

Eco World Development (ECW MK)

Reaping the fruits of its industrial park

Kulai site visit note

We visited ECW's *Quantum Edge* business park (QEBP) in Kulai last week. With secured land deals to Microsoft and Princeton Digital Group (PDG), QEBP is expected to start contributing to earnings from FY25E onwards. Management is actively negotiating with data center (DC) operators and could secure 1-2 DC-related land sale by the end of 2024/2025. We raise FY25-26E earnings forecasts by +1% to +2%. Our TP is unchanged at MYR1.96 (on an unchanged 1.1x FY25E P/B). Maintain BUY.

Strategically-located *Quantum Edge* business park

We visited ECW's 404-acre QEBP in Kulai, Johor last week. QEBP targets digital and high-tech players in AI, cloud computing, high-tech manufacturing and R&D. We are impressed by its strategic location - 6 min drive from Kulai toll and 25 min from Sedenak toll, and the availability of TNB pylons on the site, which serves as an attractive pull factor for DC developments. Preliminary approvals for power and water supply are required before finalizing any land deals with DC players. We understand that QEBP has secured sufficient power and water supply.

Will start contributing to earnings from FY25E

The QEBP site works are progressing well, with 40% of overall earthworks completed to date (see pictures on page 5). Infrastructure works are expected to commence by the end of 2024 once earthworks are completed. With secured land deals with Microsoft (123 acres; MYR402.3m or MYR75 psf) and PDG (57 acres; MYR224m or MYR90 psf), QEBP will start contributing to earnings from FY25E onwards. The project accounts for 28%/11% of our FY25E/26E pretax profit.

More DC deals?

ECW is actively negotiating with DC players and could secure 1-2 DC land sale for its Eco Business Park V and QEBP by end-2024/2025. Backed by healthy balance sheet (0.21x net gearing in end-3QFY24), ECW is also actively looking for new landbank in Klang Valley and Iskandar Malaysia for its township/QUANTUM products. We fine-tune our FY25/26E earnings forecasts by +0.7%/+2.4% to factor in change in work billing assumptions for QEBP. Our FY24E property sales assumption is unchanged at MYR3.9b.

FYE Oct (MYR m)	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Revenue	2,044	2,227	2,807	3,338	3,319
EBITDA	341	388	398	574	510
Core net profit	231	273	284	416	386
Core EPS (sen)	7.9	9.3	9.6	14.1	13.1
Core EPS growth (%)	0.2	17.9	4.1	46.4	(7.1)
Net DPS (sen)	5.0	6.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Core P/E (x)	7.7	10.9	18.9	12.9	13.9
P/BV (x)	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.0
Net dividend yield (%)	8.3	5.9	3.8	3.8	3.8
ROAE (%)	3.3	4.0	5.9	8.4	7.5
ROAA (%)	2.4	3.0	3.1	4.4	3.9
EV/EBITDA (x)	9.6	10.8	16.6	11.3	12.9
Net gearing (%) (incl perps)	31.4	25.2	25.7	22.3	23.6
Consensus net profit	-	-	285	326	336
MIBG vs. Consensus (%)	-	-	(0.4)	27.6	15.2

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BUY

Share Price	MYR 1.82
12m Price Target	MYR 1.96 (+8%)
Previous Price Target	MYR 1.96

Company Description

Eco World Development is principally involved in the property development business.

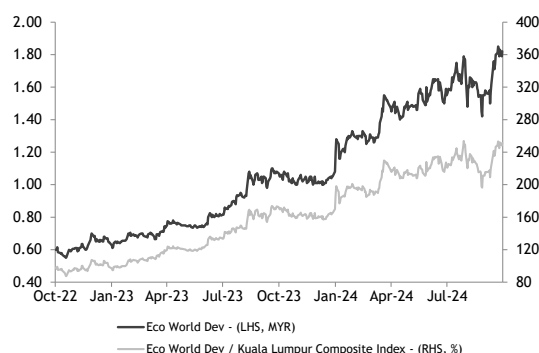
Statistics

52w high/low (MYR)	1.85/1.00
3m avg turnover (USDm)	3.1
Free float (%)	38.0
Issued shares (m)	2,949
Market capitalisation	MYR5.4B USD1.3B

