Axiata Group (ахіата мк)

Sri Lanka developments

Further market consolidation

We view Dialog's merger with Airtel Lanka as an overall healthy market development, while generating longer-term synergies. However, there are integration costs to be borne which could defer Axiata's net profit recovery in the initial years. We continue to view Axiata's overall risk-reward as being positive, with net profit recovery and balance sheet repair being potential re-rating catalysts. Reiterate BUY with an unchanged MYR3.50 SOP-based TP.

Merger to proceed

Recall Dialog Axiata had entered into a binding term sheet to merge with Airtel Lanka in May 2023. Dialog has now entered into a Share Sale Agreement (SSA) to acquire 100% of Airtel Lanka, via the issuance of 952.7m new Dialog shares (representing 10.4% of Dialog's enlarged share base). Axiata's stake in Dialog post-merger would be diluted to 73.7% (from 82.3% currently pre-merger). The transaction has been approved by Sri Lanka's telecom regulator, but is subject to Dialog's shareholders' approval and completion of specific conditions in the SSA.

Initial integration drag for Dialog?

The transaction would see the largest operator (Dialog) merging with the smallest (Airtel Lanka, currently loss-making), with the aim of achieving economies of scale and reducing infrastructure duplication. In our view, the transaction resembles that of Bangladesh, where Robi Axiata and Airtel Bangladesh had explored and completed a merger in 2015-16. The enlarged Robi endured a few years of losses during the integration phase before enjoying the longer-term synergies.

Reiterate BUY

Dialog's management will host a call this afternoon, which would likely provide more colour on timelines and financial impact. Our earnings forecasts and MYR3.50 TP for Axiata (derived from a sum-of-parts with each op-co valued on DCF) are unchanged, with associate CelcomDigi being the largest contributor of both earnings and SOP.

FYE Dec (MYR m)	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Revenue	27,522	23,489	22,704	23,430	24,157
EBITDA	12,434	10,560	10,864	11,348	11,769
Core net profit	1,587	542	700	1,271	1,703
Core EPS (sen)	17.3	5.9	7.6	13.8	18.5
Core EPS growth (%)	19.6	(65.8)	29.0	81.7	33.9
Net DPS (sen)	14.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Core P/E (x)	17.9	40.3	33.5	18.4	13.7
P/BV (x)	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0
Net dividend yield (%)	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.9	3.9
ROAE (%)	46.6	(8.7)	3.2	5.8	7.5
ROAA (%)	2.1	0.7	0.9	1.6	2.1
EV/EBITDA (x)	5.1	5.7	5.7	5.5	5.3
Net gearing (%) (incl perps)	92.8	114.5	117.4	115.1	108.8
Consensus net profit	-	-	657	800	976
MIBG vs. Consensus (%)	-	-	6.5	58.9	74.4

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Share Price	MYR 2.55
12m Price Target	MYR 3.50 (+40%)
Previous Price Target	MYR 3.50

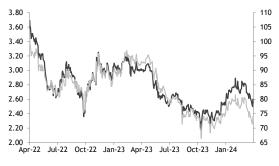
Company Description

Axiata Group owns a portfolio of mobile telcos, network infrastructure and digital internet companies in 10 countries across Asia.

Statistics

52w high/low (MYR)	3.09/2.18
3m avg turnover (USDm)	3.9
Free float (%)	43.2
Issued shares (m)	9,179
Market capitalisation	MYR23.4B
	USD4.9B
Major shareholders:	
Khazanah Nasional Bhd. (Investment Cor	npa 36.7%
Employees Provident Fund	18.0%
Permodalan Nasional Bhd.	16.6%

Price Performance



	-1M	-3M	-12M
Absolute (%)	(8)	1	(16)
Relative to index (%)	(7)	(3)	(21)
Source: FactSet			



