# China / Hong Kong Company Update

# **Towngas Smart Energy**

Bloomberg: 1083 HK Equity | Reuters: 1083.HK

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

## DBS Group Research . Equity

## BUY

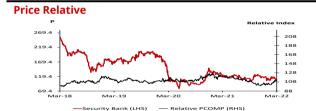
Last Traded Price (17 Mar 2022): HK\$4.86 (HSI: 21,501)
Price Target 12-mth: HK\$5.90 (21% upside) (Prev HK\$6.80)

#### **Analyst**

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#### **What's New**

- FY21 net profit growth of 11% was below our expectation due to lower dollar margin and absence of contribution from Shanghai Gas
- Expect low-teen organic growth in gas sales volume with further pressure on dollar margin
- Good progress in rooftop solar business with 1GW installation in FY22
- Maintain BUY for its good progress in smart energy business; TP is lowered to HK\$5.90 to reflect lower dollar margin



<b>Forecasts and Valuatio</b>	n			
FY Dec (HK\$m)	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Turnover	12,826	17,125	20,934	24,204
EBITDA	3,362	3,561	4,294	4,899
Pre-tax Profit	2,201	2,145	2,642	3,079
Net Profit	1.446	1.253	1.680	1.978
Net Pft (Pre Ex) (core profit)	1,446	1,253	1,680	1,978
Net Profit Gth (Pre-ex) (%)	10.5	(13.3)	34.1	17.7 0.47
EPS (HK\$) EPS Gth (%)	0.50 7.5	0.42 (16.1)	0.46 10.4	3.5
Diluted EPS (HK\$)	0.50	0.42	0.46	0.47
DPS (HK\$)	0.30	0.42	0.40	0.47
BV Per Share (HK\$)	6.98	7.25	7.16	7.48
PE (X)	9.8	11.7	10.6	10.2
P/Cash Flow (X)	6.5	6.1	5.3	5.8
P/Free CF (X)	nm	nm	nm	nm
EV/EBITDA (X)	7.6	9.1	9.1	9.8
Net Div Yield (%)	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
P/Book Value (X)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Net Debt/Eauitv (X)	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7
ROAE(%)	7.4	5.7	6.4	6.5
Earnings Rev (%):			(29)	(35)
Consensus EPS (HK\$)			0.62	0.70
Other Broker Recs:		B:10	S:1	H:1
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Source of all data on this page: Company, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK"), Thomson Reuters

## 18 Mar 2022

## Good progress in smart energy

#### **Investment Thesis**

Smart energy as a new growth driver. Towngas Smart Energy (TSEL) is transforming from a pure gas distributor to an energy service provider and targets this rooftop solar operation to account for around 50% of total revenue by 2025. We have conservatively estimated a new installation of just 1.0-1.5GW p.a., with the percentage of revenue from smart energy increasing from 4% of total revenue in FY22 to 6% in FY23.

Competitive edge in the growing distributive solar market. We reckon TSEL has a competitive edge to win projects in the growing distributive solar market. The company has a solid track record, reputation, and working relationship with local governments. TSEL can also capitalise on its large industrial and commercial customer base in gas distribution. TSEL has already secured 32 net-zero smart industrial parks and plans to add 50 more in FY22.

Share incentive scheme to refocus management priorities. The share incentive scheme was effective in Aug 21 with two key operational KPIs included. Apart from targets for gas sales volume growth (at least a 25% CAGR for FY20-25) and revenue growth of the extended business (at least a 30% CAGR), we expect a target for smart energy will also be set to incentivise performance.

#### Valuation:

We have lowered our FY22/23 earnings estimates by 29-35% to reflect the lower dollar margin. Despite this, we maintain our BUY rating as the recent share price correction of >40% has already reflected the challenges in gas business. We reckon good progress in smart energy will be its share price catalyst. Our TP is lowered from HK\$6.80 to HK\$5.90. To reflect the strong growth potential of its smart energy business, we have changed our valuation method from DCF to PE multiples. Our new TP is based on 12.5x 12-month rolling PE, which is equivalent to +1SD from 5-year historical average PE.

#### Where we differ:

Our FY22/23F earnings are 19% lower than the market consensus, as we have factored in lower dollar margin.

#### **Key Risks to Our View:**

Dollar margin pressure from high LNG prices and lower earnings growth due to slow development of smart energy.

