannaCry-level” headline event, but that absence of spectacle should not be mistaken for calm. Beneath the surface, threat actors continued refining tactics, and enterprises accelerated structural upgrades in response to increasingly sophisticated attack chains.

The Quiet Escalation of AI-Enabled Threats

Artificial intelligence is no longer an emerging variable — it is embedded in both offensive and defensive cyber operations.

Threat actors are using generative AI to produce highly convincing phishing campaigns at scale, removing traditional indicators like poor grammar or formatting errors. AI-assisted reconnaissance is shortening the time required to profile targets, identify exposed infrastructure, and tailor spear-phishing attacks. In ransomware ecosystems, automation is now being integrated into vulnerability scanning and lateral movement mapping, reducing dwell time and accelerating breach monetisation cycles.

Deepfake technology also continues to evolve. Executive impersonation scams — particularly in financial services and multinational corporations — are becoming more convincing, leveraging AI-generated voice and video cloning to authorize fraudulent transfers.

At the same time, security teams are deploying AI-driven behavioral analytics to detect anomalous patterns across networks and endpoints. Predictive threat intelligence models are being trained to identify emerging exploit chains before they are widely weaponized. The AI arms race is now operational.

Active Vulnerability Exploitation & Supply Chain Risk

February saw continued exploitation of high-severity vulnerabilities in widely deployed enterprise software stacks. Remote code execution (RCE) vulnerabilities and privilege escalation flaws remain the most monetizable targets.

Attackers continue targeting:
- Cloud identity misconfigurations
- API exposure weaknesses
- VPN and remote access gateway vulnerabilities
- Open-source software dependencies

Software supply chain risk remains elevated. Compromised development libraries and dependency poisoning continue to represent low-friction attack vectors. Organisations increasingly recognise that third-party vendor risk is not a compliance checkbox — it is a systemic exposure channel.

Zero-day vulnerabilities are also monetised faster than ever. The window between disclosure and weaponisation continues to shrink, often measured in days rather than weeks.

Key Takeaway

Cybersecurity investment is shifting from reactive patchwork to systemic architecture.

The most resilient organisations are not those that respond fastest to breaches — they are those that design systems assuming breach inevitability. The competitive advantage in 2026 lies in proactive adaptation, AI-enabled defence, zero-trust implementation, and long-horizon cryptographic readiness.

Silence in headlines does not equate to safety. February reinforced that cybersecurity is now a continuous strategic discipline — not an episodic response function.

VENTURE CAPITAL SPOTLIGHT

Discipline Over Hype

Private capital markets in February reflected something increasingly evident across 2026: the era of indiscriminate deployment has ended. What remains is capital — but capital with filters.

Venture activity continues, particularly across AI infrastructure, climate technologies, fintech enablement, and vertical SaaS. However, the psychology of deployment has changed. Investors are no longer underwriting narratives alone; they are underwriting execution. Revenue durability, customer concentration risk, burn efficiency, gross margin profile, and credible paths to profitability are being interrogated more rigorously than during prior liquidity cycles.

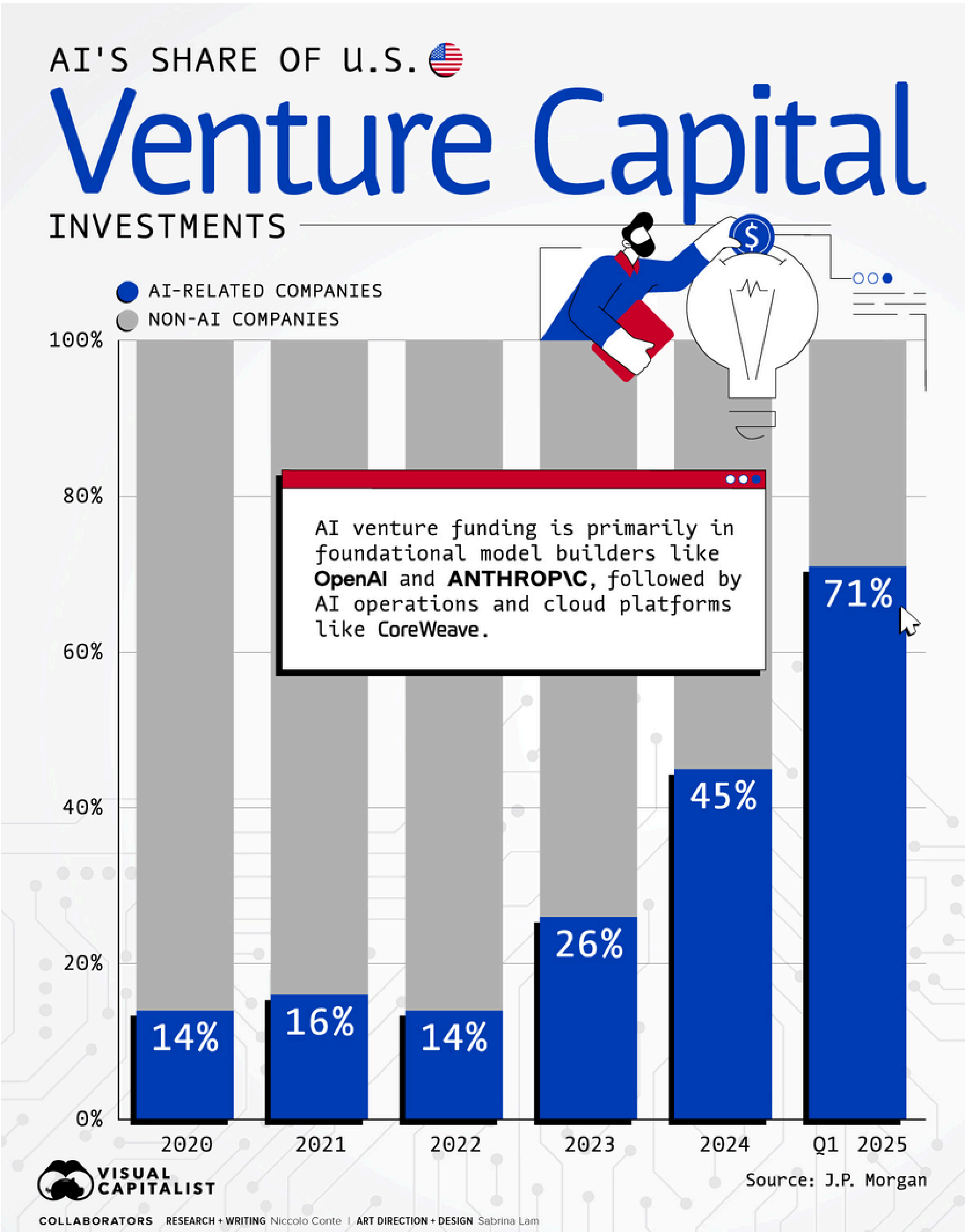
The AI sector remains a capital magnet, but even here, differentiation matters. Infrastructure-layer plays with defensible moats are attracting sustained interest, while application-layer startups without strong retention or proprietary data advantages are facing longer fundraising timelines and tighter valuations. The market is rewarding depth over breadth.