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Risk Rating& Score ¹	29.9 (Medium)
Score Momentum ²	+2.0
Last Updated	13 Apr 2023
Controversy Score ³ (Updated: 3 Apr 2023)	2 - Business ethics (acc. & tax) incidents

Business Model & Industry Issues

- The ESG pressure faced by telcos is overall benign. Telcos are not major emitters and thus do not pose a significant threat to the environment. Major social issues relate to digital inclusion and data protection, and can generally be well-managed from an operational perspective. Axiata however also operates in frontier markets, and thus faces relatively higher operating risks.
- We see telcos are potential ESG beneficiaries. Given the industry's extensive population reach and core speciality in connectivity, telcos are well-positioned to serve as ESG enablers, helping other industries address their respective ESG issues. Axiata has already invested tangibly in a digital business arm, which at the moment is scaling up and is thus still loss-making. Axiata has demonstrated the monetisation potential of the business through divestment of minority stakes.
- Given its conglomerate-like structure, Axiata is possibly more inclined on a relative basis to participate in M&As. Axiata has initiated a number of M&As in recent years, both at the holding-co level and among its op-cos. Results have unfortunately been mixed, with the supposed accretion not materialising for some transactions.
- Axiata scores above-average in our proprietary scoring methodology (see next page) with an overall score of 68/100.

Material E issues

- Environmental risks are inherently less pertinent for telcos, with operations being neither energy nor emission intensive. Globally, GSMA (the industry body) has committed to a "Zero by 2050" carbon emission target, which Axiata is aiming to align to.
- The net zero target is potentially a challenge for Axiata as it is operating in regions where subscribers and networks are still growing. Axiata recorded a 3% increase in energy consumption in 2022, with networks accounting for 98% of total energy consumption.
- Measures undertaken include investing in new energy efficient equipment, transferring sites from diesel to grid, installing outdoor cabinets which do not require air conditioning units and building renewable energy capacity. edotco, its tower arm, has reduced its GHG emissions through innovative tower designs.

Material S issues

- Internet connectivity is deemed as an essential service. Axiata's op-cos in Malaysia, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka had offered discounted/free data to subscribers during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected monetisation.
- The emphasis on digital inclusion and rural connectivity means telcos could be pressured to invest in areas that are not commercially-viable. In Malaysia, the regulator funds such investments through the USP fund (telcos contribute 6% of revenue to the fund annually).
- Axiata operates in emerging and frontier markets, where many have no access to formal financial services. Axiata has developed digital financial services platforms.
- The male-female split of Axiata's workforce stood at 68%-32% as at 2022. Female representation at senior management is at 24%.

Key G metrics and issues

- Axiata is a government-linked company. Khazanah Nasional, the national sovereign fund, owns 36.8% of Axiata and has board representation.
- The Board currently has 12 Directors, comprising 1 Managing Director (CEO), 1 Executive Director, 3 Non-Independent Non-Executive Directors and 7 Independent Non-Executive Directors (including the chairman).
- There are presently 3 women on the Board. The search for additional female Directors is in progress, with the Board aiming to comply with the 30% female representation target.
- Axiata does not disclose the remuneration details of senior management for confidentiality reasons.
- Axiata has been audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers for at least the past decade.
- Axiata's track record with dividends is average, given that capex requirements (due to growth opportunities) are still high in many markets that it operates in.
- Axiata had in 2019, announced it was in talks with Telenor to merge their respective Asian operations, but talks were subsequently terminated. Their respective Malaysia entities (Celcom and Digi) were eventually merged in 2022.
- Axiata's last major transaction was the acquisition of Ncell in 2017. This transaction was unfortunately mired with issues as capital gains tax was subsequently imposed on Ncell (instead of the seller) following a change of government. Axiata disposed its stake in Ncell in 2023.
- Axiata's has initiated a number of M&As at its op-cos (Smart-Hello in Cambodia, XL-Axis in Indonesia, Robi-Airtel in Bangladesh), mainly on the basis of market consolidation. Results have unfortunately been mixed, with the supposed accretion not materialising for some transactions.