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Issued Capital (m shrs)	3,160
Mkt Cap (HK\$m/US\$m)	15,358 / 1,964
Major Shareholders (%)	
Hong Kong and China Gas Co Ltd	66.0
Free Float (%)	34.0
3m Avg. Daily Val. (US\$m)	7.43
GICS Industry: Utilities / Gas Utilities	







#### **WHAT'S NEW**

#### A challenging year for gas distributors

Towngas Smart Energy (TSEL) reported a 13% decline in net profit to HK\$1.25bn for FY21. However, stripping out one-off items (such as the loss from the change in the fair value of the embedded derivative component of convertible bonds), **net profit climbed 11% to HK\$1.61bn**, **below our expectation**. This was due to a lower-than-expected dollar margin of Rmb0.51/m³ and the absence of contribution from Shanghai Gas. The final dividend was maintained at HK\$0.15 per share, the same as FY20.

As the natural gas pricing mechanism of Shanghai Gas will be refined in 2022, the transition period of the deal with Shanghai Gas was extended and TSEL will share Shanghai Gas' profit starting from 1 January 2022.

2022 will be a challenging year for gas distributors. Downward pressure on economic growth and the preventive measures for COVID are expected to **slow down organic growth of gas sales volumes to the low teens in FY22**. With the contribution from Shanghai Gas, which is expected to achieve a sales volume of 9bn m³, growth in total gas volume will jump to >70%.

Another challenge is the dollar margin. The Ukraine crisis has boosted LNG prices, which are expected to stay high this year. Global decarbonisation efforts have also tightened the overall supply of natural gas. We also expect the three oil majors to charge higher for gas supply, even in the off-peak season. Although TSEL has a mechanism in passing on the cost hike, the time lag in the process will put pressure on the dollar margin. To alleviate the margin pressure, TSEL has signed long term contract for supply of LNG of 1m tons with another 1m tons of long term contract under negotiation. It will also increase the supply of non-conventional gas from the domestic market as well as increase gas storage volume in Jintan. Nevertheless, we have lowered our dollar margin assumptions to Rmb0.48/m³, from Rmb0.545/m³. But we expect dollar margin to rebound back to Rmb0.51/m<sup>3</sup> in FY23 after passing through cost hike.

On a positive note, TSEL's new smart energy business is progressing well. After securing 32 zero-carbon industrial parks, it targets to add 50 more to its portfolio. TSEL will start the installation of 300MW of rooftop solar power in these industrial parks in 2Q and set 1GW as the target in FY22. The target is slightly lower than our projection of

1.5GW, but we believe this installation will accelerate the achievement of TSEL's installation target of 8GW by FY25. We estimate revenue from this business line to increase 75% in FY23, accounting for 6% of total revenue. The long term target of new smart energy business accounting for 50% of total revenue remains intact.

Growth in extended business is also expected to be robust at 40%, thanks to the enlarged customer base after acquisition of Shanghai Gas and broadened product range.

In view of large capex for the development of its smart energy business, net debt-equity ratio is expected to climb to >70% in FY23. Management is exploring different ways to finance the development. Apart from internal resources and bank loans, other options under consideration include equity financing and seeking partners for joint development at project level.

To reflect the above changes in assumptions, we have lowered our FY22/23 earnings estimates by 29-35%. After the revision, adjusted earnings (stripping out one-off items) is expected to increase 4% and 18% in FY22 and FY23 respectively.

Given the strong growth potential of the smart energy business, we have changed our valuation method from DCF to PE multiples. Our new TP of HK\$5.90 is based on 12.5x 12-month rolling PE which is equivalent to +1SD from 5-year historical average. We maintain our BUY rating as the recent share price correction of >40% has already reflected the challenges in gas business. The good progress in smart energy will transform TSEL into an integrated energy play.

#### **Company Background**

Towngas China is one of the major gas distributors in China. It is mainly engaged in the sales and distribution of piped gas in China, including the provision of piped gas, construction of pipelines, operation of city gas networks and gas refilling stations, as well as the sales of household gas appliances.





#### Income Statement (HK\$ m)

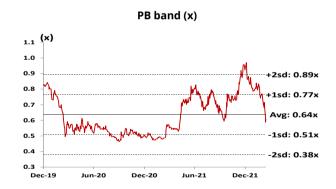
FY Dec	2020A	2021A	% chg v-o-v	
Revenue	12,826	17,125	33.5	
Cost of Goods Sold	(9,506)	(13,122)	38.0	
Gross Profit	3,321	4,003	20.5	
Other Opng (Exp)/Inc	(1,387)	(1,818)	31.1	
Operating Profit	1,934	2,185	13.0	
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	(32)	(359)	(1,036.1)	
Associates & JV Inc	697	867	24.4	
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(398)	(548)	(37.7)	
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0	0	nm	
Pre-tax Profit	2,201	2,145	(2.6)	
Tax	(555)	(618)	11.3	
Minority Interest	(201)	(274)	(36.5)	
Net Profit	1,446	1,253	(13.3)	
Net Profit before Except.	1,446	1,253	(13.3)	
EBITDA	3,362	3,561	5.9	
Margins & Ratio				
Gross Margins (%)	25.9	23.4		
Opg Profit Margin (%)	15.1	12.8		
Net Profit Margin (%)	11.3	7.3		

