

Netflix shares hit record high as subscribers soar

SHARES of Netflix soared 13% to an all-time high on Wednesday after the streaming giant’s big bet on sports helped add a record 18.9 million subscribers in the holiday quarter, ballooning its already sizeable advantage over other players.

The company also unveiled price hikes on Tuesday in markets including

the US, aiming to boost revenue just as it shifts focus from subscriber growth to other performance metrics such as sales.

“We thought it was a typo. Netflix defied the odds once again, delivering subscriber additions far beyond even the most unreasonable subscriber bogey,” Bernstein analyst Laurent Yoon said.

The company’s global subscriber base now exceeds 300 million, giving it a commanding lead in the streaming wars and more leverage in talks with marketing firms as it looks to grow its ad-supported business.

Netflix, already worth more than the combined valuations of rivals Dis-

ney, Comcast, Paramount and Warner Bros Discovery, was set to add more than \$50 billion to its market capitalization of about \$370 billion, if gains hold.

The stock hit a record high of \$988 during early morning trading on Wednesday, paving the way for a potential stock split. — **Reuters**



RUTGER VAN DER MAAR/ FLICKR

VinFast’s losses heap pressure on Vingroup as foreign investors sell

HANOI — Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup is facing renewed scrutiny on its strategy of backing loss-making electric vehicle maker VinFast with its shares near multi-year lows as foreign investors sell and its borrowing costs rise.

Pressure on the company, a household name in Vietnam with businesses spanning autos, real estate, retail and resorts, intensified this month as Moody’s and Fitch gave ‘junk’ ratings to the debt of Vingroup’s most profitable unit, real estate firm Vinhomes as well as to its planned \$500-million international bond sale.

The two agencies said the speculative-grade ratings were due to Vinhomes’ links to Vingroup.

This year “may become indicative of Vingroup’s broader financial health,” said Leif Schneider, head of international law firm Luther in Vietnam.

The conglomerate and its founder, Pham Nhat Vuong, poured \$13.5 billion into the electric automaker as of October in loans and grants, and promised another nearly \$3.5 billion in November, despite concerns about the bet investors raised at the company’s last two annual shareholders’ meetings.

Vingroup’s market capitalization has shrunk by nearly half to

about \$6 billion since VinFast’s listing in August 2023. Over the past year, its shares fell 6.6%, the most among the 10 largest listed companies in Vietnam, and underperforming the 7.5% rise for the Vietnam market .VNI, according to LSEG data.

Its shares traded in December at their lowest level since 2017. They have recovered slightly since but were still close to that multi-year low level this week.

Vingroup, however, is not backing off.

Strong expected growth for its units this year would attract investment in the company, Vingroup said.

So far, investors, especially from overseas, have been unconvinced. Since VinFast’s listing, the value of foreigners’ combined holdings in Vingroup has dropped by nearly 60% to 15.7 trillion dong (\$620.5 million), faster than local investors’, according to stock market data updated to last week.

Among foreigners who fully divested their holdings in the conglomerate last year are investment vehicles of BlackRock and DWS, while JPMorgan’s asset management unit nearly halved its stake to 0.13%, according to LSEG data. — **Reuters**

Saudi Arabia plans \$600B in new US investment and trade over four years

SAUDI Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told President Donald Trump that the kingdom wants to put \$600 billion into expanded investment and trade with the United States over the next four years, the Saudi State news agency said early on Thursday.

In a phone call between the two leaders, the crown prince said the Trump administration’s expected reforms could create “unprecedented economic prosperity,” the state news agency reported.

The report said Saudi Arabia wants its investments to capitalize on these conditions. It did not detail the source of the \$600 billion, whether it would be public or private spending nor how the money would be deployed.

The investment “could increase further if additional opportunities

arise,” the agency quoted Mr. Bin Salman as telling Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump fostered close ties with Gulf states including Saudi Arabia during his first term. The country invested \$2 billion in a firm formed by Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law and former aide, after Trump left office.

Trump said following his inauguration on Monday that he would consider making Saudi Arabia his first destination for a foreign visit if Riyadh agreed to buy \$500 billion worth of American products, similar to what he did in his first term.

“I did it with Saudi Arabia last time because they agreed to buy \$450 billion worth of our product. I said I’ll do it but you have to buy American product, and they agreed to do that,” Mr. Trump said, referring to his 2017 visit to the Gulf kingdom. — **Reuters**

Volkswagen plans to sell 15% of its truck unit Traton in first half

BERLIN — Germany’s Volkswagen plans to sell 15% of its shares in truck unit Traton in the first half of this year, hoping to raise about €2 billion (\$2.09 billion), *Manager magazin* reported on Wednesday, citing unnamed company sources.

A spokesperson for Traton said they could not comment on

Volkswagen’s plans, but regularly received feedback from investors that the low free float was an obstacle for them — a point which Volkswagen CFO Arno Antlitz also made on an earnings call in April.