<u>Reling & Score</u> - derived by Sustainalytics and assesses the company's exposure to unmanaged ESG risks. Scores range between 0 - 50 in order of increasing severity with low/high scores & ratings representing negligible/significant risk to the company's enterprise value, respectively, from ESG-driven financial impacts. <u>Score</u> <u>Momentum</u> - indicates changes to the company's score since the last update - a <u>negative</u> integer indicates a company's improving risk score; a <u>positive</u> integer indicates a deterioration. <u>Controversy Score</u> - reported periodically by Sustainalytics in the event of material ESG-related incident(s), with the impact severity scores of these events ranging from Category 0-5 (0 - no reports; 1 - negligible risks; ...; 5 - poses serious risks & indicative of potential structural deficiencies at the company).

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	Quantitative Parameters (Score: 62)								
	Particulars	Unit	2020	2021	2022	Maxis (MAXIS MK)			
	Scope 1 emissions	k tCO2e	77.89	74.02	69.11	4.70			
	Scope 2 emissions	k tCO2e	1240.56	1287.78	1322.58	220.51			
	Scope 3 emissions	k tCO2e	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			
-	Total	k tCO2e	1318.45	1361.80	1391.69	225.21			
5	Carbon intensity per data usage	tCO2e/TB	0.12	0.09	0.09	N/A			
	Energy Usage per Data Terabyte (MWh)	GJ/TB	0.67	0.52	0.50	N/A			
	Solar adoption at sites (edotco)	Number	1,677	2,208	2,556	N/A			
	Op-cos publishing waste data	Number	0	4	3	N/A			
	% of women in workforce	%	31.0%	32.0%	32.0%	43.6%			
~	% of women in management roles	%	17.0%	20.0%	24.0%	33.3%			
2	Average training hours per employee	Hours	22.0	33.1	27.2	32.1			
	Lost time injury frequency (LTIF)	Number	0 - 0.55	0 - 0.4	0 - 0.55	0.18			
	Key management salary as % of net profit	%	5.3%	0.6%	0.01%	4.7%			
G	Independent directors on the Board	%	55.6%	60.0%	58.3%	40%			
G	Female directors on the Board	%	22%	20%	25%	20%			
	Number of top-ranked op-cos by NPS	Number	4	4	4	N/A			

Qualitative Parameters (Score: 83)

a) Is there an ESG policy in place and whether there is a standalone ESG committee or is it part of a risk committee?

Yes. Axiata has a Sustainability Steering Committee to oversee its sustainability agenda.

b) Is the senior management salary linked to fulfilling ESG targets?

Yes. Sustainability-related key performance indicators (KPIs) have been included in Axiata's Group CEO and OpCo CEOs' annual KPIs. c) Does the company follow the task force of climate related disclosures (TCFD) framework for ESG reporting? Yes

e) Does the company have a mechanism to capture Scope 3 emissions - which parameters are captured?

No. Axiata is undertaking Scope 3 screening of its suppliers to determine its areas of control towards developing a Scope 3 inventory and baseline, with the aim of identifying a science-based Scope 3 target for 2030.

f) What are the 2-3 key carbon mitigation/water/waste management strategies adopted by the company?

68

Remote monitoring sensor (RMS) technology deployed at tower sites, pursuing green building certification, phase-out of diesel consumption for backup generators

g) Does carbon offset form part of the net zero/carbon neutrality target of the company?

