

# VIETNAM

# BUSINESS REVIEW

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*TPP is changing Vietnam's economy, no matter what Trump does*



USS TPP

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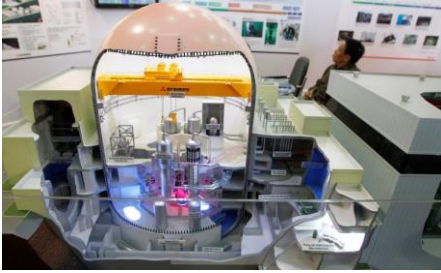
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## ECONOMY

### Vietnam abandons plan for first nuclear power plants



*A man sits behind a model of a Japanese Mitsubishi nuclear reactor at the World Nuclear Power 2012 exhibition in Hanoi, Vietnam October 26, 2012.*

Reuters - Vietnam's National Assembly voted on Tuesday to abandon plans to build two multi-billion-dollar nuclear power plants with Russia and Japan, after officials cited lower demand forecasts, rising costs and safety concerns.

The vote to scrap the country's first atomic energy project deals a blow to the global nuclear business and to Japan's drive to begin exporting reactors after the Fukushima disaster left its nuclear industry in a deep freeze.

The Vietnamese government said in a statement that the decision, made in a closed session of parliament after discussion of a government proposal, was taken for economic reasons and not because of any technological considerations.

Russia's Rosatom and a consortium of Japanese firms led by private

utility Japan Atomic Power [JATOM.UL] were due to build the plants.

The estimated investment needed for the projects had doubled since 2009 to nearly 400 trillion dong (\$18 billion), state media Tien Phong quoted Le Hong Tinh, vice chairman of the National Assembly's science, technology and environment commission, as saying earlier this month.

The Vietnamese government is fiscally strapped as public debt lingers near the permitted limit, curbing its ability to maintain Vietnam as one of Asia's fastest-growing economies through spending.

Growth in power demand in Vietnam is also forecast to slacken. When the government approved plans for the two plants in 2009, growth in Vietnam's annual power demand was projected at 17-20 percent.

Duong Quang Thanh, chairman of state utility Vietnam Electricity group, was quoted by state-run Voice of Vietnam radio recently as saying that annual growth between 2016 and 2020 was now forecast at 11 percent, and 7-8 percent through 2030.

Vietnam's decision to scrap the project is a further setback for the

nuclear industry as countries from Germany to Indonesia have decided to either pull out of nuclear energy or cancel development plans in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, the world's worst since Chernobyl in 1986.

Environmental campaign group Greenpeace, however, welcomed the decision to drop the nuclear plan, saying it would have been a waste of money when renewable energy alternatives are available.

"The project could also pose an environmental threat, and Vietnam cannot afford to risk another disaster after a toxic industrial leak triggered mass fish deaths earlier this year," Greenpeace Regional Campaign Coordinator Arif Fiyanto told Reuters.

A toxic leak sullied over 200 km (125 miles) of coastline in April. The country's worst environmental disaster, it killed more than 100 tonnes of fish and left thousands

The Japanese and Russian nuclear plants were due to have been located in central Ninh Thuan province. They would have had a combined capacity of 4,000 megawatts.

"We respect our customer's position, and we are ready to provide the full support to Vietnam when the

## ECONOMY

country continues the implementation of its national nuclear power program," Russia's Rosatom said in an emailed comment.

Rosatom, however, is not fully pulling out of Vietnam. The state-run company said it would continue taking part in developing nuclear technologies and infrastructure, which should support peaceful nuclear energy in Vietnam, it said without elaborating.

### Tan Cang – Cai Mep port handles 1 millionth TEU

VNS – The year will go down in the history of the Tan Cang – Cai Mep International Terminal (TCIT) as the port handled its one millionth TEU

(twenty-foot equivalent unit) for 2016, following six years of operation.

TCIT in southern Ba Ria – Vung Tau Province is a deep-water port near the confluence of the Cai Mep and Thi Vai Rivers.