Following a partial initial public offering in 2019, most of Traton is owned by parent Volkswagen with the company’s free float at a mere 10.28%. — **Reuters**

Samsung unveils AI smartphones with Qualcomm microchips

SEOUL/SAN FRANCISCO — Samsung Electronics on Wednesday unveiled its newest Galaxy S25 smartphones, powered by Qualcomm’s chips and Google’s artificial intelligence (AI) model, hoping its upgraded AI features can reinvigorate sales and fend off Apple and Chinese rivals.

Samsung also previewed a thinner version of the flagship models at the end of an event in California, aiming to launch the Galaxy S25 Edge in the first half of this year ahead of Apple’s anticipated rollout of its slimmer iPhone.

Samsung was faster than Apple in launching an AI-powered smartphone but failed to regain its crown in the global smartphone market last year, squeezed by com-

petition with the US rival in the premium market and with Chinese firms in the lower-end segment.

“We are one step ahead of the industry in terms of offering AI features. I believe we are going in the right direction,” Park Ji-sun, the executive vice president who leads Samsung’s Language AI team, told Reuters.

Samsung kept the prices of its Galaxy S25 series unchanged at between \$799 and \$1,299.

The new Galaxy S25 uses Gemini offered by Alphabet’s Google as its default AI engine, and features Samsung’s upgraded in-house voice assistant, Bixby, Mr. Park said.

The two tools complement each other, and Bixby plays a key role at Samsung, whose products

span mobile phones to TVs and home appliances, he said.

Thomas Husson, an analyst at Forrester, said that differentiating Bixby would be a challenge for Samsung.

“I don’t think there is really a killer application today that you know would convince them (consumers), ‘OK, I’m going to buy this one because it’s an AI smartphone,’” he said.

Mr. Husson added, however, that AI features could create a halo effect around the Samsung brand.

The Galaxy S25 will offer a more personalized AI experience. For example, its “Now Brief” service — which makes recommendations to users based on personalized data that is stored and processed on the phone for

privacy reasons — will display a suite of customized items such as calendars, news and bedroom air temperature and carbon dioxide levels, Mr. Park said.

The phone will be able to carry out multiple tasks with a single command, such as finding upcoming sporting events and then adding them to users’ calendars.

Samsung shares were down 1.1%, lagging the wider market’s 0.4% loss.

Samsung used Qualcomm’s Snapdragon 8 Elite Mobile Platform for the entire Galaxy S25 lineup, ditching its own mobile chip Exynos, a major change of strategy for a company that previously used both to have more bargaining power with suppliers. — **Reuters**



Power Maintenance Updates

by **MERALCO** ADVISORY

The following are scheduled power interruptions necessary for the regular maintenance and upgrade of our power distribution facilities, to ensure the delivery of safe and reliable electricity to your areas. Rest assured that Meralco is doing everything to quickly restore your electricity according to schedule.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2025

RIZAL PROVINCE (ANTIPOLO CITY)

BETWEEN 10:00AM AND 3:00PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT NEW TERESA 42XP

Sitio Sukol in Bgy. Dalig.

REASON: Line maintenance work inside Meralco – New Teresa substation.

TUESDAY TO WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28 – 29, 2025

PARAÑAQUE CITY

BETWEEN 10:00PM (TUE., 01/28/25) AND 3:00AM (WED., 01/29/25) – PORTION OF CIRCUIT BF-PARAÑAQUE 425VU

Portion of Carlos P. Garcia Ave. (C-5 Road) from LBC Central Exchange to and including Bagong Parañaque Housing Subd., Global Compound, SM Asinan Warehouse Complex; Parañaque City Environment & Natural Resources (CENRO) Material Recovery Facilities (MRF), Homeworld Central Warehouse, Ace Hardware Warehouse, Watsons Warehouse and Airspeed Southwest Metro Manila Warehouse in Bgys. La Huerta and San Dionisio.

Portion of Purok 7 Multinational Road from Multinational Ave. to and including Our Mother of Perpetual Help Village; and Purok 7 Multinational in Bgys. La Huerta and Moonwalk.

REASON: Relocation of facilities affected by C5 Southlink Expressway Project in Global Compound, Bgy. La Huerta, Parañaque City.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025

MANILA (SAN NICOLAS)

BETWEEN 8:30AM AND 2:30PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT TUTUBAN 433VT

San Miguel Yamamura Packaging Corp. Manila Glass Plant along Muelle Dela Industria St.

REASON: Replacement of rotten poles along Muelle Dela Industria St. in San Nicolas, Manila.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2025

CAVITE (DASMARIÑAS CITY)

BETWEEN 9:30AM AND 2:30PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT ABUBOT 38XZ

Portion of Don Placido Campos Ave. from Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo Highway to and including Dasmariñas Executive Village and Villa Luisa Subd. Phases I, II, III & IV; and portion of Villa Catalina Village in Bgys. San Agustin II & III and Zone III.