Yes

			Tar	t (Score: 67)					
Particulars				Ta	arget	Achieved			
Reduce emission	in 2030 (from		45%	N/A					
Net-zero carbon e	emissions by 2		2050	N/A					
To achieve 30% fe	male director		30%	25%					
Impact									
ŇA									
			Ov	all Score: 68					
As per our ESG ma	atrix, Axiata h	ias an overa	all score of 68.						
ESG score	Weights	Scores	Final Score	As per our ESG assessment, Axiata has an	establisł	ned framework,			
Quantitative	50%	62	31	internal policies, and tangible mid/long-term targets. Axiata overall ESG score is 68, which makes its ESG rating above avera in our view (average ESG rating = 50; refer to Appendix I for c					
Qualitative	25%	83	21						
Target	25%	67	17	ESG Assessment Scoring).	τυ Αρι				

Total

Fig 1: Axiata: Revenue, EBITDA and net profit split

	Rev	enue	Rev	enue	EB	ITDA	EB	ITDA	Net	profit	Net	profit
(MYR m)	2023	%	2024E	%	2023	%	2024E	%	2023	%	2024E	%
Indonesia	9,664	41%	9,893	44%	4,777	45%	4,847	45%	172	32%	237	34%
Bangladesh	4,200	18%	4,426	1 9 %	1,923	18%	2,036	1 9 %	110	20%	102	15%
Sri Lanka	2,624	11%	2,675	12%	859	8%	963	9 %	111	20%	155	22%
Nepal	1,173	5%	-	-	651	6%	-	-	86	16%	-	-
Cambodia	1,721	7%	1,756	8%	919	9 %	931	9 %	313	58%	312	45%
Linknet	1,174	5%	1,234	5%	489	5%	481	4%	-127	-23%	-134	-1 9 %
edotco	2,791	12%	2,972	13%	1,876	18%	1,932	18%	64	12%	53	8 %
CelcomDigi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	514	95 %	523	75%
Others	141	1%	-250	-1%	-933	- 9 %	-325	-3%	-700	-12 9 %	-548	-78%
Total	23,489		22,704		10,560		10,864		542		700	

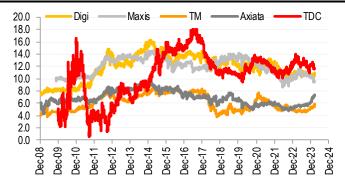
Source: Maybank IBG Research

Fig 2: Axiata: Target price derivation

(MYR m)	Value	Stake	Attri. value	per share	%
Malaysia	52,846	33%	17,492	1.91	54%
Indonesia	11,534	61%	7,091	0.77	22%
Bangladesh	7,982	62%	4,933	0.54	15%
Sri Lanka	2,784	83%	2,319	0.25	7%
Cambodia	7,863	73%	5,701	0.62	18%
Linknet	-2,889	92 %	-2,652	-0.29	-8%
Edotco	10,404	63%	6,555	0.71	20%
Digital businesses			1,898	0.21	6%
Residual net cash			-11,240	-1.22	-35%
Total equity value			32,096	3.50	100%

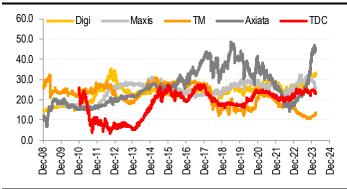
Source: Maybank IBG Research

Fig 3: EV/EBITDA - Malaysia telcos



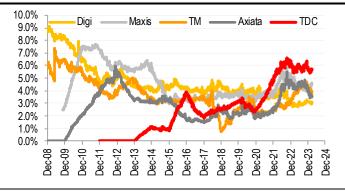
Source: Bloomberg, Maybank IBG Research

Fig 5: PER - Malaysia telcos



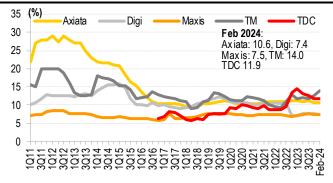
Source: Bloomberg, Maybank IBG Research

Fig 4: Net dividend yield - Malaysia telcos



Source: Bloomberg, Maybank IBG Research

Fig 6: Foreign shareholding



Source: Companies

Risk statement

There are several risk factors for our earnings estimates, price target, and rating for Axiata. Competitive developments such as price wars would adversely affect monetisation and thus profitability. Regulatory developments pertaining to spectrum fees, taxation or product pricing also pose a risk to Axiata's earnings. Axiata is also exposed to currency risk.

