China / Hong Kong

Industry Flash Note

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity   9 Nov 2023

China Warehouse Sector

ANALYSTS

Ben Wong +852 36684183
benwongkf@dbs.com

Jason Lam +852 36684179
jasonlamch@dbs.com

Dexter Chun +852 36684461
dexterchun@dbs.com

Expert call takeaways: A turnaround on the horizon?

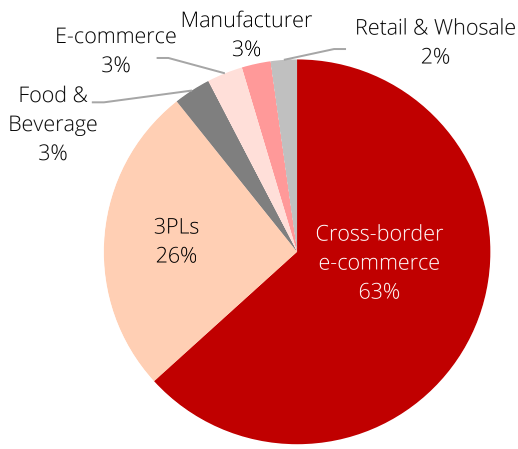
- **Decent leasing demand overwhelmed by sector's record-high supply entrance**
- **GBA stood out due to strong lease demand from cross-border e-commerce**
- **Sector expected to bottom out in 1H24, with rents to progressively recover in 2H24 and supply pressure halved**
- **An attractive level for investors to revisit the China warehouse sector – top pick CICC GLP CREIT (508056 CH)**

What's New

We recently hosted a call with an industry expert from CBRE to get their latest views on the China warehouse sector and its outlook for 2024. Key takeaways from the call are as follows:

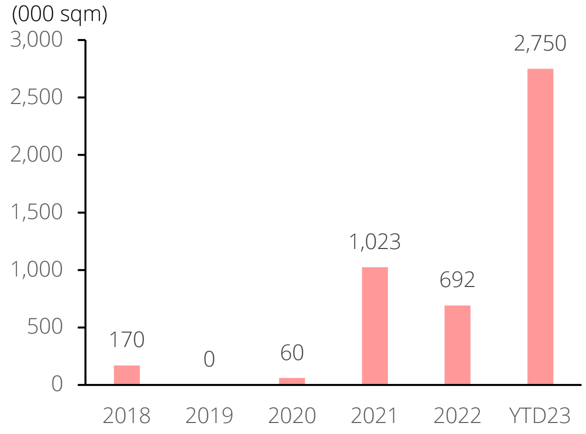
Steady consumption recovery served as a cornerstone for warehouse leasing demand… Despite weaker-than-expected macro backdrop, China's grade A warehouse net absorption rose 46% y-o-y to c.5.3m sm in 9M23 per data from CBRE and brought the vacancy rate in China down slightly to 20.8% as at 3Q23, after the sector recorded seven consecutive quarters of vacancy rate pickup. This is premised mainly on a solid pickup in cross-border e-commerce (c.2.75m sm new lease) and 3PLs throughout the year, particularly in 3Q23 that came through better than CBRE expert has expected. The expert attributed this leasing momentum to China's decent online retail recovery (online retail sales +8.9% y-o-y in 9M23), rebounding export volume of cross-border e-commerce (+17.7% y-o-y), and parcel delivery volume growth (>10% y-o-y growth every month since Jan '23). Looking ahead, CBRE expects leasing momentum in 4Q to hold up and conclude 2023 with a >30% y-o-y rebound in net absorption.

