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Vietnam raises the bar for credit-rating agencies

Vietnam is preparing to raise the minimum paid-in capital for credit-rating agencies to about $950,000 from roughly $570,000, signaling a broader effort to strengthen the country's financial-market infrastructure.

The proposal comes more than a decade after the current framework was introduced. Since 2014, Vietnam's gross domestic product has more than doubled, while demand for ratings has expanded alongside the corporate bond market and increasingly complex financing structures.

From a financial perspective, the higher capital threshold is less about solvency than institutional capability. Rating agencies are expected to invest more heavily in data, information technology, analytical models and specialist talent. These resources are essential if ratings are to support risk-based pricing, improve investor confidence and reduce excessive reliance on collateral in corporate lending.

The immediate market impact should be limited. Vietnam currently has five licensed agencies, all of which already exceed the proposed minimum. Their paid-in capital ranges from approximately $1.02 million to $7.4 million. The tighter requirement is therefore more likely to raise barriers for new entrants than disrupt existing providers.

More significant are the draft's safeguards on independence. Rating firms would remain barred from banking, auditing, securities brokerage, underwriting, fund management and investment activities. Compensation for analysts and rating-committee members must also remain independent of client fees and rating outcomes.

The reform is a positive step, but capital alone will not guarantee credibility. Vietnam will still need transparent methodologies, stronger disclosure standards, performance tracking and effective oversight of conflicts of interest to build a trusted domestic rating industry. Thoibaotaichinh

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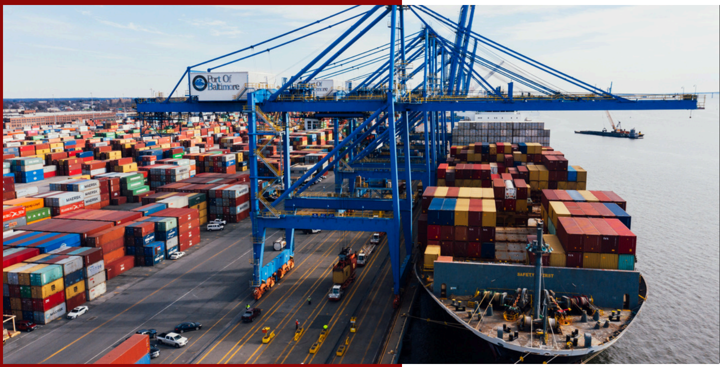

Green ports could reshape logistics competition in Vietnam

Vietnam's push to develop greener ports is emerging as more than an environmental initiative. For the country's logistics sector, it could become a catalyst for new services, higher operating standards and deeper integration into global supply chains.

The opportunity extends well beyond terminal operators. Trucking companies can develop lower-emission transport links, while warehouse operators can coordinate with ports to reduce container waiting times. Freight forwarders could move beyond booking and documentation to advise clients on routes, transport modes and carbon performance. Technology providers, meanwhile, can supply platforms for truck appointments, yard management, vehicle tracking and emissions calculation.

This transition will also change how logistics services are priced. Cost alone will no longer be sufficient. International customers increasingly expect providers to demonstrate delivery reliability, shipment visibility, transit time and environmental impact. Companies able to provide credible emissions data alongside competitive rates will be better positioned to serve multinational manufacturers and exporters facing stricter supply-chain requirements.

Green ports therefore need to be smart ports. Their effectiveness will depend on data connectivity among shipping lines, terminals, depots, trucking companies, customs authorities and cargo owners. Better coordination can reduce congestion, empty trips, fuel use and operational uncertainty.

For Vietnam, the strategic prize is significant. Ports that are cleaner, more efficient and more transparent could attract higher-value cargo, premium shipping services and export-oriented investors. Yet progress will require common carbon-accounting standards, interoperable digital systems and investment across entire logistics corridors.

Green port development should therefore be viewed not as a standalone environmental project, but as national competitiveness infrastructure. VLR

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Smartphone boom reshapes the E-Commerce battleground in Vietnam

Vietnam's digital economy is entering a new phase in which market growth will depend less on expanding internet access and more on converting connected consumers into frequent online shoppers.

A nationwide survey covering nearly 47,000 households found that 80.3% of the population used smartphones in 2025, while 87.1% accessed the internet. With only 27.4% of households owning a computer, Vietnam is clearly a mobile-first market. E-commerce platforms and retailers must therefore prioritize fast-loading applications, simplified checkout processes and payment journeys designed specifically for smartphones.

Social commerce is emerging as the second major growth engine. Social media usage reached 80.3% of the population, up from 76.5% in 2024. The overlap between smartphone and social media adoption provides a large addressable market for livestream selling, short-form video, affiliate marketing and chat-based commerce. For many Vietnamese consumers, product discovery, comparison and purchase increasingly take place within the same social platform.

However, digital access is advancing faster than digital capability. Only 21.5% of the population possessed advanced IT skills. This gap creates risks ranging from online fraud and misleading advertising to weak inventory, data and customer management among small merchants.

