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The Vietnam Energy Outlook Report, developed in close cooperation between the Danish Energy Agency (DEA), the Electricity and Renewable Energy Authority (Vietnam), and the Embassy of Denmark was presented in Hanoi. The report shows how Vietnam can reach its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions in 2050.

Power outages are leaving Vietnamese homes and businesses without power for hours at a time, as a prolonged drought and high temperatures strain the fast-growing economy's capacity to keep up.

A long-anticipated plan meant to fix the energy crunch and help achieve ambitious climate change goals will offer some relief but may not go far enough in weaning the country off of fossil fuels, experts say.

Streetlights have been turned off in some major cities and businesses have been told to cut energy use. Amid severe drought, two out of the three largest hydroelectric reservoirs in Vietnam have almost completely stopped operating.

The national energy plan, called Power Development Plan 8 or PDP8, aims to more than double the maximum power Vietnam can generate to some 150 gigawatts by 2030. That's more than the capacity of developed countries like France and Italy, though well below Japan's 290 GW.

It calls for a drastic shift away from heavily-polluting coal, expanding use of domestic gas and imported liquefied natural gas or LNG, which will account for about 25% of total generating capacity, while hydropower, wind, solar and other renewable sources will account for nearly 50% by 2030.

"This plan showcases Vietnam's macroeconomic growth ambitions -- with robust plans to expand its generation capacity and the associated power sector infrastructure required to cater to the country's growing energy demand," said Kanika Chawla chief of staff at Sustainable Energy for All, the United Nations' sustainable energy unit.

While Vietnam's new energy plan mandates that no new coal-fired power plants will be built after 2030 as the country transitions to cleaner fuels, total generation capacity from coal power will still rise by 2030, contributing some 20% of total energy production -- down from the current 30.8%.

The continued reliance on fossil fuels and burning biomass such as rice husk and residue from sugar cane farms, as well as the switch to build new infrastructure for gas-powered plants, has experts worried.

In July 2022, Vietnam enshrined in law a pledge to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Late last year the Group of Seven advanced economies promised to provide \$15.5 billion to help it end its reliance on coal-fired power



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plants as a part of a Just Energy Transition Partnership or JETP. Such projects have offered similar incentives to South Africa and Indonesia. Vietnam pledged to phase out coal power by 2040 at the United Nations climate change conference in Glasgow in 2021

"While coal remains part of the energy mix, it is a marked shift from the coal dependence that Vietnam sees today," said Chawla. "A definite phase down in share of energy mix and future emissions, in line with the JETP, even as absolute quantities of thermal power are largely unchanged."

Vietnam has also drawn criticism for cracking down on environmental campaigns. The German government has warned that the recent detention of prominent environmental campaigner Hoang Thi Minh Hong, the fifth activist to be arrested in the past two years, could endanger a recent multi-billion-dollar deal to help the country phase out coal use.

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