3Q23 new lease breakdown by industry



Source: CBRE, DBS HK

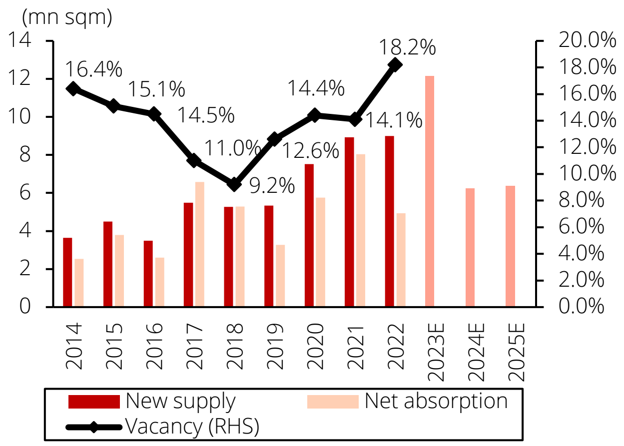
New lease from cross-border e-commerce



Source: CBRE, DBS HK

... but operating performance took a hit on record-high supply entrance. According to latest estimates from CBRE, China's new Grade A warehouse supply in 2023 may land at c.12m sm, of which, 30% was brought forward from 2022 due to construction delays caused by COVID lockdowns. Per the latest statistics from the real estate agent, it is estimated that there is c.8.8m sm of new supply that has landed in 9M23, up 51.5% y-o-y. This has accordingly brought the sector-wide vacancy rate up 4.5ppt y-o-y to 20.8% alongside a -2.0% y-o-y decline in average face rent despite recording decent leasing demand during the period. Alongside further landing of supply in 4Q23, CBRE expects the sector's overall vacancy rate to come in at 21.1% by year-end, up 2.9% y-o-y.

New supply, net absorption, and vacancy trend



Source: CBRE, DBS HK

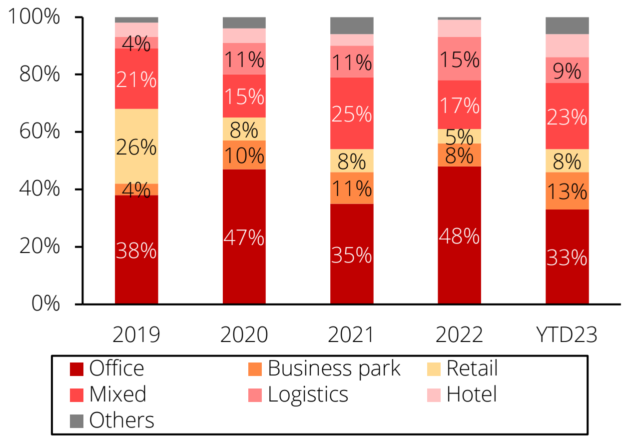
Greater Bay Area fared strongly on solid cross-border e-commerce development. Thanks mainly to the solid expansion of cross-border e-commerce tenants (primarily Temu and SheIn expanding rapidly in Guangzhou, Foshan, and Dongguan), the region (with the exception of Huizhou) maintained very healthy vacancy rates of below 6% even though there were some entrances of supply. The expert expects cross-border e-commerce to extend their leasing momentum in the upcoming year, and thus supply entering the region should be easily digested.

Jing-Jin-Ji expectedly faced pressure alongside digestion of its ongoing supply glut. Cities in the region – notably Beijing, Tianjin, and Langfang – are still looking to digest their scaleable supply pipelines. While the expert believes Beijing's outlook remained relatively more resilient (vacancy at c.13.5% with rent at c.Rmb57.1/sm/mth) thanks to its consumption-based economy, warehouse leasing demand has generally stayed within the city to digest new supply. Vacancy rates in Tianjin and Langfang remains elevated at >30%, with Langfang having recorded a >10% rental decline y-o-y.

Yangtze River Delta saw mild pressure on supply release and export perfromance. Alongside a yet-to-recover overall export performance in China, the YRD region has expectedly faced mild headwinds together with a relatively meaningful supply pipeline. Alongside supply release in Shanghai, some of the previous spillover demands has been re-absorbed by the city, and thus nearby satelite cities faced weaker leasing environments. Meanwhile, supply in Taicang, Changshu was also meaningful, which put pressure on satelite cities' overall vacancy (Jiaxing, Kunshan, Taicang, Changshu at >20% in 3Q23) and rental performance in the region.