Major shareholders:

Syabas Tropikal Sdn. Bhd.	32.9%
LIEW KEE SIN	9.4%
Eco World Development Holdings Sdn. Bhd.	7.5%

Price Performance



	-1M	-3M	-12M
Absolute (%)	17	14	69
Relative to index (%)	20	11	46

Source: FactSet

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Risk Rating & Score ¹	12.5 (Low)
Score Momentum ²	+2.1
Last Updated	27 Apr 2024
Controversy Score ³ (Updated: 21 Apr 2024)	0-No reported incidents

Business Model & Industry Issues

- ECW is one of the leading developers in Malaysia. Its property projects are spreading across the country i.e. Klang Valley, Penang and Johor. As at May 2024, it has remaining landbank of 3,426 acres worth MYR52b in GDV. With more than 15 ongoing development projects, ECW is exposed to some ESG risks, including bribery and corruption.
- ECW has been a constituent of the FTSE4Good Bursa Malaysia (F4GBM) Index since 2020.
- To ensure better corporate governance, ECW's ABC Policy is aligned with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 and covers bribery and corruption prevention. ECW's workforce must undergo an annual assessment of the ABC Policy that requires a minimum score of 90% for successful completion.
- ECW scores above-average in our proprietary ESG scoring methodology (see next page) with an overall score of 69/100.

Material E issues

- ECW aims to install at least one electric vehicle charging station at every EcoWorld Malaysia premises. In FY23, 93% (FY22: 93%, FY21: 87%) of its projects had installed at least one electric vehicle charging station.
- In FY23, 89% of ECW projects received green certification with 32 total certifications in Green Building Index (GBI), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), GreenRE and Green Mark.
- ECW repurposes excess materials, including concrete and bricks, by crushing them and using the resulting hard materials to create stable foundations for temporary access roads within the construction sites. This helped to minimise material waste while reducing the need for additional raw materials and transportation.
- ECW has also targeted to allocate at least 15% of total area to be developed to open green spaces. In FY23, it achieved its target where 22% (FY22: 23%) of all its developments have been allocated to green area.

Material S issues

- ECW's workforce consists of 45% women in FY23 (FY22: 44%). ECW has recorded an average training hours per staff of 26 in FY23 (+44% YoY).
- In FY23, ECW recorded zero fatalities and one workplace incident. Lost-time Incident Rate (LTIR) has declined to 0.014 in FY23 (FY22: 0.035).
- ECW has a Students Aid Programme that provided monetary assistance to about 1,816 students from primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in FY23.
- In FY23, the total amount spent in CSR programme was MYR2.7m (FY22: MYR1.7m); this was spent on schools, orphanage, old folk's home and flood relief assistance.

Key G metrics and issues

- There are 11 members on ECW's Board comprising 1 Executive Chairman, 2 Executive Directors (including CEO), 2 Non-independent Non-Executive Director (NINED) and 6 Independent Non-Executive Director (INED).
- In terms of Board gender and diversity, 4 of the 11 Board members are female (36% of Board members; 30% is the minimum requirement) and 3 are Bumiputera.
- ECW has been audited by Messrs Baker Tilly Monteiro Heng PLT since 2015.
- The cumulative remuneration of the Board members (MYR37.1m) represented 13.6% of ECW's net profit in FY23 (FY22: 20%).
- ECW's Audit Committee is made up of 4 INEDs. Its Nomination and Remuneration Committees comprise 3 INEDs each while Whistleblowing Committee comprises 3 INEDs.
- ECW has 29% stake in Eco World International (ECWI MK; TP: MYR0.28; HOLD), which has property projects in UK and Australia. ECW and ECWI are managed by two separate management teams. There have been no questionable related-party transactions since the listing of ECWI in April 2017.
- In FY23, there were zero cases of corruption and bribery, and zero reported whistleblowing incidents.

