NEUTRAL

[Downgrade]

Downgrade to NEUTRAL

Malaysia Construction

Going gets tough

New public infrastructure spending has been slow YTD due to pandemic management and we expect this to persist into most of 2H21. We anticipate two major trends: (i) PFI as the financing mode for new major infrastructure projects; (ii) restructuring of highway concessions - both to alleviate the government's fiscal burden. Amid a challenging landscape, we prefer stocks with strong balance sheet and delivery track record; keeping our BUY on IJM, GAM and LTK.

Expect weak 2Q/3Q earnings

With a FMCO being in full-force for a month plus (from 1 Jun), and an 80% workforce capacity cap under FMCO Phase 2 (anticipated in Jul/ Aug), we expect core earnings delivery in the construction/infra sector to be weak in 2Q/3Q21, with 2Q21 to potentially revisit 2Q20 levels. Earnings in 4Q21 will depend on how well the pandemic is managed and the vaccination pace. Traffic at toll highways may not recover as fast with the work-from-home directive likely to be enforced throughout most of 3Q21, and social and education sectors likely to re-open in 4Q21.

Slow public infrastructure spend

Government net development spend in 1Q21 was down 24% QoQ to MYR15.3b, at 22% of the MYR68.2b allocated under Budget 2021. View from the ground is that new public spending for infrastructure has been slow YTD. We expect this situation to persist into most of 2H21 as focus will remain on pandemic management, and in mitigating livelihood impact from the FMCO, with full opening of economic and social sectors anticipated only from November.

Near-term unlikely to excite

News flow over the near-term is unlikely to excite. Coupled with the considerations outlined above, we revise down our top-down sector view from POSITIVE. From a bottom-up perspective, we had downgraded our calls on SCGB to HOLD in Apr 2021 due to limited upside to our PER-based TP, and CMS to HOLD too, as we incorporate a governance risk factor into valuations pending outcome of an independent investigation relating to its Group CFO.

Analyst

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Abbreviation

PFI = Private Finance Initiative FMCO = Full Movement Control Order 12MP = 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-25)

KVMRT3 = Klang Valley Mass Rapid Transit Phs 3 HSR = High Speed Rail PSI = Penang South Island

Stock	Bloomberg	Mkt cap	Rating	Price	ТР	Upside	P/E	(x)	P/B	(x)	Div yl	d (%)
	code	(USD'm)		(LC)	(LC)	(%)	21E	22E	21E	22E	21E	22E
Gamuda	GAM MK	1,840	Buy	3.08	4.05	34	17.8	12.0	0.9	0.8	0.0	3.9
IJM Corp	IJM MK	1,590	Buy	1.81	2.18	23	18.3	20.2	0.6	0.6	3.6	2.5
Sunway Const'n	SCGB MK	518	Hold	1.66	1.72	7	19.3	15.8	3.2	3.0	3.6	4.2
Lingkaran Trans I	LTK MK	474	Buy	3.69	4.90	33	10.0	9.4	1.7	1.5	5.2	5.4
Cahya Mata S.	CMS MK	290	Hold	1.12	1.73	57	8.2	7.4	0.4	0.4	3.6	4.0

2H21 Outlook & Lookouts

1H21: Disrupted again!

Construction activities (except for critical works) halted again from 1 Jun under Malaysia's FMCO. This came just one week after a 60% workforce capacity directive was enforced from 25 May under MCO 3.0. In 1Q21, construction activities of PLCs under our research coverage had normalised closer to their pre-MCO levels, building on from 3Q/4Q20, after a disruption in 2Q20. Elsewhere, toll traffic at Gamuda and IJM's urban highways was impacted again during MCO 2.0 (from 13 Jan) and MCO 3.0 (from 7 May).

Fig 1: Pandemic induced movement restrictions in the Klang Valley

2020	2021
18 Mar - 3 May 🗲 MCO	14 Oct 2020 - 12 Jan → CMCO 2.0
4 May - 9 Jun 🗲 Conditional MCO (CMCO)	13 Jan - 4 Mar 🗲 MCO 2.0
10 Jun - 13 Oct → Recovery MCO (RMCO)	5 Mar - 5 May → CMCO 3.0
14 Oct - 12 Jan 2021 → CMCO 2.0	6 May - 31 May → MCO 3.0
	1 Jun - mid Jul → Full MCO (FMCO) Phs 1 *
	Jul - Aug 🗲 FMCO Phs 2 *
	Sep - Oct → FMCO Phs 3 *
	Nov - Dec → FMCO Phs 4 *

* Length of Phase 1-4 is dependent on how well the pandemic is contained/controlled Source: Compiled by Maybank KE