For e-commerce companies, the next competitive advantage will not come from access alone. Winning platforms will combine intuitive mobile experiences with trusted payments, stronger seller verification and simple digital tools that help merchants operate professionally. Vietnam already has the connectivity required for mass e-commerce. The remaining challenge is turning widespread smartphone use into secure, repeatable and higher-value digital consumption. VNA

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Vietnam's power pricing reform sends a signal to global energy investors

Vietnam's latest electricity pricing reform may appear technical, but its implications for foreign investors are substantial.

Decree 278 introduces clearer thresholds for adjusting the country's average retail electricity price. Minor cost movements will no longer trigger frequent revisions, while larger changes can be reflected after regulatory review. For developers of LNG, offshore wind, solar and battery storage projects, this improves the predictability of long-term revenue assumptions — a critical factor in securing international project finance.

The decree also strengthens scrutiny over the costs used to calculate electricity prices. State utility EVN must submit detailed pricing proposals, while the Ministry of Industry and Trade can order recalculations, require price reductions and engage independent consultants. Annual inspection results must also be disclosed publicly. This greater transparency could help address longstanding investor concerns over cross-subsidies, delayed cost recovery and politically driven tariff decisions.

More importantly, the reform signals a gradual shift from administrative price control toward a regulated market model. Together with direct power purchase agreements, time-of-use tariffs and emerging markets for energy storage and ancillary services, the new framework could expand opportunities beyond conventional generation.

Foreign investors may increasingly find opportunities in grid infrastructure, storage, power trading and renewable electricity supply for export-oriented manufacturers seeking to meet decarbonisation targets.

However, pricing reform alone will not unlock large-scale capital. Vietnam must still strengthen bankable power purchase agreements, clarify curtailment compensation, improve payment security and address foreign-exchange risks. Decree 278 is therefore best viewed not as a complete solution, but as an important reduction in regulatory uncertainty.

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AEON bets on Vietnam’s shift toward modern retail

AEON is accelerating its expansion in Vietnam, positioning the country as a central growth market as rising incomes and urbanisation reshape consumer spending.

The Japanese retailer estimates Vietnam’s retail market at roughly 40 trillion yen and expects it to nearly double by 2030. Modern retail, however, still accounts for only 10% to 15% of total sales, leaving substantial room for organised chains to gain share from traditional markets and independent stores.

AEON’s strategy extends beyond building large shopping centres. The group is developing a multi-format ecosystem that includes supermarkets, convenience stores, drugstores, cinemas, e-commerce and financial services. This gives it access to both occasional destination shopping and high-frequency purchases closer to residential areas.

The retailer plans to open four new shopping centres in 2026, including locations in Da Nang, Hai Duong, Ha Long and Thanh Hoa. Its smaller MaxValu supermarket format is also expanding beyond Hanoi into Ho Chi Minh City, signalling a broader push into neighbourhood retail and second-tier urban markets.

The more important long-term asset may be AEON’s customer platform. With 3.8 million members, WAON Point can connect purchasing data across the group’s businesses, supporting personalised promotions, cross-selling and better inventory planning. The planned expansion into financial services from 2027 could further link shopping, payments, loyalty and consumer credit.

For retailers, AEON’s approach highlights a wider shift in Vietnam: competitive advantage will increasingly depend not only on store networks, but also on customer data, format flexibility and ecosystem integration. The main risk will be execution, as rapid expansion raises pressure on capital efficiency, local merchandising and operational control. Baodautu

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Vietnam's green transition opens a new frontier for Private Equity

Vietnam's climate investment market is beginning to move from green lending toward direct equity participation, creating a new opportunity set for private equity investors.

A key signal is the $50 million investment arranged by Deutsche Bank for the Mekong Earth Regeneration Fund, managed by Mekong Capital. The fund plans to acquire stakes in companies operating across regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and sustainable aquaculture in Vietnam and Laos.

For private equity, the significance lies less in the initial capital commitment than in the investment model. Many agricultural businesses remain undercapitalized, operationally fragmented and valued primarily on current earnings. Investors with long-term capital can support consolidation, strengthen governance, digitize supply chains and improve access to export markets.

MERF's $200 million target also demonstrates how blended finance can expand the investable universe. Concessional support from climate institutions can absorb part of the early-stage risk, making businesses with longer transformation cycles more suitable for commercial investors.

The case of Phuc Sinh Group illustrates the potential value-creation pathway. Sustainable farming programs involving more than 6,300 households increased farmer income by about 36% while reducing input costs by 40% to 60%. Such gains can translate into more stable sourcing, stronger margins and lower supply-chain risk.

The next source of private equity returns may therefore come from assets not fully captured in conventional valuations: soil quality, carbon reduction, traceability, biodiversity and climate resilience.

The opportunity is substantial, but execution will be demanding. Successful investors will need sector expertise, credible impact measurement and the ability to turn environmental improvements into higher cash flow, premium market access and stronger exit valuations. Baodautu

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