¹**Risk Rating & Score** - 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. ²**Score Momentum** - indicates changes to the company's score since the last update - a **negative** integer indicates a company's improving risk score; a **positive** integer indicates a deterioration. ³**Controversy Score** - 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).

Quantitative Parameters (Score: 38)							
	Particulars	Unit	2021	2022	2023	SPSB MK (2023)	
E	Scope 1 GHG emissions	tCO2e	332	546	595	457	
	Scope 2 GHG emissions	tCO2e	5,607	5,978	5,923	12,429	
	Total	tCO2e	5,939	6,524	6,518	12,886	
	Scope 3 GHG emissions	tCO2e	NA	2,680	3,673	NA	
	Total	tCO2e	NA	9,204	10,191	NA	
			tCO2e/rev				
	GHG intensity (Scope 1 and 2)	RMm	2.9	3.2	2.9	2.9	
	Energy intensity (managed assets)	KWh/sq. m	0.10	0.11	0.12	NA	
	Water intensity	cu. m/sq. m	1.2	0.8	0.9	NA	
	Waste generated intensity (Scope 3)	tCO2e/MT	0.0	0.3	0.4	NA	
S	Total waste recycled	%	NA	12	20	73	
	Green certification for new and existing projects	%	70	89	89	NA	
	% of women in workforce	%	43	44	45	46	
	% of women in management roles	%	49	49	55	37	
G	Lost time injury frequency (LTIF) rate		0.02	0.04	0.01	0.7	
	Training hours per employee	number	13	18	26	29	
	MD/CEO salary as % of reported net profit	%	1.1	1.1	2.4	1.1	
	Board salary as % of reported net profit	%	4.5	20.0	13.6	2.2	
	Independent directors on the Board	%	54	58	55	60	
	Female directors on the Board	%	31	33	36	30	

Qualitative Parameters (Score: 100)	
a) Is there an ESG policy in place and whether there is a standalone ESG committee or is it part of a risk committee?	<i>Yes. The Sustainability Committee (SC) was established in 2017 to assist the Board in the implementation of ECW's sustainability goals and initiatives. The SC is chaired by the CEO and comprises key senior management across all disciplines, regions of operation and support functions.</i>
b) Is the senior management salary linked to fulfilling ESG targets?	<i>Yes.</i>
c) Does the company follow the task force of climate related disclosures (TCFD) framework for ESG reporting?	<i>Yes</i>
e) Does the company have a mechanism to capture Scope 3 emissions - which parameters are captured?	<i>Yes. ECW started Scope 3 GHG emissions reporting in 2022. ECW's reported Scope 3 emissions include employee commuting, business travel encompassing both air and land transportation, and this has expanded to include waste generated in FY23.</i>
f) What are the 2-3 key carbon mitigation/water/waste management strategies adopted by the company?	<i>Energy efficiency: Installed Solar PV system and EV charging stations. Water mgmt: Water from detention ponds, underground rainwater harvesting systems and bio-effluents for landscaping and cleaning are utilised, thus conserving and reducing consumption of potable water. Waste mgmt: ECW repurposes excess materials including concrete and bricks by crushing them and using the resulting hard materials to create stable foundation for temporary access roads within its construction sites.</i>
g) Does carbon offset form part of the net zero/carbon neutrality target of the company?	<i>Yes. ECW places a significant emphasis on carbon offset initiatives to neutralise any residual emissions that prove challenging to eradicate.</i>

Target (Score: 100)		
Particulars	Target	Achieved
To reduce Scope 2 GHG emissions by 20% by 2025 and 30% by 2030 compared to FY19 baseline (6,976 tCO2e). Net Zero GHG emissions by 2050.	20%	NA
Zero workplace fatalities, including contractors, across all project sites	100%	100%
Providing open spaces and a natural environment	15%	22%
Contributing to the local community to achieve 1,500 CSR hours	1,500	2,041
Opportunities for employee training	82%	98%
To achieve an employee satisfaction score of 82% or higher	≥82%	98%
Obtain a min "certified" rating from a Green Accreditation body for 100% of new & existing projects	100%	89%
Impact		
NA		
Overall Score: 69		
As per our ESG matrix, Eco World Development (ECW MK) has an overall score of 69.		