The terminal has handled nearly 4.5 million TEUs since it officially began operating on January 15, 2011, but this is the first time it received one million TEUs in a single year.

It is currently the second largest container port in Vietnam, following Tan Cang – Cat Lat based in District 2 of HCMC.

The terminal is a joint venture between Saigon Newport Corporation and three partners -- Mitsui O.S.K Line (Japan), Hanjin

Transportation (the Republic of Korea) and Wanhai Lines (China's Taiwan).

TCIT and Tan Cang – Cai Mep Thi Vai form a continuous port complex of Saigon Newport Corporation in the province.

The port, some 70km from the centre of HCMC, is connected by road to industrial parks in the province and nearby Binh Duong and Dong Nai provinces. It is also favourable for linking with other ports in the Mekong Delta, such as Cao Lanh and Sa Dec in Dong Thap Province, My Thoi in An Giang Province, and Cai Cui in Can Tho City.

The terminal is a popular point of transit for goods traded between Vietnam and Cambodia.



**Tan Cang-Cai Mep International Terminal, the second largest container port in Việt Nam, has handled nearly 4.5 million TEUs since it officially began operating on January 15, 2011**

## FINANCIALS

### The Ministry of Industry & Trade joins club of billion-dollar investors in stock market

VNN - The nine biggest investors in the Vietnamese stock market hold shares worth more than \$1 billion, according to CafeF.

In August 2016, CafeF reported that eight institutions and individuals were holding listed shares valued at \$1 billion and more. These included one individual, two ministries, two state-owned enterprises and three foreign investors.

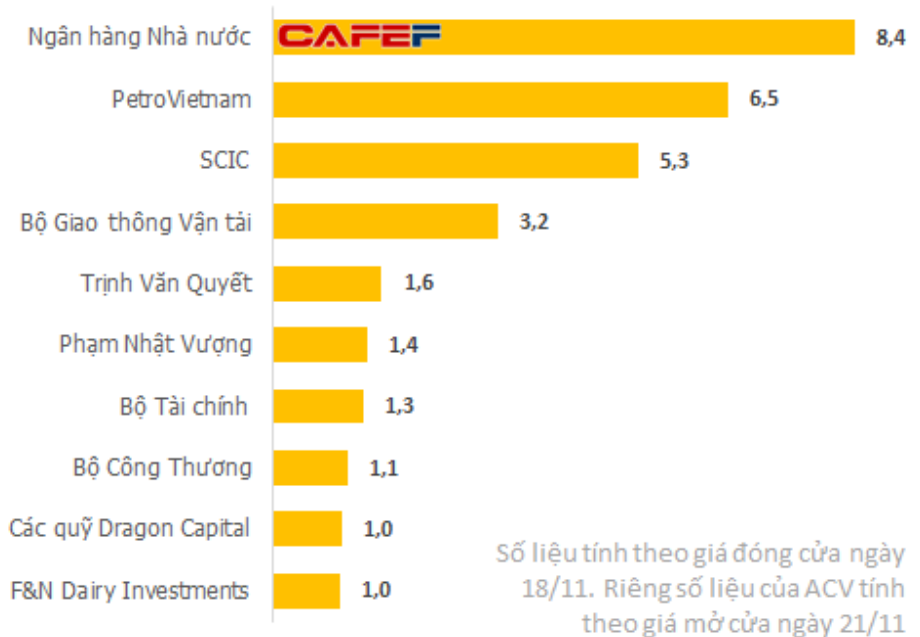
They were the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV), PetroVietnam, the State Capital Investment Corporation (SCIC), the Ministry of Finance, Dragon Capital, F&N Dairy Investment, Mizuho Bank, and one individual – Pham Nhat Vuong, president of Vingroup.

With the government's serious measures to encourage enterprises to list shares on the bourse, the club of billion-dollar investors in the stock market has had new members – two ministries and one individual.

On November 21, nearly 2.17 billion ACV shares of the Airports Corporation of Vietnam were put into transaction at UpCom market with the reference price of VND25,000 per share.