Private equity dealmaking remains active, yet increasingly selective. Transaction volumes are disciplined, with sponsors demonstrating a stronger preference for resilient cash-flow businesses and sector specialisation. Valuations have stabilised relative to the volatility of 2023–2024, but underwriting standards have tightened meaningfully. Debt structures are more conservative, leverage multiples are moderated, and operational value creation — pricing strategy, supply chain optimisation, digital transformation — has replaced pure financial engineering as the primary lever of return.

In parallel, private credit and alternative lending platforms continue gaining momentum. As traditional bank lending remains constrained and sponsors seek flexibility, direct lending funds are filling the gap. This shift reflects a broader structural trend: capital markets are fragmenting into more specialised, risk-adjusted channels rather than flowing uniformly through traditional banking institutions.

Family offices, particularly across the GCC, are increasingly behaving less like passive allocators and more like strategic investors. Allocations to venture and growth equity are expanding, but with heightened emphasis on co-investment rights, governance influence, and long-term thematic alignment. Rather than outsourcing entirely to fund managers, many are building internal investment teams and participating directly in late-stage and structured growth rounds. This marks a maturation of regional capital — from preservation toward proactive value creation.

Importantly, liquidity expectations have reset. Exit timelines are longer. IPO markets remain selective. Secondary transactions and continuation vehicles are becoming more common as sponsors manage portfolio duration. Patience is once again a competitive advantage.


AI'S SHARE OF U.S.
Venture Capital
INVESTMENTS
AI-RELATED COMPANIES
NON-AI COMPANIES
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
AI venture funding is primarily in foundational model builders like OpenAI and ANTHROP\C, followed by AI operations and cloud platforms like CoreWeave.
14%
16%
14%
26%
45%
71%
2020
2021
2022
2023
2024
Q1 2025
VISUAL CAPITALIST
Source: J.P. Morgan
COLLABORATORS RESEARCH + WRITING Niccolo Conte | ART DIRECTION + DESIGN Sabrina Lam

WRAPPED UP

Reset, Resilience & Strategic Capital

February was not defined by a single shock event — it was defined by recalibration.

Across crypto markets, we saw consolidation rather than collapse. Capital rotated, leverage normalised, and regulatory clarity continued quietly progressing in the background. The market is not euphoric — nor is it distressed. It is repositioning.

In global finance, volatility persisted, but systemic stress did not escalate. Growth remains intact, though uneven. Political friction and trade uncertainty added noise, yet the broader macro framework remains one of cautious expansion rather than contraction.

Cybersecurity reinforced a critical theme: resilience is no longer reactive. AI-enabled threats, supply chain exposure, and quantum readiness are shaping boardroom conversations. The organisations that treat cybersecurity as architecture — not patchwork — will define the next competitive tier.

Private capital markets reflected maturity. Venture and private equity activity continues, but discipline dominates deployment. Family offices, particularly across the GCC, are becoming more active allocators, favouring strategic positioning over momentum chasing. Capital remains abundant — but underwriting standards are tighter, and value creation must be demonstrable.

What to Watch in March:

- Will ETF flows in crypto stabilise or continue to retrace?
- How will central banks respond to persistent but moderating inflation?
- Are AI-driven equity narratives sustainable at current valuations?
- Will geopolitical cyber tensions escalate into visible disruptions?
- Does private capital accelerate deployment, or maintain selective pacing?

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