ESG score	Weights	Scores	Final Score
Quantitative	50%	38	19
Qualitative	25%	100	25
Target	25%	100	25
Total			69

As per our ESG assessment, ECW has an established framework, internal policies, and tangible mid/long-term targets but needs to make headway in improving its quantitative "E" metrics YoY. ECW's overall ESG score is 69, which makes its ESG rating above average in our view (average ESG rating = 50; refer to Appendix I for our ESG Assessment Scoring).

Background of *Quantum Edge* business park

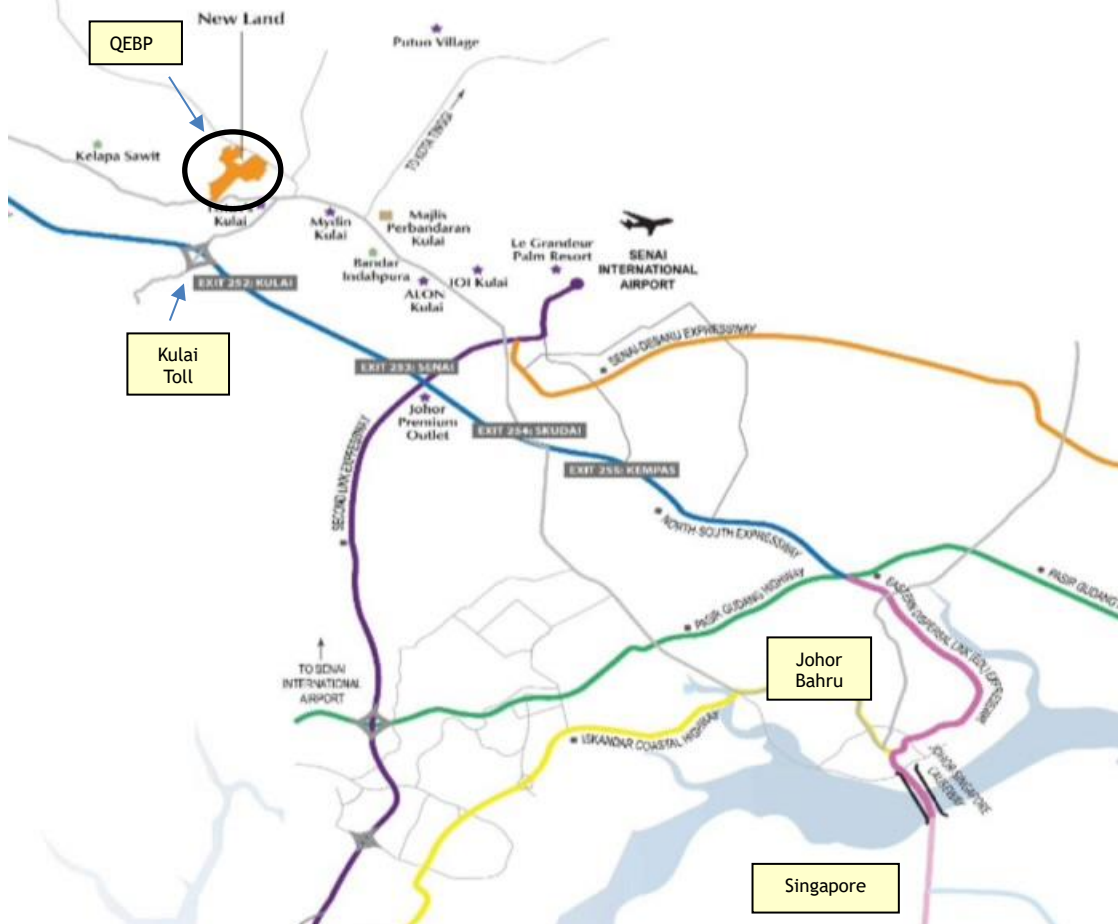
ECW entered into a conditional SPA with IOI Prima Property S/B (99.9%-owned by IOI Properties Group Bhd [IOIPG MK; Not Rated; CP: MYR2.16]) to acquire 403.8 acres of freehold agricultural land in Kulai for MYR211.1m cash (MYR12 psf) in early Sep 2023. The land, which is being developed into a business park named *Eco Business Park VI (EBPVI)*, and caters to medium and light industrial businesses, is strategically located and easily accessible through the North-South Highway, just 5 km drive away from the Kulai toll. The acquisition was completed in Jan 2024.