Source: Company, DBS HK

## **Historical PE and PB band**









## **Key Assumptions**

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
City and township gas sales volume growth (%)	9.7	9.4	4.5	74.0	13.7
Dollar margin (Rmb / m3)	0.59	0.57	0.51	0.49	0.51

Source: Company, DBS HK

## Segmental Breakdown (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Revenues (HK\$ m)					
Piped gas	10,835	10,228	13,951	16,761	19,113
Gas connection	2,089	2,210	2,429	2,308	2,192
Extended business	0	388	745	1,043	1,460
Smart Energy	0	0	0	822	1,439
Total	12,924	12,826	17,125	20,934	24,204

Source: Company, DBS HK

## Income Statement (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Revenue	12,924	12,826	17,125	20,934	24,204
Cost of Goods Sold	(9,599)	(9,506)	(13,122)	(16,501)	(18,773)
Gross Profit	3,326	3,321	4,003	4,433	5,431
Other Opng (Exp)/Inc	(1,551)	(1,387)	(1,818)	(2,403)	(3,158)
Operating Profit	1,775	1,934	2,185	2,030	2,273
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	(123)	(32)	(359)	0	0
Associates & JV Inc	743	697	867	1,269	1,419
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(381)	(398)	(548)	(657)	(613)
Dividend Income	0	0	0	0	0
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-tax Profit	2,014	2,201	2,145	2,642	3,079
Tax	(501)	(555)	(618)	(660)	(770)
Minority Interest	(204)	(201)	(274)	(301)	(331)
Preference Dividend	0	0	0	0	0
Net Profit	1,308	1,446	1,253	1,680	1,978
Net Profit before Except.	1,308	1,446	1,253	1,680	1,978
EBITDA	3,034	3,362	3,561	4,294	4,899
Growth					
Revenue Gth (%)	N/A	(0.8)	33.5	22.2	15.6
EBITDA Gth (%)	N/A	10.8	5.9	20.6	14.1
Opg Profit Gth (%)	N/A	8.9	13.0	(7.1)	11.9
Net Profit Gth (%)	N/A	10.5	(13.3)	34.1	17.7
Margins & Ratio					
Gross Margins (%)	25.7	25.9	23.4	21.2	22.4
Opg Profit Margin (%)	13.7	15.1	12.8	9.7	9.4
Net Profit Margin (%)	10.1	11.3	7.3	8.0	8.2
ROAE (%)	7.0	7.4	5.7	6.4	6.5
ROA (%)	3.4	3.6	2.6	2.8	2.8
ROCE (%)	4.2	4.3	3.9	3.0	2.8
Div Payout Ratio (%)	32.6	30.8	37.8	37.2	31.6
Net Interest Cover (x)	4.7	4.9	4.0	3.1	3.7
Source: Company, DBS HK					





## Interim Income Statement (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2H2019	1H2020	2H2020	1H2021	2H2021
Revenue	6,412	5,563	7,263	7,773	9,353
Cost of Goods Sold	(4,657)	(4,204)	(5,301)	(5,979)	(7,143)
Gross Profit	1,755	1,359	1,961	1,793	2,210
Other Oper. (Exp)/Inc	(1,017)	(577)	(811)	(712)	(1,425)
Operating Profit	739	782	1,150	1,082	785
Other Non Opg (Exp)/Inc	0	0	0	0	1
Associates & JV Inc	378	301	396	373	495
Net Interest (Exp)/Inc	(209)	(193)	(233)	(235)	(354)
Exceptional Gain/(Loss)	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-tax Profit	908	890	1,313	1,220	926
Tax	(248)	(229)	(326)	(316)	(302)
Minority Interest	(108)	(80)	(120)	(126)	(148)
Net Profit	553	581	866	778	475
Net profit bef Except.	553	581	866	778	476
Growth					
Revenue Gth (%)	3.4	(14.6)	13.3	39.7	28.8
Opg Profit Gth (%)	(4.1)	(16.0)	55.7	38.3	(31.7)
Net Profit Gth (%)	(1.4)	(23.1)	56.7	34.0	(45.2)
Margins					
Gross Margins (%)	27.4	24.4	27.0	23.1	23.6
Opg Profit Margins (%)	11.5	14.1	15.8	13.9	8.4
Net Profit Margins (%) Source: Company, DBS HK	8.6	10.4	11.9	10.0	5.1