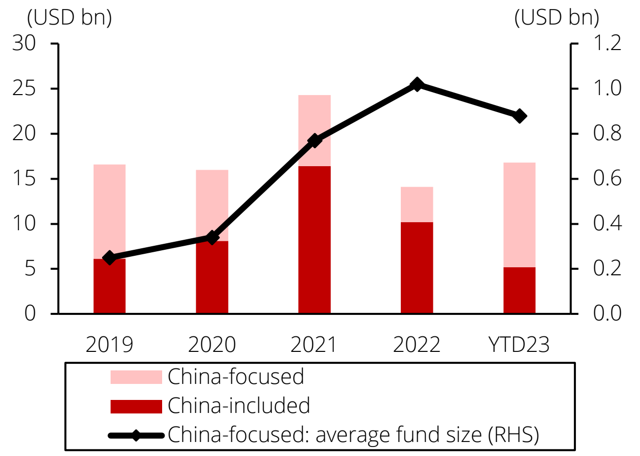
Investors took a step back from warehouse assets on the US's interest rates and uncertain rental outlook. While total transaction value on China's assets only recorded a mild decline of 4.4% to Rmb149bn in 9M23, contribution from cross-border offshore investors in fact recorded a meaningful decline (-28% to Rmb17.2bn) and represented only 12% of total transacted value (vs. the previous 30-40%). This has directly affected transactions in the warehouse space, which was previously a favoured place for offshore investors (-36% y-o-y to Rmb13.4bn, inclusive of industrial space).

Share of transaction volume by asset type



Source: CBRE, DBS HK

China-related private equity real estate fundraising



Source: CBRE, DBS HK

The expert attributed the main reason to the adverse US interest rate environment, as CBRE noted that the finding is not uncommon elsewhere. Per data compiled by the property agent, transaction volume globally has recorded a ~30% decline so far into 2023. Investment demand has also been weak, weighed in part by the sector's uncertain rental outlook under China's currently subdued macro backdrop. Nevertheless, there was a slight pickup in transaction volume (though lower than 1Q23) in 3Q23.

Tenants and investors in conservative mode. According to an occupier survey compiled by CBRE, most tenants are relatively conservative on their expansion plans upon China's weaker-than-expected economic performance. Per observations from the expert, most tenants are relatively "risk-off" with expansions made mainly just in Tier 1 cities or that close to the hub city. A similar attitude is noted for investors as well. China-focused fund raising has expectedly been subdued. Most of their focuses are concentrated potential opportunities in the GBA region, where leasing demand remains solid upon the backing of fast-growing cross-border e-commerce industry.

Better year expected in 2024; solid demand outlook in the mid-term. The expert expects the warehouse sector to stage a decent rebound next year as supply should have peaked in 2023 and completions are to be halved in 2024. Accordingly, occupancy and rental performance may bottom out then, with rents to start regaining strength by 2024.

Meanwhile, per estimation from CBRE, it is expected that China's online retail sales will continue to grow at a solid pace alongside both an increase in retail consumption and further pickup in online penetration rate, and is expected to arrive at Rmb17trn by 2025F from Rmb11.8tr in 2020, implying a CAGR of 7.6%. This is expected to create an incremental Grade A warehouse leasing demand of c.74m sm (vs. the current total stock of c.82m sm as at 3Q23).

An attractive level for investors to revisit the China warehouse sector. There is a positive relationship between China's retail sales and the China warehouse index, which has been a unit price driver for China warehouse REITs. As China's economy appears to have reached a near-term bottom, it may be a good time for investors to revisit the warehouse sector with quality oversold names. GLP C-REIT, with its solid asset quality identified by our in-house scorecard (see report for details) is now trading at a near historical low valuation subsequent to the sell-off relating to concerns on the China warehouse sector, as well as spill-over worries from the credit downgrade of its sponsor, offering a decent entry point for investors.