In early Jun 2024, ECW secured Microsoft as an anchor tenant for the industrial park. Microsoft acquired 123 acres of land in EBPVI for MYR402m (or MYR75 psf).

To set a clearer marketing strategy, ecosystem, and branding for ECW in the high-tech industrial segment that targets digital and high-tech players in AI, cloud computing, high-tech manufacturing, and R&D, ECW unveiled its new industrial products revenue pillar, *QUANTUM*, in early Aug 2024 and renamed *EBPVI* to *Quantum Edge*. Besides data center players, ECW also targets operators in the upstream and downstream data center, digital, and high-tech manufacturing value chains.

In Aug 2024, ECW secured another DC player, Princeton Digital Group, which acquired 57 acres of land in *Quantum Edge* for MYR224m (MYR90 psf). As at Aug 2024, QEBP's remaining landbank and GDV stood at 132.6 acres and MYR1b, respectively.

Fig 1: Location of *Quantum Edge* business park



Source: Company

Site visit to *Quantum Edge* business park, Kulai

Fig 2: TNB pylons are on the site, 25 Sep 2024



Source: Maybank IBG Research

Fig 3: Picture taken on 29 Sep 2023 for comparison purposes



Source: Maybank IBG Research

Fig 4: Ongoing earthworks at the site, 25 Sep 2024



Source: Maybank IBG Research

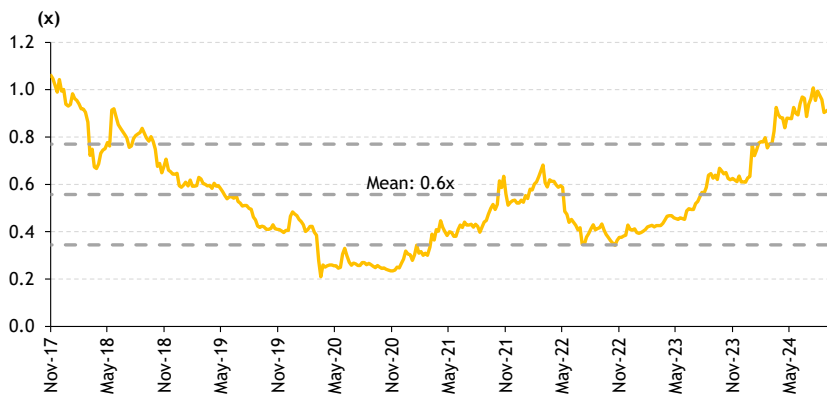
Fig 5: Site view on 25 Sep 2024



Source: Maybank IBG Research

Valuation

Fig 6: ECW's 1-year forward PBV (2018-2023)



Source: Bloomberg, Company data, Maybank IBG Research

Downside risks

There are several risk factors to our earnings estimates, target price and rating for ECW. This includes a prolonged slowdown in the property sector, higher-than-expected losses from its 29%-associate ECWI, weaker-than-expected operating margins on higher marketing expenses and construction material prices, and regulatory/policy changes.

Appendix I

Methodology of our proprietary ESG scoring methodology.

We evaluate the ESG ratings based on quantitative, qualitative and ESG targets. We assign a score for each of these three parameters. The overall rating is based on the weighted average of the scores: quantitative (50%), qualitative (25%) and ESG target (25%).

For the quantitative, qualitative and ESG target, the sub-parameters are assigned a score - '0' for data not available, '+1' for improving trajectory, positive change, 'Yes', better than peers or a positive number if historical is not available and '-1' for declining trajectory, negative change, 'No', lower than peers or a negative number. The total of the scores of all the sub-parameters is divided by the total number of sub-parameters, to derive the score of each of the three parameters.