REASON: Line reconstruction work along Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo Highway in Bgy. San Agustin II, Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

BULACAN (SANTA MARIA)

BETWEEN 10:00AM AND 2:00PM – PORTION OF CIRCUIT MARILAO 430MRL

Portion of Caybanban St. from Caybanban Basketball Court to and including Sitio Caybanban in Bgy. Parada.

REASON: Retirement of facilities and line reconductoring work in Sitio Caybanban, Bgy. Parada, Santa Maria, Bulacan.

THURSDAY TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 30 - 31, 2025

QUEZON CITY (PROJECT 8)

BETWEEN 11:00PM (THU., 01/30/25) AND 6:00AM (FRI., 01/31/25) – PORTION OF CIRCUIT BALINTAWAK 57E

Portion of General Ave. from Assistant Road to Road 20 including Robinsons Easymart; Palad Compound and Citiville 3 Subd.; Administration and Asset Sts. in GISIS Village, Bgy. Bahay Toro.

Portion of Road 20 from J. Kennedy St. to and including BJMP Multi-Purpose Cooperative Bldg.; St. Jude Road, F. Herrera, D. Baguino, Reyes, Delos Reyes, R. Parnas and Parifas Sts.; Citiville 1 Subd., Citiville 2 Subd. and Sta. Rita Village in Bgy. Bahay Toro.

Portion of Administration St. from General Ave. to and including Geronimo Subd.; Records Ext., Personnel and Asset Sts. in GISIS Village, Bgy. Bahay Toro.

REASON: Replacement of poles and line reconductoring work along General Ave. in GISIS Village, Bgy. Bahay Toro, Project 8, Quezon City.

VALENZUELA CITY (BIGNAY); AND CALOOCAN CITY (LLANO)

BETWEEN 11:30PM (THU., 01/30/25) AND 4:30AM (FRI., 01/31/25) – PORTION OF CIRCUIT KAYBIGA 45YX

Portion of Mahabang Parang St. from Twinpack Container Corp. to and including Caingin Neighborhood Association in Bgy. Bignay, Valenzuela City.

Portion of Vista Verde Ave. from London St. to Stockholm Ave. in Vista Verde North Executive Village, Llano, Caloocan City.

Portion of Stockholm Ave. from Victory Ville 2 Subd. to and including Sofia, Georgetown, Bangkok, Kimberly, Melbourne, Jerusalem and Tasmania Sts. in Vista Verde North Executive Village, Llano, Caloocan City.

Portion of Llano Road from Montevideo St. to and including New Delhi, Victoria and Belgrade Sts. in Vista Verde North Executive Village, Llano, Caloocan City.

Portion of Llano Road from Victoria St. to and including Silver Eight Neighborhood Association in Llano, Caloocan City.

REASON: Line reconductoring work along Stockholm Ave. and Llano Road in Llano, Caloocan City.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2025

MANILA (STA. ANA); MAKATI CITY (CARMONA; AND KASILAWAN); AND MANDALUYONG CITY (HULO; MABINI – J. RIZAL; AND NAMAYAN)

BETWEEN 8:30AM AND 9:00AM AND THEN BETWEEN 3:00PM AND 3:30PM – THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT STA. ANA 18VN; AND PORTION OF CIRCUIT STA. ANA 13VN

Portion of Pedro Gil St. from Meralco – Sta. Ana substation to Embarcadero St. in Sta. Ana, Manila.

Portion of Old Panadero St. from Embarcadero St. to near Lamayan St. in Sta. Ana, Manila.

Portion of J. Posadas St. from Posadas St. Ext. to and including Villamor and C. Garcia Sts. in Sta. Ana, Manila.

Portion of Calderon St. from Pedro Gil St. to and including Begonia Silang, Azucena, Lamayan, Sta. Clara, Suter Ext., Isabel, Leiva, Syquia, Kasarinlan, Havana, Hernandez, La Torre, Suter, M. Roxas, Mayon, Paco Roman, Cagayan, Dela Rosa, Revillin, Zamora, Medel, Kalayaan, Bulacan, Garrido, Bayani and Callejon 3 – 8 Sts. in Sta. Ana, Manila.

Portion of E. Pascua St. from Del Pan St. to near H. Santos St. including Calidad Ext., F. Guizon, D. Benito, A. Mendoza, Pagkakaisa, C. Francisco, Cagayan, Arpilleda and P. Domingo in Bgys. Kasilawan and Carmona in Makati City.

Portion of J. P. Rizal St. from near Villarrica St. to near F. Blumentritt St. including Claro Castañeda, Dona B. Yangco, Namayan 1st – 4th and San Pedro Sts. in Bgys. Hulo, Mabini - J. Rizal and Namayan in Mandaluyong City.

REASON: Preventive maintenance and testing work inside Meralco – Sta. Ana substation.

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