As such, the Ministry of Transport (MOT), the agency which holds a

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#### Biggest investors in Vietnam stock market (billion USD)

95.4 percent ACV stake, has joined the club of the richest stock investors.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT), which is the governing body of Habeco, the brewer which put its shares up for transactions at UpCom, has also joined the club.

The individual is Trinh Van Quyet, president of FLC Group and a big shareholder of Faros, a construction firm.

Meanwhile, Mizuho Bank and F&N Dairy Investments left the club because of the price decreases of VCB and VNM shares.

With the reference of VND25,000 per share, MOT now holds VND30.8 trillion, or \$1.4 billion worth of ACV shares. At the first trading session,

the ACV price hit the ceiling price level of VND35,000, thus raising the total stock value to \$3.2 billion.

Similarly, MOIT now has VND24.2 trillion, or \$1.1 billion, after Habeco shares were put into transactions on UpCom with the reference price of VND39,000 per share.

The shares increased in price for the next eight consecutive trading sessions to VND144,000 per share despite market fluctuations.

MOIT's stock asset value will still be increasing further once Sabeco, the largest Vietnamese brewer, enters the bourse.

The State Bank, with a 77 percent stake in Vietcombank, 95 percent in BIDV and 64.5 percent in

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## FINANCIALS

VietinBank, now has VND187.5 trillion worth of stock assets (the closing price on November 18).

The national oil & gas group PetroVietnam has VND146.6 trillion, or \$6.5 billion with shares of 11 subsidiaries. The shares of PV Gas alone are valued at VND123 trillion.

SCIC's investment portfolio comprises shares of tens of listed companies, but the biggest stock asset comes from Vinamilk, the nation's leading dairy producer (VND89 trillion).

SCIC is said to have divested its nine percent of Vinamilk shares in December.

### New credit card rules



VNS - Credit card service providers will have to compensate card owners for any probable loss not caused by the owners, starting November 28, 2016.

This is according to a new State Bank of Việt Nam (SBV) directive.

Banks and other financial entities will have a maximum of five days from the announcement of the results of inspection based on the clients' claims to comply with the appropriate contract and legal procedures stated in the recently issued circular.

In case the deadline for inspection of claims as stated in the card contract has already passed without a determined cause of loss or the party at fault, the credit card issuer must negotiate with the card owner within 15 working days to find a solution or offer temporary compensation until a final decision is reached by the appropriate authorities on the fault and responsibility of each party.

With regard to cheque service and usage, SBV stated there must be a concrete regulation on the time limit for clients to file a claim, which would be no less than 60 days since the cheque is presented for encashment. Meanwhile, the time limit for the cheque service provider to handle the said claim must be

no more than 30 working days from receiving the client's initial claim.

For cases of legal breach, the investigation must be undertaken by an authorised government agency, whereas cases where no legal breach is involved can be handled by the card issuer and the card owner alone.

Circular No. 30 also deemed any probable loss due to concerned parties, such as intermediate payment organisations, international card organisations and card acceptance units, will have to be compensated by the said parties to the credit card issuers in accordance with a mutual agreement.

## INVESTMENT

### Quang Ninh calls for Japanese city's investment in agriculture



The northern province of Quang Ninh has called on investors from Japan's Asahikawa city to seek partnership with local firms, especially in agriculture.

During a working session with a delegation of Asahikawa's Government's officials and businesses on November 28 in Quang Ninh, Dang Huy Hau, Vice Standing Chairman of the provincial People's Committee introduced the economic and agricultural development in the province.

He highlighted that Quang Ninh has a large market both at home and abroad for agricultural products, adding that local farm produces are diverse and abundant, especially aquatic products.

Recently, the province has restructured its agriculture sector towards a goods-producing agriculture. However, production

has yet to meet the market demands, he said.

Hau attributed the situation to the small scale of agricultural production in the locality, along with poor technology, which forced local firms to export only raw material with low value.

He underscored that Quang Ninh is keen on cooperating with businesses from countries with developed agriculture to help the locality boost sector's growth to meet requirements of domestic and foreign markets. This is among priority of the province currently, he revealed.