DBS HK recommendations are based on an Absolute Total Return* Rating system, defined as follows:
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)

**Share price appreciation + dividends*

Completed Date: 9 Nov 2023 09:03:51 (HKT)
Dissemination Date: 9 Nov 2023 10:57:19 (HKT)

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

GENERAL DISCLOSURE/DISCLAIMER

This report is prepared by DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK"). This report is solely intended for the clients of DBS Bank Ltd., DBS HK, DBS Vickers (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBSV HK"), and DBS Vickers Securities (Singapore) Pte Ltd. ("DBSVS"), its respective connected and associated corporations and affiliates only and no part of this document may be (i) copied, photocopied or duplicated in any form or by any means or (ii) redistributed without the prior written consent of DBS HK.

The research set out in this report is based on information obtained from sources believed to be reliable, but we (which collectively refers to DBS Bank Ltd., DBS HK, DBSV HK, DBSVS, its respective connected and associated corporations, affiliates and their respective directors, officers, employees and agents (collectively, the "DBS Group") have not conducted due diligence on any of the companies, verified any information or sources or taken into account any other factors which we may consider to be relevant or appropriate in preparing the research. Accordingly, we do not make any representation or warranty as to the accuracy, completeness or correctness of the research set out in this report. Opinions expressed are subject to change without notice. This research is prepared for general circulation. Any recommendation contained in this document does not have regard to the specific investment objectives, financial situation and the particular needs of any specific addressee. This document is for the information of addressees only and is not to be taken in substitution for the exercise of judgement by addressees, who should obtain separate independent legal or financial advice. The DBS Group accepts no liability whatsoever for any direct, indirect and/or consequential loss (including any claims for loss of profit) arising from any use of and/or reliance upon this document and/or further communication given in relation to this document. This document is not to be construed as an offer or a solicitation of an offer to buy or sell any securities. The DBS Group, along with its affiliates and/or persons associated with any of them may from time to time have interests in the securities mentioned in this document. The DBS Group, may have positions in, and may effect transactions in securities mentioned herein and may also perform or seek to perform broking, investment banking and other banking services for these companies.

Any valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments herein constitutes a judgment as of the date of this report, and there can be no assurance that future results or events will be consistent with any such valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments. The information in this document is subject to change without notice, its accuracy is not guaranteed, it may be incomplete or condensed, it may not contain all material information concerning the company (or companies) referred to in this report and the DBS Group is under no obligation to update the information in this report.

This publication has not been reviewed or authorized by any regulatory authority in Singapore, Hong Kong or elsewhere. There is no planned schedule or frequency for updating research publication relating to any issuer.

The valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments described in this report were based upon a number of estimates and assumptions and are inherently subject to significant uncertainties and contingencies. It can be expected that one or more of the estimates on which the valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments were based will not materialize or will vary significantly from actual results. Therefore, the inclusion of the valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments described herein IS NOT TO BE RELIED UPON as a representation and/or warranty by the DBS Group (and/or any persons associated with the aforesaid entities), that:

(a) such valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments or their underlying assumptions will be achieved, and
(b) there is any assurance that future results or events will be consistent with any such valuations, opinions, estimates, forecasts, ratings or risk assessments stated therein.

Please contact the primary analyst for valuation methodologies and assumptions associated with the covered companies or price targets. Any assumptions made in this report that refers to commodities, are for the purposes of making forecasts for the company (or companies) mentioned herein. They are not to be construed as recommendations to trade in the physical commodity or in the futures contract relating to the commodity referred to in this report.

DBS Vickers Securities (USA) Inc ("DBSVUSA"), a US-registered broker-dealer, does not have its own investment banking or research department, has not participated in any public offering of securities as a manager or co-manager or in any other investment banking transaction in the past twelve months and does not engage in market-making.

