

## News Release

Co Reg. No. 193500026Z

### **Energy Management Emerges as Top Priority for Businesses Amid Global Uncertainty: UOB Business Outlook Study 2026**

*More than eight in 10 businesses cite energy management as a key business priority, with interests expanding beyond near-term solutions*

**Singapore, [14 May 2026]** – As geopolitical tensions continue to disrupt global energy markets and fuel prices remain volatile, businesses across the region are accelerating efforts to manage energy costs and safeguard operational stability. According to the UOB Business Outlook Study 2026, energy management has emerged as a top priority for more than eight in 10 businesses in 2025 across the region, even before the ongoing heightened geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, with the strongest focus in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

The ongoing global energy crisis has underscored the risks of energy price volatility and supply disruptions. This further reinforced the need for businesses to adopt a more structured and proactive approach to energy usage. The study found that 47 per cent of businesses cited reducing energy consumption as a key priority, while 42 per cent are focused on optimising energy usage to strengthen cost resilience and maintain operational continuity. These measures are increasingly viewed not just as sustainability initiatives, but as essential levers to manage rising costs and margin pressures in an uncertain global environment.

#### **Overall Business Sentiment**

Overall sentiment remains largely positive, with 74 per cent of companies expressing confidence in business outlook, although this continues to trail the peak levels seen in 2022. Simultaneously, geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, and operating costs have intensified since 2023, weighing on the overall outlook. While business expectations have recovered to levels seen in previous years, the pace of recovery remains uneven. Thus, businesses are increasingly signalling a need for solutions that improve efficiency and support transformation as they navigate a more complex operating environment.



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### **AI Adoption**

Beyond energy considerations, the study points to accelerating digital adoption, with 65 per cent of businesses having deployed artificial intelligence (AI), although only 15 per cent have implemented advanced AI capabilities, indicating that most businesses are at an early stage of maturity. AI adoption is becoming more embedded within business functions, particularly in customer support automation (39 per cent) and payments and invoicing (34 per cent), as companies seek productivity gains, cost efficiencies and stronger customer engagement. Despite the clear benefits, AI adoption continues to face challenges. Businesses cited gaps in data and system readiness (47 per cent), funding availability (47 per cent), and talent and capability constraints (39 per cent) as key roadblocks.

### **Supply Chain Management and Resilience**

Supply chain management remains a key priority across the region, particularly in China, Indonesia and Vietnam. While the immediate impact of geopolitical tensions on supply chains have eased comparatively to 2024, disruptions remain elevated in manufacturing-intensive markets. Regulatory complexity continues to pose challenges, with 87 per cent of businesses impacted by ambiguity around regulatory requirements. China continues to play a central role in global manufacturing, with only one in four ASEAN business achieving end-to-end manufacturing. Businesses are increasingly focusing on supplier diversification to strengthen business resilience, with seven in 10 planning to expand their supplier base. Companies in ASEAN and Hong Kong are more inclined towards near shoring their suppliers, while businesses in China are exploring suppliers beyond the region. Key motivations include access to new markets, cost optimisation and building supply chain resilience. However, efforts to reconfigure supply chains are constrained by technology integration challenges and high operational costs, driving a growing demand for ecosystem partnerships, digital supply chain management solutions and advisory support.

Mr Eric Lian, Head, Group Commercial Banking, UOB, said, "In an uncertain operating environment marked by geopolitical risks, cost volatility and uneven recovery, energy management is increasingly integrated with broader priorities such as operational resilience and cost efficiency. Strategic business decisions intersect with digitalisation and sustainability





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efforts more, as businesses rethink how resources, risks and capital are managed in a more uncertain world. We partner our clients closely to navigate these interconnected shifts, combining our deep regional understanding with practical insights and financing solutions that enable business to build stronger foundations for growth across ASEAN.”

Now in its seventh year, the UOB Business Outlook Study has been refreshed with a bi-annual cadence and the introduction of expanded focus areas, reflecting how rapidly changing economic and geopolitical conditions are reshaping the business landscape. The 2026 edition covers seven markets – Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Mainland China and Hong Kong. To get a copy of the study with the full insights, please visit: <https://www.uobgroup.com/asean-insights/articles/uob-business-outlook-study-2026-regional-h1.page>

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### About UOB

UOB is a leading Asian bank with a global network in Southeast Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe and North America. Operating through our head office in Singapore and banking subsidiaries in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, we have a global network of about 430 branches and offices in 19 markets.

Since its incorporation in 1935, UOB has grown organically and through a series of strategic acquisitions. Today, UOB is rated among the world's top banks: Aa1 by Moody's Investors Service and AA- by both S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings.

For more than nine decades, UOB has adopted a customer-centric approach to create long-term value by staying relevant through its enterprising spirit and doing right by its customers. UOB is focused on building the future of ASEAN – for the people and businesses within, and connecting with, ASEAN.

The Bank connects businesses to opportunities in the region with its unparalleled regional footprint and leverages data and insights to innovate and create personalised banking experiences and solutions catering to each customer's unique needs and evolving preferences. UOB is also committed to help businesses forge a sustainable future, by fostering social inclusiveness, creating positive environmental impact and pursuing economic progress. UOB believes in being a responsible financial services provider and is steadfast in its support of education, children and art, doing right by its communities and stakeholders.

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