Hau noted that over the past years, Quang Ninh has partnered with a number of foreign firms, including those from Japan in producing safe agricultural products, which has seen a number of achievements.

He held that the meeting is a good chance for agricultural enterprises in Quang Ninh to set up comprehensive and effective affiliation with their Japanese counterparts. He proposed that the Japanese Asahikawa delegation will support Quang Ninh's firms in conducting joint projects in the locality.

The Asahikawa delegation made fact-finding tours to Quang Ninh's Hong Thai Tay high-tech agricultural

production area to see the current production technology in the site.

Basing on what the Japanese firms have learnt during the visit, Hau suggested that the Japanese side design financial and human resources plan for cooperation projects, while implementing pilot projects in the field of agriculture in coordination with local firms of Quang Ninh, which will be expanded later.

Earlier, the Asahikawa delegation also visited a number of agriculture firms, including Viet Long company, Song Hanh company in Quang Yen town, and Hoa Phong high quality agricultural product production cooperative in Dong Trieu town.

On the framework of the visit, leaders and local businesses of Asahikawa city visited a number of markets and trade centres in the locality.

### Logistics giant sets eye on Asia Pacific

VIR - The high growth of the e-commerce industry offers more opportunities for logistics companies to tap into the market's potential.

## INVESTMENT



Malcolm Monteiro, CEO of DHL eCommerce Asia Pacific, told VIR that Vietnam is particularly important amongst the firm's Southeast Asian markets due to the huge opportunities it offers. DHL eCommerce is studying the 90-million market and meeting with the most promising e-commerce companies in Vietnam.

"Our entire objective is to work closely with Vietnamese people by adapting global expertise to the local market. Thus, we are doing an extensive market study before launching our products in Vietnam," he noted.

Meanwhile, InDo Trans Logistics Corporation (ITL Corp) has just officially announced joining the Vietnamese courier market under

the brand SpeedLink, focusing on e-commerce logistics services, which is considered to hold more potential than general logistics services.

Lazada, Southeast Asia's largest online shopping website, also has its own delivery company called LEX.

Lazada Vietnam's CEO Alexandre Dardy told VIR that the e-commerce concept was still unknown when Lazada launched in Vietnam five years ago. During this time, warehouse and delivery services were undeveloped to effectively serve e-commerce. However, e-commerce is now developing hand-in-hand with delivery services. Many delivery parties have entered the market

and we now have much better choices.

Vietnam Post's competency is its distribution network covering even the most remote areas. On the other hand, GiaoHangNhanh and other young delivery parties have a deep understanding of e-commerce, higher-level technology application, are fast to adapt, and similar system development with new e-commerce sites. Meanwhile, Ninja Van has advantages when it comes to large-size orders that require customised trucks.

"Delivery services are forecast to develop even more with investments from current players to enhance their facilities, technique, and network, while new players, such as Grab and Uber will enter the market with their own competencies to penetrate e-commerce and DHL in the near future, focusing on the domestic market and approaching the current leaders in e-commerce," he noted.

#### David and Goliath?



## INVESTMENT

Juergen Gerdes, CEO of Post – eCommerce – Parcel Division at Deutsche Post DHL Group, said that the e-commerce industry is extremely exciting and offers tremendous opportunities for businesses and consumers alike.

The global B2C (cross-border) e-commerce market will multiply in size to \$1 trillion in 2020. Thus, DHL eCommerce was launched in 2014 with the aim to capitalise on the growing opportunities in e-commerce logistics.

Most recently, DHL eCommerce has invested EUR70 million (\$74.3 million) to strengthen its operations to meet the fast-growing demand for quality e-commerce logistics services in India. This investment is part of the company's broader plan to aggressively expand across the Asia Pacific.

In June 2016, DHL eCommerce announced increasing its overall presence in China by 50 per cent by expanding its distribution centres in Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Earlier in January 2016, DHL eCommerce launched domestic delivery operations in Thailand and announced plans to double its fleet and number of depots by 2017.