The sub-parameters may be different for different industries depending on the key areas to monitor for each industry. A company should achieve a minimum score of 50 for an average ESG rating.

FYE 31 Oct	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Key Metrics					
P/E (reported) (x)	15.0	12.5	18.9	12.9	13.9
Core P/E (x)	7.7	10.9	18.9	12.9	13.9
P/BV (x)	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.0
P/NTA (x)	0.4	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.0
Net dividend yield (%)	8.3	5.9	3.8	3.8	3.8
FCF yield (%)	44.0	7.1	2.5	6.0	1.8
EV/EBITDA (x)	9.6	10.8	16.6	11.3	12.9
EV/EBIT (x)	9.6	10.8	16.8	11.4	13.1
INCOME STATEMENT (MYR m)					
Revenue	2,043.6	2,226.9	2,806.5	3,337.9	3,319.4
EBITDA	341.4	387.8	398.2	574.2	509.5
Depreciation	0.0	0.0	(4.3)	(5.0)	(5.6)
Amortisation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EBIT	341.4	387.8	393.9	569.2	503.9
Net interest income / (exp)	(96.9)	(122.7)	(74.9)	(75.8)	(73.4)
Associates & JV	62.3	87.0	54.9	52.4	75.4
Exceptionals	(81.0)	(82.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other pretax income	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pretax profit	225.8	270.0	373.8	545.9	505.9
Income tax	(68.6)	(80.7)	(89.7)	(131.0)	(121.4)
Minorities	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.0
Discontinued operations	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported net profit	157.2	189.3	284.1	415.8	386.5
Core net profit	231.5	272.9	284.1	415.8	386.5
BALANCE SHEET (MYR m)					
Cash & Short Term Investments	1,316.0	1,336.6	1,292.5	1,409.9	1,302.1
Accounts receivable	460.3	642.6	809.9	963.3	957.9
Inventory	360.8	238.8	301.0	358.0	356.0
Reinsurance assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Property, Plant & Equip (net)	150.0	144.3	166.3	186.6	205.3
Intangible assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Investment in Associates & JVs	2,342.0	2,142.5	2,142.5	2,142.5	2,142.5
Other assets	4,770.7	4,398.0	4,558.5	4,769.7	5,034.3
Total assets	9,399.7	8,902.8	9,270.6	9,829.9	9,998.1
ST interest bearing debt	1,077.7	740.0	740.0	740.0	740.0
Accounts payable	893.7	844.4	1,064.2	1,265.7	1,258.7
Insurance contract liabilities	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LT interest bearing debt	1,727.0	1,800.9	1,800.9	1,800.9	1,800.9
Other liabilities	963.0	744.0	814.0	962.0	957.0
Total Liabilities	4,661.3	4,129.3	4,419.1	4,768.6	4,756.5
Shareholders Equity	4,738.5	4,773.5	4,851.5	5,061.3	5,241.6
Minority Interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total shareholder equity	4,738.5	4,773.5	4,851.5	5,061.3	5,241.6
Total liabilities and equity	9,399.7	8,902.8	9,270.6	9,829.9	9,998.1
CASH FLOW (MYR m)					
Pretax profit	225.8	270.0	373.8	545.9	505.9
Depreciation & amortisation	0.0	0.0	4.3	5.0	5.6
Adj net interest (income)/exp	(120.2)	(125.6)	(74.9)	(75.8)	(73.4)
Change in working capital	823.7	418.0	107.3	98.4	(3.4)
Cash taxes paid	(65.6)	(51.9)	(89.7)	(131.0)	(121.4)
Other operating cash flow	72.4	61.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Cash flow from operations	936.0	572.1	266.0	390.0	237.8
Capex	(133.7)	(356.0)	(274.6)	(111.3)	(140.5)
Free cash flow	783.2	210.4	132.6	322.6	97.3
Dividends paid	(147.2)	(176.7)	(176.7)	(206.1)	(206.1)
Equity raised / (purchased)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Change in Debt	(75.3)	(263.9)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other invest/financing cash flow	(97.7)	(340.1)	141.2	44.8	1.0
Effect of exch rate changes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net cash flow	482.1	(564.5)	(44.1)	117.5	(107.8)