Fig 2.7	Fraffic at	Gamuda's	toll highways	(compared	against n	ore-MCO levels)
1 15 4. 1	manne at	Gamada 3	ton inginways	(compared	agamst p	

Highways	Mid-Mar to mid-Apr'20 (1 st mth of MCO 1.0)	Jun 2020 (during CMCO 1.0)	Sep 2020 (during RMCO)	Mid-Oct to Dec 2020 (during CMCO 2.0)	End-Feb 2021 (during MCO 2.0)	End-Apr 2021 (during CMCO 3.0)	End-May 2021 (during MCO 3.0)
KESAS	10-20%	90%	100%	71%	85%	95%	65%
LDP	10-20%	90%	100%	88%	90%	97 %	69 %
SPRINT	10-20%	90%	98 %	61%	70%	90%	52%
SMART	10-20%	80%	88%	38%	50%	81%	37%

Source: Gamuda's results announcements

Expect weak 2Q/3Q earnings

With a FMCO being in full-force for a month plus (from 1 Jun), and an 80% workforce capacity cap under FMCO Phase 2 (anticipated in Jul/Aug), we expect core earnings delivery to be weak in 2Q/3Q21, with 2Q21 to potentially revisit 2Q20 levels. Earnings in 4Q21 will depend on how well the pandemic is managed and the vaccination pace. Traffic at toll highways may not recover as fast with the work-from-home directive likely to be enforced throughout most of 3Q21, and social and education sectors likely to re-open only in 4Q21. Traffic at Gamuda's highways are down again to between 20-50% of their pre-MCO levels during the current FMCO Phase 1 (since 1 Jun).

Slow public infra spend

Government net development spend in 1Q21 was down 24% QoQ to MYR15.3b, at 22% of the MYR68.2b allocated under Budget 2021. View from the ground is that new public spending for infrastructure has been slow YTD. We expect this situation to persist into most of 2H21 as focus will remain on pandemic management, and in mitigating livelihood impact from the FMCO, with full opening of economic and social sectors anticipated only from November.

Fig 3: Major infrastructure projects pipeline

Project	Estd Value (MYR b)	Updates
Digital		
National Digital Infrastructure Plan (JENDELA)	21.0	 Phase 1 (2020-22): 96.9% mobile coverage (from 91.8%), 35 Mbps speed (from 25 Mbps) and 7.5 million premises passed. Phase 2 (2022-25): Full deployment of 5G, thus boosting digital connectivity nationwide.
Rail		
JB-SG Rapid Transit System (RTS)	3.715 (MY's portion)	 G-to-G agreement inked on 30 Jul 2020. Ground-breaking ceremony held on 22 Nov 2020. [Link] Under public inspection (15 Mar - 15 Apr 2021). Construction to be in full-swing in 2021; target completion in 2026.
KV Double Track Phase 2 (KVDT2)	4.475	 An earlier award to Dhaya Maju LTAT S/B was cancelled in Aug 2020. An independent checking consultant will be appointed before the appointment of a new contractor via an open tender.
KV Mass Rapid Transit 3 (KVMRT3)	45.0 (original); 22.5 (rev 1.0) 30.0 (rev 2.0)	 2021 Budget Speech said that the project will proceed. Potential 50% reduction to its original cost of e.MYR45b. Cabinet has given the go-ahead to proceed with the project in Mar 2021; MRT Corp to update earlier studies with a view to kick-start works in 2H 2021. [link] The tender call is delayed by 2-3 months (from an earlier target of Aug 2021) due to changes in the project scope.
High Speed Rail (HSR)	70.0	 G-to-G decision to cancel the project (on 1 Jan 2021) due to disagreement on some changes proposed by MY. MY has paid SG SGD102.8m/MYR320m for costs incurred (per joint announcement on 29 Mar 2021). MyHSR Corp Chairman said on 19 May 2021 that the HSR plan is still on track. [link]
Kuching Autonomous Rapid Transit (ART)	6.0	 The ART system was proposed in Sep 2019 in favour of the LRT. Funding from the 12MP. Target commercial operations by 2025. [link]
<u>Highways</u>		
Sarawak Coastal Road & 2 nd Trunk Road	11.0	 Coastal Road: Package 5 (MYR467m) awarded to a CMS led JV. 2nd Trunk Road: Tenders are believed to have opened.
Sabah-Sarawak Link Road Others	1.2	Decision on Federal vs. State funding is pending.
Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP)	32.0	 PDP agreement between SRS Consortium (40% held by Gamuda) and Penang State inked on 1 Jul 2020. Federal Government had declined a MYR2b loan guarantee for the Bayan Lepas-Komtar LRT component. Island A development to be undertaken via a PFI structure (vs. PDP); SRS to enter into 2 JVs with the Penang State as Project Developer and Turnkey Contractor with Gamuda to take on Phase 1 reclamation works (announcement on 25 Mar 2021). Reclamation of Island A Phase 1 (1,200 acres) targeted to start in Aug 2021 after approval of its Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