CEO Charles Brewer said that the this year's investments in India, the Americas, and the Asia Pacific

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showcases the corporation's commitment to the e-commerce industry by delivering high quality and reliable logistics solutions to meet the rising demands of e-commerce consumers.

"The company has recently developed an eco-friendly street scooter and a driverless helicopter (parcelcopter) for last-mile delivery. As part of our expansion plans, DHL intends to bring these new vehicles to Asia in the coming years," he said.

According to Le Duy Hiep, chairman of the Vietnam Logistics Association, the entrance of the foreign logistics giant will heat up competition in Vietnamese e-commerce logistics. The main reason is that Vietnamese logistics companies are generally of a smaller scale, like online booking and delivery services, and have no cross-border experience. Most of them also lack technology and capital to scale up its operations.

"The Vietnamese e-commerce market is lagging far beyond its neighbours, like China, where online sales account for \$548 billion. To develop the e-commerce logistics sector, the government should introduce action plans, while local companies should join forces to invest in technology

infrastructure to prepare for the future," he noted.

On the same note, Dardy said that Vietnamese e-commerce is developing based on an ecosystem where delivery companies play an important role in supporting each other. This is a win-win relationship that also benefits the market and brings the fastest and most convenient services for customers. Therefore, new comers are encouraged to join and develop the market together.

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## MARKET & PRICES

### Mobile market penetration hits 147%



VIR - Vietnam's broadband market is growing strongly on the back of the mobile broadband sector, according to the latest report from Reportbuyer, a leading industry intelligence solution that provides all market research reports from top publishers.

The nation's mobile market had reached 147% penetration coming into 2016, the Reportbuyer report said.

The fixed-line market continues to be in decline, having dropped by 70% from its 2009 peak. Vietnam's second satellite, Vinasat-2, has been launched.

MobiFone, having been hived off from VNPT, by 2015 was being prepared for an IPO. "MobiFone is once again in the spotlight with the government looking to sell 49% of the company," wrote Business Monitor International (BMI).

"We believe that a good foreign investor could inject a strong and positive impetus for renewed

competition in the marketplace and drive forward the uptake of 4G services in the coming years."

A revamped VNPT Vinaphone operation was formally launched in August 2015. FPT became the first 100% foreign-owned company to secure a fixed-line services license in Myanmar last year.

VNPT Vinaphone meanwhile, became the first mobile network provider in Vietnam to launch 4G services, on Phu Quoc Island, after receiving a license from the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC). This is the first step in the company providing 4G services nationwide.

The company will expand 4G services to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and other cities and provinces with a focus on high speed and stability, at Mr. Luong Manh Hoang, Chairman of VNPT Vinaphone.

Other mobile providers such as Viettel started piloting 4G in the southern province of Ba Ria-Vung Tau in December 2015. Last month MobiFone was officially granted a license by MoIC to provide 4G services.

Samsung became the largest foreign investor in Vietnam when it launched a US\$3 billion telephone handset manufacturing and assembling plant project. MoIC has

set 2017 as the target date for introducing Mobile Number Portability (MNP).

"The government set ambitious targets early on in the telecom sector, especially for the expansion of infrastructure," according to Paul Buddle Communication Pty. Ltd. "But initially it fell well short of these targets. This began to change, however, mainly on the back of an increasingly competitive mobile sector. After a period of strong growth over the last decade, the mobile market stalled in 2013 and suffered a major correction in that year. By 2015 growth had returned but was generally slower."

BMI forecasts 134.1 million subscribers by end-2020, for a 136.6% penetration rate. Of this, 55.9 million will have 3G/4G connections. The figure is distorted, however, by inactive prepaid subscriptions and multiple SIM ownership.

### Competitive power market key to promoting renewables

VNA – Vietnam is prioritizing developing a competitive electricity market, which is vital to promoting renewable energies, said Head of the Central Institute for Economic Management (CIEM)

## MARKET & PRICES

Nguyen Dinh Cung.

He made the statement at a CIEM seminar in Hanoi on November 28, where participants discussed the growth of renewable energies in concert with a competitive power market.