FYE 31 Oct	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Key Ratios					
Growth ratios (%)					
Revenue growth	0.0	9.0	26.0	18.9	(0.6)
EBITDA growth	28.3	13.6	2.7	44.2	(11.3)
EBIT growth	28.3	13.6	1.6	44.5	(11.5)
Pretax growth	(5.7)	19.6	38.4	46.0	(7.3)
Reported net profit growth	(14.0)	20.4	50.1	46.4	(7.1)
Core net profit growth	0.2	17.9	4.1	46.4	(7.1)
Profitability ratios (%)					
EBITDA margin	16.7	17.4	14.2	17.2	15.3
EBIT margin	16.7	17.4	14.0	17.1	15.2
Pretax profit margin	11.0	12.1	13.3	16.4	15.2
Payout ratio	93.6	93.3	72.5	49.6	53.3
DuPont analysis					
Net profit margin (%)	7.7	8.5	10.1	12.5	11.6
Revenue/Assets (x)	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Assets/Equity (x)	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9
ROAE (%)	3.3	4.0	5.9	8.4	7.5
ROAA (%)	2.4	3.0	3.1	4.4	3.9
Leverage & Expense Analysis					
Asset/Liability (x)	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1
Net gearing (%) (incl perps)	31.4	25.2	25.7	22.3	23.6
Net gearing (%) (excl. perps)	31.4	25.2	25.7	22.3	23.6
Net interest cover (x)	3.5	3.2	5.3	7.5	6.9
Debt/EBITDA (x)	8.2	6.6	6.4	4.4	5.0
Capex/revenue (%)	6.5	16.0	9.8	3.3	4.2
Net debt/ (net cash)	1,488.8	1,204.3	1,248.4	1,130.9	1,238.7

Source: Company; Maybank IBG Research

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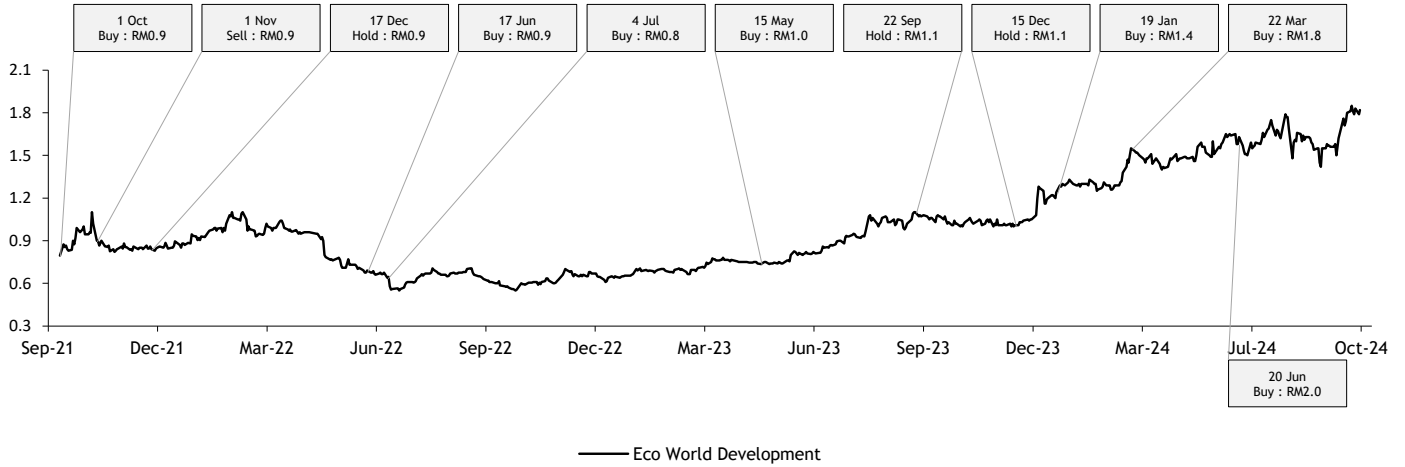
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