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Vietnam bets on AI and data to lift digital economy to 30% of GDP by 2030

Vietnam is accelerating its push toward a digitally driven growth model, setting a target for the digital economy to contribute 30% of gross domestic product by 2030 as the country seeks new engines of productivity and competitiveness. Under a newly approved national programme for 2026–2030, policymakers aim to move beyond traditional manufacturing-led expansion by leveraging digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data-driven innovation. The strategy reflects a broader regional trend as Southeast Asian economies compete to capture value from emerging technologies while addressing slowing productivity growth.

A central pillar of the plan is the digital transformation of Vietnam's vast small and medium-sized enterprise sector. Authorities intend to support 500,000 SMEs in adopting digital tools, a move expected to improve operational efficiency, broaden market access and strengthen supply-chain resilience. The government is also targeting the emergence of at least five globally competitive technology companies and the establishment of five operational data exchanges, signalling an effort to develop domestic digital infrastructure rather than relying solely on foreign platforms. Financial digitisation remains a key priority. Vietnam aims for the value of cashless transactions to reach 30 times GDP by the end of the decade, while 95% of adults are expected to hold accounts with banks or licensed financial institutions. These targets underscore the growing importance of digital payments as a foundation for e-commerce, fintech and broader economic formalisation.

To support long-term growth, the programme places significant emphasis on human capital. STEM enrolment is expected to account for 40% of university students, while at least 10 million working-age citizens will receive basic digital-skills training.

Meanwhile, nationwide digital infrastructure is set for a major upgrade. Fibre-optic broadband is expected to reach all households, while 5G services are targeted to cover 99% of the population. For investors, the programme highlights Vietnam's ambition to evolve from a manufacturing hub into a regional digital economy powerhouse. Success, however, will depend on the country's ability to translate infrastructure spending, talent development and AI adoption into measurable productivity gains and internationally competitive technology businesses.

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Ho Chi Minh City is positioning itself as Vietnam's leading hub for drone technology and low-altitude logistics

Ho Chi Minh City is positioning itself as Vietnam's leading hub for drone technology and low-altitude logistics, as authorities accelerate efforts to build a comprehensive unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) ecosystem and unlock a new growth engine for the digital economy.

The city views the low-altitude economy – encompassing drone operations, aerial data services and supporting air traffic infrastructure below 1,000 meters – as a strategic sector capable of creating new business models across logistics, urban management and industrial services.

Momentum is growing following the launch of a regulatory sandbox for drone delivery services. Earlier this year, Ho Chi Minh City successfully completed Vietnam's first unmanned postal delivery across the sea between Can Gio and Vung Tau, demonstrating the potential of UAVs to serve remote and difficult-to-access areas.

For the logistics sector, drones could significantly reduce delivery times, ease pressure on congested road networks and support greener transportation solutions. Industry experts see opportunities in last-mile delivery, infrastructure inspection, warehouse management and emergency response services.

The city's expanded metropolitan footprint, which combines dense urban districts, industrial zones and agricultural areas, provides a valuable testing ground for commercial drone applications. Authorities have also identified UAVs as a priority technology under plans to develop the low-altitude economy through 2030.

Despite the progress, major challenges remain. Vietnam's drone ecosystem is still fragmented, with limited integration between research, manufacturing and commercialization. Critical infrastructure such as flight operation centers, landing facilities and low-altitude airspace management systems remains underdeveloped.

As Southeast Asia's logistics market continues to expand, successful deployment of drone-based services could help Vietnam leapfrog traditional infrastructure constraints and establish a competitive position in the region's emerging low-altitude economy. VNS

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Vietnam tightens consumer protection as E-Commerce risks rise

Vietnam is moving to strengthen consumer protections in its rapidly expanding e-commerce sector as online shopping generates a growing number of complaints related to counterfeit products, misleading advertising and data privacy breaches.

The country's digital marketplace has become one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing consumer channels, offering businesses wider market access and shoppers greater convenience. However, regulators and industry participants warn that the speed of growth has exposed weaknesses in oversight and consumer safeguards.

According to the National Competition Commission, e-commerce now accounts for the largest share of consumer complaints nationwide. Common grievances include products that differ from online descriptions, delayed refunds, difficulties in returns and exchanges, and unauthorized use of personal data.

Unlike traditional retail, online transactions often rely entirely on digital information such as product images, promotional content and customer reviews, making it difficult for consumers to verify product quality or identify sellers when disputes occur.

Vietnam's government is responding with a shift toward preventive regulation. The new E-commerce Law, scheduled to take effect on July 1, will require online marketplaces to assume greater responsibility for activities conducted on their platforms. Operators will be required to verify seller identities, retain transaction records, cooperate with authorities and take action against violations.

The move reflects a broader effort to build trust in the digital economy as cross-border platforms and online merchants play an increasingly important role in retail growth.

Industry participants broadly support the tighter rules, arguing that stronger transparency standards will help curb unfair competition from sellers of counterfeit or unverified products while creating a more level playing field for legitimate businesses.