FYE 31 Dec	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Key Metrics					
P/E (reported) (x)	3.0	nm	33.5	18.4	13.7
Core P/E (x)	17.9	40.3	33.5	18.4	13.7
P/BV (x)	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.0
P/NTA (x)	28.9	(16.5)	(65.4)	22.7	8.6
Net dividend yield (%)	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.9	3.9
FCF yield (%)	2.7	16.2	20.4	22.9	25.2
EV/EBITDA (x)	5.1	5.7	5.7	5.5	5.3
EV/EBIT (x)	14.1	20.6	18.4	15.9	14.3
INCOME STATEMENT (MYR m)					
Revenue	27,521.7	23,489.5	22,704.3	23,430.4	24,156.9
EBITDA	12,433.7	10,560.3	10,864.5	11,348.2	11,768.7
Depreciation	(7,922.5)	(7,626.6)	(7,476.1)	(7,414.7)	(7,434.2)
Amortisation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EBIT	4,511.2	2,933.7	3,388.4	3,933.5	4,334.5
Net interest income / (exp)	(1,713.9)	(2,121.7)	(2,282.7)	(2,218.2)	(2,144.5)
Associates & JV	(50.8)	531.8	527.3	789.3	991.1
Exceptionals	8,348.3	(3,534.0)	(92.6)	(92.6)	(92.6)
Other pretax income	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pretax profit	11,094.7	(2,190.3)	1,540.4	2,412.1	3,088.5
Income tax	(1,061.4)	(266.9)	(483.2)	(624.8)	(745.6)
Minorities	(267.7)	462.4	(357.4)	(516.2)	(640.4)
Discontinued operations	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.0
Reported net profit	9,765.6	(1,994.8)	699.7	1,271.1	1,702.5
Core net profit	1,586.7	542.2	699.7	1,271.1	1,702.5
BALANCE SHEET (MYR m) Cash & Short Term Investments	7,452.2	4,612.1	4,056.3	4,130.1	4,808.1
Accounts receivable	6,863.4	4,808.7	4,050.3	4,130.1	4,632.8
Inventory	221.6	218.9	211.7	213.7	4,052.0
Property, Plant & Equip (net)	27,201.0	27,439.8	28,968.2	30,436.3	31,758.6
Intangible assets	22,916.9	23,388.9	22,203.8	21,168.0	20,262.7
Investment in Associates & JVs	15,610.8	15,652.6	15,682.8	15,765.3	15,868.0
Other assets	1,369.1	2,321.0	2,321.0	2,321.0	2,321.0
Total assets	81,635.1	78,442.0	77,797.9	78,527.8	79,868.5
ST interest bearing debt	8,935.6	4,752.5	4,752.5	4,752.5	4,752.5
Accounts payable	10,534.3	9,317.4	8,890.6	4,732.3 9,134.1	9,449.6
LT interest bearing debt	26,942.4	32,191.7	32,191.7	32,191.7	32,191.7
Other liabilities	4,579.0	3,945.0	3,945.0	3,945.0	3,945.0
Total Liabilities	50,991.7	50,206.7	49,779.9	50,023.5	50,338.9
Shareholders Equity	-	•	,	22,199.2	
Minority Interest	23,896.7 6,746.7	22,064.1 6,171.2	21,845.9 6,172.0	6,305.2	22,983.8 6,545.8
Total shareholder equity				28,504.4	
Total liabilities and equity	30,643.4 81,635.1	28,235.3 78,442.0	28,018.0 77,797.9	78,527.8	29,529.6 79,868.5
CASH FLOW (MYR m)					
Pretax profit	11,094.7	(2,190.3)	1,540.4	2,412.1	3,088.5
Depreciation & amortisation	7,922.5	(2,190.3) 7,626.6	7,476.1	2,412.1 7,414.7	3,000.5 7,434.2
Adj net interest (income)/exp	1,713.9	2,121.7	2,282.7	2,218.2	2,144.5
		-		102.3	-
Change in working capital	(4,822.0)	840.5	34.9		172.5
Cash taxes paid	(875.5)	(675.5)	(483.2)	(624.8)	(745.6)
Other operating cash flow	(4,602.2)	2,755.3	(30.2)	(82.5)	(102.7)
Cash flow from operations	10,431.4	10,478.3	10,820.6	11,439.9	11,991.4
Capex	(9,652.0)	(6,949.4)	(6,056.5)	(6,084.2)	(6,088.5)
Free cash flow	779.4	3,528.9	4,764.1	5,355.7	5,902.9
Dividends paid	(504.7)	(1,743.9)	(917.9)	(917.9)	(917.9)
Equity raised / (purchased)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Change in Debt	7,029.3	(1,581.3)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other invest/financing cash flow	(6,019.6)	(2,727.4)	(4,402.1)	(4,363.9)	(4,307.0)
Effect of exch rate changes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1,284.4				