According to Pham Duc Chung, a CIEM member, renewable energy producers in Vietnam enjoy incentives in tax, land leasing prices and loans.

However, the dependency of electricity firms on State support has led to a power market without competition, making it hard to attract investment in renewables.

To address these shortcomings, Chung stressed continuing a complete overhaul of the Electricity of Vietnam (EVN) as planned with a focus on restructuring its executive board to boost independence among EVN members.

Improving the capacity of the Electricity Regulatory Authority and Competition Authority is also necessary, he said.

Nguyen Van Vy, Head of the Vietnam Energy Association, proposed preferential investment credits for renewable projects.

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He also suggested issuing an environmental tax on the use of fossil fuels, adding that the fees should be channeled into developing sustainable energies.

### Medicinal drug imports on the rise



VOV.VN - Vietnam imported US\$207.4 million worth of pharmaceuticals in October, up 3.7% compared to September, according to preliminary statistics from the General Department of Vietnam Customs.

This is the first month seeing a growth after three-month decline. Accordingly, pharmaceutical imports jumped by 14.38% to US\$2.1 billion in the first 10 months of this year.

The imported drug come from 28 countries, of which France ranked first with US\$270.7 million (up 16.54% and accounting for 14% of total import value), trailed by India (up

11.7% to US\$230.1 million) and Germany (up 19.15% to US\$198.5 million).

In the reviewed period, imports from the UK suffered the deepest decrease of 48.01% while Argentina enjoyed the strongest growth of 687.75%.

With an average growth of two-digits, the domestic drug market is an attractive destination for foreign investors. They have cooperated with domestic partners to expand market shares since early this year.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

### TPP is changing Vietnam's economy no matter what Trump does

Bloomberg - As Donald Trump prepares to kill the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the 12-nation trade pact is helping to spur the biggest overhaul of Vietnam's economy in decades.

The Communist government in Hanoi plans to push ahead with more than 30 separate pieces of legislation proposed to comply with the trade deal, including rules on labor, business, foreign trade, and small-and-medium enterprises. Since a new Constitution was adopted in 2013, Vietnam's lawmakers have passed more than 100 laws -- a scale of change unseen since the nation introduced the market-oriented "doi moi" reforms in the 1980s.

"We will continue carrying out what we've planned to do," Nguyen Duc Kien, deputy head of the Vietnam National Assembly's economic committee, said in an interview in Hanoi last week. "It's the technologies and corporate governance that we need to improve. It's crucial."

Vietnam has long been seen as one of the biggest potential winners from the TPP, with increased market access for everything from clothing

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to electronics to footwear. The deal also stood to complement a growing strategic relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam, which opposes China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Yet all isn't lost: The TPP also helped serve as an impetus for long-needed structural changes in a nation with 90 million people that's forecast to grow more than 6 percent this year -- one of the fastest rates in Asia. While Vietnam first announced plans to reform its state-owned enterprises in 2011, progress has been slow, with the stakes sold often too small and many companies pulling back on plans to list on exchanges.

'Good Preparation'

"We wanted to have good preparation, with or without TPP,"

said Vu Thi Thuan, chairwoman of Traphaco JSC, Vietnam's second-largest listed pharmaceutical company. "We still have to make sure we are able to compete with foreign rivals because Vietnam is more and more integrating into the global economy," she said.

Thuan said Traphaco has spent heavily to increase its competitiveness, including the construction of \$22 million factory to prepare for the expected rise in foreign medicines entering Vietnam if TPP came into effect. Other companies in export industries such as textiles and garment, footwear, seafood, wood furniture and agricultural products have also made investments, according to Nghia Trong Pham, deputy director

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## HIGHLIGHTS

general of the Department of Laws at Vietnam's National Assembly Office.

"This preparation contributes to improve their competitiveness even if the TPP is not taking effect," Nghia said in an e-mail. "It is reasonable to conclude that the period of 2011-2016 is the biggest reforms in Vietnam since Doi Moi. TPP is one of the important actors for this process."