Source: Various (compiled by Maybank KE)

Two major trends

Resuming fiscal consolidation will be of priority post the pandemic. Our Economics Team forecasts 2021 fiscal deficit to widen to -6.8% of GDP (2020: -6.2%), factoring the additional direct fiscal injection from stimulus package announced YTD and downward revision to GDP growth forecast. Against such backdrop, we see new major infra projects to be taken on via the PFI or deferred payment financing model. Elsewhere, the postponement of toll rate hike involving 20 highways (+2 bridges) this year, requiring MYR2.1b in government compensation, is a yearly recurring opex. Gamuda's planned MYR5.2b highway trust, offering no toll hikes and cash outflow (and guarantee) by the government, merits consideration. An alternative is perhaps an 'infrastructure REIT' structure.

12MP in 3Q/4Q?

We expect the details to be made known once Parliament sitting reconvenes. We expect the KVMRT3 project to feature, and the HSR too; MyHSR Corp Chairman had said on 19 May that the HSR plan is still 'on track'.

NEUTRAL sector call

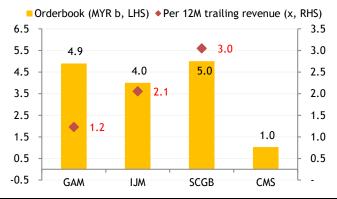
News flow over the near-term is unlikely to excite. Coupled with the considerations outlined above, we revise down our top-down sector view from POSITIVE. From a bottom-up perspective, we had downgraded our calls on SCGB to HOLD in Apr 2021 due to limited upside to our PER-based TP, and CMS to HOLD too in May 2021, as we incorporate a governance risk factor into valuations pending outcome of an independent investigation relating to its Group CFO, and clarity relating to recent abrupt movements in its Board of Directors.

Sector BUYs

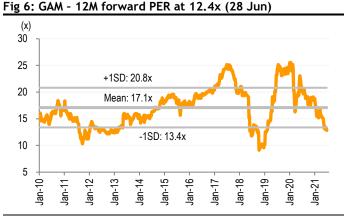
Amid a challenging backdrop, we prefer stocks with strong balance sheet and delivery track record.

- IJM's balance sheet will strengthen considerably post its sale of 56.2% IJMP, with net gearing to be down to 0.24x from 0.44x end-FY21. With 48% of the MYR1.53b net cash proceed from the sale to be set aside for investment/ capex and working capital, IJM is in a strong position to take on PFI projects.
- As for Gamuda, management has alluded to balance sheet capability to take on PFI projects alongside the PSI reclamation (its net gearing was 0.22x end-Apr 2021). We expect Gamuda to be a tier-1 beneficiary of the KVMRT3 rollout, riding on its track record.
- For LITRAK, Gamuda's affirmation of a proposal to sell its highway concessions at fair market value to an independent entity, to be funded entirely by the private debt capital market, should help to unlock value.

Fig 4: Outstanding orderbook @ end-Mar/Apr 2021 (MYR b)



Note: As at end-Mar for IJM, SCGB, CMS; As at end-Apr for GAM; Source: Companies



Source: Company data, Maybank KE

Fig 8: SCGB - 12M forward PER at 17.4x (28 Jun)



Source: Company data, Maybank KE

Fig 5: Foreign shareholding

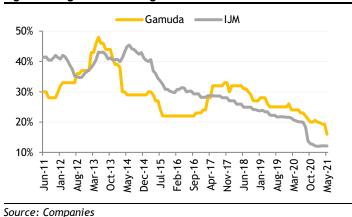
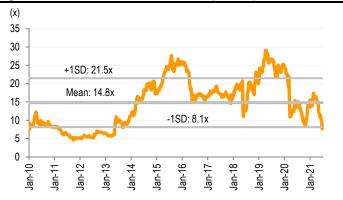


Fig 7: IJM - 12M forward PER at 20.4x (28 Jun)



Source: Company data, Maybank Kim Eng

Fig 9: CMS - 12M forward PER at 7.8x (28 Jun)





Risks

There are several risk factors for our earnings estimate, target price and rating for stocks in the construction/infra sector. Key risks are: (i) Prolonged movement restriction/lockdown affecting the work pace of construction and property projects, and traffic at the toll highways; (ii) Slow orderbook replenishment due to delays in major infra projects roll-outs; (iii) Continuous rise in material cost (steel bar: +21% in 2020; copper: +28%) and labour shortages (due to pandemic travel restrictions) which will cut into margins for jobs already secured.

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Malaysia

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