## Balance Sheet (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Net Fixed Assets	18,019	20,899	23,752	28,804	37,145
Invts in Associates & JVs	7,020	8,086	14,813	21,226	21,883
Other LT Assets	8,208	8,307	7,946	7,946	7,946
Cash & ST Invts	1,937	2,226	4,071	3,768	3,873
Inventory	587	643	705	861	996
Debtors	1,941	2,237	2,463	2,931	3,389
Other Current Assets	482	494	487	510	515
Total Assets	38,195	42,893	54,237	66,046	75,746
ST Debt	3,434	5,137	0.622	8,433	8,313
Creditors	,	,	8,633	8,476	9,800
Other Current Liab	5,525 1,098	6,423	6,934 1,804	8,476 1,902	,
LT Debt	,	1,363	,	,	1,934
	6,806	6,356	10,724	13,848	20,627
Other LT Liabilities	1,033	966	969	969	969
Shareholder's Equity	18,612	20,723	22,895	29,839	31,192
Minority Interests	1,688	1,926	2,278	2,579	2,910
Total Cap. & Liab.	38,195	42,893	54,237	66,046	75,746
Non-Cash Wkg. Capital	(3,612)	(4,411)	(5,083)	(6,075)	(6,835)
Net Cash/(Debt)	(8,302)	(9,267)	(15,286)	(18,513)	(25,067)
Debtors Turn (avg days)	54.8	59.4	50.1	47.0	47.6
Creditors Turn (avg days)	225.1	249.4	198.9	181.4	189.9
Inventory Turn (avg days)	23.9	25.7	20.1	18.4	19.3
Asset Turnover (x)	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3
Current Ratio (x)	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Ouick Ratio (x)	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Net Debt/Equity (X)	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7
Net Debt/Equity ex MI (X)	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.8
Capex to Debt (%)	21.5	20.2	13.2	27.1	33.0
Z-Score (X)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Source: Company, DBS HK					

## Cash Flow Statement (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Pre-Tax Profit	2,014	2,201	2,145	2,642	3,079
Dep. & Amort.	639	762	868	996	1,207
Tax Paid	(384)	(361)	(361)	(660)	(770)
Assoc. & JV Inc/(loss)	(743)	(697)	(867)	(1,269)	(1,419)
(Pft)/Loss on disposal of FAs	(31)	0	0	0	0
Chg in Wkg. Cap.	70	332	224	918	732
Other Operating CF	187	(37)	412	731	640
Net Operating CF	1,753	2,200	2,420	3,357	3,469
Capital Exp. (net)	(2,203)	(2,317)	(2,548)	(6,048)	(9,548)
Other Invts. (net)	(126)	0	0	0	0
Invts in Assoc. & JV	(140)	(19)	(19)	(5,405)	0
Div from Assoc & JV	353	483	483	261	763
Other Investing CF	(96)	(624)	(887)	0	0
Net Investing CF	(2,213)	(2,476)	(2,971)	(11,192)	(8,785)
Div Paid	(75)	(73)	(73)	0	(625)
Chg in Gross Debt	859	664	5,131	2,925	6,659
Capital Issues	0	0	0	5,264	0
Other Financing CF	96	(128)	(2,763)	(657)	(613)
Net Financing CF	880	464	2,295	7,532	5,421
Currency Adjustments	(94)	102	102	0	0
Chg in Cash	326	289	1,845	(303)	105
Opg CFPS (HK\$)	0.59	0.64	0.73	0.67	0.66
Free CFPS (HK\$)	(0.16)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.73)	(1.46)

Source: Company, DBS HK



## **Target Price & Ratings History**



S.No	. Date	Closing Price	12-mth Target Price	Rating
1:	19-Mar-21	HK\$3.50	HK\$4.00	Hold
2:	23-Aug-21	HK\$5.01	HK\$6.10	Buy
3:	26-Nov-21	HK\$5.39	HK\$6.80	Buy

Source: DBS HK

Analyst: Patricia Yeung
Ian Chui



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STRONG BUY (>20% total return over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

BUY (>15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, >10% for large caps)

HOLD (-10% to +15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, -10% to +10% for large caps)

**FULLY VALUED** (negative total return, i.e., > -10% over the next 12 months)

SELL (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

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Sources for all charts and tables are DBS HK unless otherwise specified.

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