### Reform Momentum

Nghia said TPP has also helped raise awareness among key stakeholders including state officials, employers, trade unions, workers and the general public on the implications of free trade. Vietnamese business leaders also appear keen to maintain the reform momentum generated by TPP.

Alan Pham, chief economist at Vietnam's largest fund manager VinaCapital Group, says TPP is a kind of roadmap for Vietnam as it integrates further into the global economy.

"Whether we have TPP or not, Vietnam will still have to reform," Pham said. "The trade pact is really useful for the government and for Vietnamese business to know what are the steps they will need to take

to really become part of the global economy."

Last month, the ruling Communist Party adopted a resolution on International Economic Integration that confirmed Vietnam's commitment to further opening up the economy. The Finance Ministry has recommended moves to support start-up companies, including cutting the corporate income-tax rate for small and medium-sized enterprises to as low as 15 percent from the current 20 percent.

### China Pact

The TPP includes Japan, Malaysia, Australia and Canada -- but excludes China -- and would represent nearly 40 percent of global economic output worth \$30 trillion if it came into force. The World Bank estimates the pact could raise gross domestic product by an average 1.1 percent in member countries by 2030.

China is now pushing a separate 16-nation agreement called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. That would include Vietnam along with the rest of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India.

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said last month that Vietnam would pursue greater international integration through 12 other free trade agreements it had already signed even if the TPP falls through.

"So it'll be very good to have TPP, but if not, we still have other integration plans to go with," Phuc said.

Those agreements, including with the European Union and China, are enough for an economy with nominal gross domestic product of roughly \$200 billion to capture growth opportunities in the years to come, Saigon Securities JSC, the country's biggest brokerage, said in a Nov. 11 note to investors.

Vu Tu Thanh, chief Vietnam representative of the U.S.-Asean Business Council, said that while the TPP's collapse isn't good "it's also not very bad" because the Southeast Asian nation will have more time to prepare.

"TPP is a game for big players, while most of Vietnamese companies are small and medium sized," he said. "TPP is just part of the reform -- if there's no TPP, the reforming process will still happen in Vietnam."

## HIGHLIGHTS

### US-style Black Friday a hit in Vietnam

VNA - Numerous stores in Vietnam put up massive sales on November 25 in an attempt to follow the famous US Black Friday.

The local shopping scene was not as hectic and anticipated as its US counterpart, though several brands did manage to cash in on the occasion.

However, many stores were not always fully committed to their discounts. In contrast to the tradition on Black Friday in the US, during which the prices of all products are sometimes reduced by 50%, some sellers in Vietnam gave false promises and arranged a discount-level ranging from 10% to 70%, depending on the item.

And though stores did not fully admit, they all priced their items to attract more buyers toward unwanted goods.

All over major streets in Hanoi, signs saying "Black Friday Sale up to 50% discount" were displayed, ranging from high-end stores at Vincom shopping malls to lower end ones selling unlabelled clothing.

Many were packed with customers hunting for a bargain. Stores that attracted the most customers included higher mid-end to mid-end brands such as Emigo, IVY

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Moda, Charles and Keith, Aldo or Canifa, with very promising deals going up to 70% discount.

An employee at a Canifa store on Ba Trieu Street told Vietnam News, "This is the second year our company has done a Black Friday sale to significant success. Consumers flocked to our stores, and the company's knitwear sold at record speeds compared to normal days. This applied to both low-end items and even high-end ones made from cashmere."

Products on sale ranged from household items to clothing, though the most anticipated sales were in the apparel area. Shoppers, almost exclusively women, including college students, office workers and housewives, gathered at

various malls and streetfront stores starting early on November 25.

Customers were advised to be frugal and discrete about their purchases, as many seemed to splurge on unnecessary deals. Many stores looked forward to the sale as chance to get rid of unwanted items from last season or even to mix in ones of lower quality. The time limits for the sales are usually from November 25 to 28, with some exceptions of weekend deals only. Discounts come with coupons and other promising deals to attract customers' attention.

Black Friday falls on the fourth Friday of November, following Thanksgiving Day in the US.

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