FYE 31 Dec	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Key Ratios					
Growth ratios (%)					
Revenue growth	6.3	(14.7)	(3.3)	3.2	3.1
EBITDA growth	9.0	(15.1)	2.9	4.5	3.7
EBIT growth	18.2	(35.0)	15.5	16.1	10.2
Pretax growth	410.4	nm	nm	56.6	28.0
Reported net profit growth	1,092.5	nm	nm	81.7	33.9
Core net profit growth	19.7	(65.8)	29.0	81.7	33.9
Profitability ratios (%)					
EBITDA margin	45.2	45.0	47.9	48.4	48.7
EBIT margin	16.4	12.5	14.9	16.8	17.9
Pretax profit margin	40.3	nm	6.8	10.3	12.8
Payout ratio	13.2	nm	131.2	72.2	53.9
DuPont analysis					
Net profit margin (%)	35.5	nm	3.1	5.4	7.0
Revenue/Assets (x)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Assets/Equity (x)	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5
ROAE (%)	46.6	(8.7)	3.2	5.8	7.5
ROAA (%)	2.1	0.7	0.9	1.6	2.1
Liquidity & Efficiency					
Cash conversion cycle	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm
Days receivable outstanding	78.0	89.4	72.6	68.0	68.0
Days inventory outstanding	nm	nm	nm	nm	nn
Days payables outstanding	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm
Dividend cover (x)	7.6	(2.2)	0.8	1.4	1.9
Current ratio (x)	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7
Leverage & Expense Analysis					
Asset/Liability (x)	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
Net gearing (%) (incl perps)	92.8	114.5	117.4	115.1	108.8
Net gearing (%) (excl. perps)	92.8	114.5	117.4	115.1	108.8
Net interest cover (x)	2.6	1.4	1.5	1.8	2.0
Debt/EBITDA (x)	2.9	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.1
Capex/revenue (%)	35.1	29.6	26.7	26.0	25.2
Net debt/ (net cash)	28,425.8	32,332.0	32,887.9	32,814.0	32,136.0

Source: Company; Maybank IBG Research

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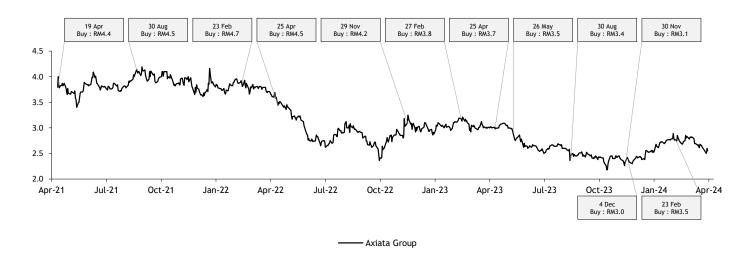
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