Experts say long-term growth of Vietnam's digital commerce sector will depend not only on market expansion but also on the ability of regulators, platforms and merchants to ensure a secure and trustworthy shopping environment. VNS



Thai energy giant eyes Vietnam LNG and wind power expansion

Vietnam's push to secure long-term energy supplies is attracting deeper interest from regional investors, with Thailand's Gulf Energy Development exploring new liquefied natural gas (LNG) and wind power projects in the country.

During a meeting with state utility Vietnam Electricity (EVN) on June 10, executives from Gulf Energy proposed cooperation on a series of LNG and renewable energy developments, reflecting growing confidence in Vietnam's expanding power market. Electricity demand in Vietnam continues to rise rapidly, driven by industrial growth, digital infrastructure expansion and foreign manufacturing investment.

EVN Chairman Dang Hoang An welcomed the proposal, noting that Vietnam must mobilize diverse sources of capital and technology to meet future electricity needs while supporting economic development.

The discussions come as Hanoi seeks to accelerate investment in cleaner energy sources under its long-term energy transition strategy. LNG is expected to play a key role in stabilizing the power system as renewable energy capacity expands, while offshore and nearshore wind projects are increasingly viewed as strategic growth areas.

For Gulf Energy, Vietnam has already become one of its most important overseas markets. The Thai energy group has invested in solar and wind projects through partnerships and subsidiaries, including two operational solar farms in Tay Ninh Province and three nearshore wind projects with a combined capacity of 128MW in the Mekong Delta.

The company is also planning a significant expansion of its offshore wind portfolio, including a proposal to increase the capacity of the Binh Dai project in Ben Tre Province to 310MW.

The latest talks signal growing regional confidence in Vietnam's energy sector as Southeast Asian investors position themselves to benefit from the country's accelerating transition toward a more diversified and sustainable power mix. VIR



Vietnam retailers move beyond discounts to drive consumer spending

Vietnamese retailers are shifting their focus from deep discounts to customer experience and digital engagement as consumers become more cautious and selective in their spending.

The summer shopping season has sparked intense competition among major retail chains, with supermarkets and e-commerce platforms offering discounts of up to 50%, alongside vouchers, free shipping and loyalty rewards. However, industry experts say price cuts alone are no longer enough to sustain consumption growth.

Consumers are increasingly prioritising product quality, convenience and shopping experiences. Retailers are therefore transforming stores into lifestyle destinations that combine shopping with entertainment, cultural activities and community engagement.

The shift comes as e-commerce strengthens its role in Vietnam's retail landscape. The country's online retail market is estimated at US\$31 billion, accounting for around 11% of total retail sales and consumer service revenue. Digital channels are now viewed as a core component of modern retail rather than a supplementary sales platform.

The Government is also supporting domestic consumption through policies aimed at improving commercial infrastructure, logistics networks and promotional regulations. Under its domestic market development strategy, Vietnam seeks not only to boost short-term spending but also to strengthen links between production and consumption.

Looking ahead, the country plans to develop major outlet shopping centres linked to tourism destinations in key cities and provinces by 2030, creating new attractions for both domestic and international visitors.

The trend underscores a broader transformation in Vietnam's retail sector, where experience, convenience and digital ecosystems are becoming as important as price in attracting consumers. VIR

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Vietnam M&A market tops US\$ 700 million as foreign investors shift toward growth capital

Vietnam's mergers and acquisitions market maintained steady momentum in May, with disclosed transactions exceeding \$700 million, highlighting continued investor confidence despite global economic uncertainties.

According to Grant Thornton Vietnam, industrials, technology and healthcare emerged as the most active sectors, reflecting growing interest in manufacturing transformation, digitalization and consumer-driven services. While deal volume remained broadly diversified, market value was heavily influenced by a major corporate restructuring transaction involving electric vehicle maker VinFast.

A notable trend was the changing profile of foreign investment. Rather than pursuing large private equity acquisitions, overseas investors increasingly favored venture, growth-stage and impact investments, particularly in healthcare, clean energy and technology. Investors from Singapore and the United Kingdom were among the most active participants, backing companies positioned to benefit from Vietnam's long-term consumption and sustainability trends.

The healthcare sector attracted significant attention as pharmacy retail and healthcare access continue to expand alongside rising incomes. Meanwhile, clean energy platforms secured fresh funding to accelerate rooftop solar and energy storage deployment, underscoring investor confidence in Vietnam's energy transition agenda.

Technology also remained a key destination for capital, with investors targeting digital platforms serving small businesses and emerging segments of the domestic economy. These investments reflect expectations that Vietnam's digital transformation will continue to create scalable growth opportunities.

The latest activity suggests Vietnam's M&A market is evolving beyond traditional control acquisitions toward a more balanced ecosystem that includes strategic restructuring, venture financing and sustainability-focused investments. As domestic demand strengthens and regulatory reforms advance, the country is increasingly positioning itself as one of Southeast Asia's most attractive destinations for long-term investment capital. VIR

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