ANALYST CERTIFICATION

The research analyst(s) primarily responsible for the content of this research report, in part or in whole, certifies that the views about the companies and their securities expressed in this report accurately reflect his/her personal views. The analyst(s) also certifies that no part of his/her compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to specific recommendations or views expressed in the report. The research analyst (s) primarily responsible for the content of this research report, in part or in whole, certifies that he or his associate[1] does not serve as an officer of the issuer or the new listing applicant (which includes in the case of a real estate investment trust, an officer of the management company of the real estate investment trust; and in the case of any other entity, an officer or its equivalent counterparty of the entity who is responsible for the management of the issuer or the new listing applicant) and the research analyst(s) primarily responsible for the content of this research report or his associate does not have financial interests[2] in relation to an issuer or a new listing applicant that the analyst reviews. DBS Group has procedures in place to eliminate, avoid and manage any potential conflicts of interests that may arise in connection with the production of research reports. The research analyst(s) responsible for this report operates as part of a separate and independent team to the investment banking function of the DBS Group and procedures are in place to ensure that confidential information held by either the research or investment banking function is handled appropriately. There is no direct link of DBS Group's compensation to any specific investment banking function of the DBS Group.

COMPANY-SPECIFIC / REGULATORY DISCLOSURES

1. DBS Bank Ltd, DBS HK, DBSVS or their subsidiaries and/or other affiliates do not have a proprietary position in the securities recommended in this report as of 06 Nov 2023.

2. Compensation for investment banking services:
DBSVUSA does not have its own investment banking or research department, nor has it participated in any public offering of securities as a manager or co-manager or in any other investment banking transaction in the past twelve months. Any US persons wishing to obtain further information, including any clarification on disclosures in this disclaimer, or to effect a transaction in any security discussed in this document should contact DBSVUSA exclusively.

3. Disclosure of previous investment recommendation produced:
DBS Bank Ltd, DBSVS, DBS HK, their subsidiaries and/or other affiliates of DBSVUSA may have published other investment recommendations in respect of the same securities / instruments recommended in this research report during the preceding 12 months. Please contact the primary analyst listed on page 1 of this report to view previous investment recommendations published by DBS Bank Ltd, DBS HK, DBSVS, their subsidiaries and/or other affiliates of DBSVUSA in the preceding 12 months.

[1] An associate is defined as (i) the spouse, or any minor child (natural or adopted) or minor step-child, of the analyst; (ii) the trustee of a trust of which the analyst, his spouse, minor child (natural or adopted) or minor step-child, is a beneficiary or discretionary object; or (iii) another person accustomed or obliged to act in accordance with the directions or instructions of the analyst.

[2] Financial interest is defined as interests that are commonly known financial interest, such as investment in the securities in respect of an issuer or a new listing applicant, or financial accommodation arrangement between the issuer or the new listing applicant and the firm or analysis. This term does not include commercial lending conducted at arm's length, or investments in any collective investment scheme other than an issuer or new listing applicant notwithstanding the fact that the scheme has investments in securities in respect of an issuer or a new listing applicant.

RESTRICTIONS ON DISTRIBUTION

General	This report is not directed to, or intended for distribution to or use by, any person or entity who is a citizen or resident of or located in any locality, state, country or other jurisdiction where such distribution, publication, availability or use would be contrary to law or regulation.
Australia	This report is being distributed in Australia by DBS Bank Ltd, DBSVS or DBSV HK. DBS Bank Ltd holds Australian Financial Services Licence no. 475946. DBS Bank Ltd, DBSVS and DBSV HK are exempted from the requirement to hold an Australian Financial Services Licence under the Corporation Act 2001 ("CA") in respect of financial services provided to the recipients. Both DBS Bank Ltd and DBSVS are regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore under the laws of Singapore, and DBSV HK is regulated by the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission under the laws of Hong Kong, which differ from Australian laws. Distribution of this report is intended only for "wholesale investors" within the meaning of the CA.
Hong Kong	This report is being distributed in Hong Kong by DBS Bank Ltd, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited and DBS Vickers (Hong Kong) Limited, all of which are registered with or licensed by the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission to carry out the regulated activity of advising on securities. DBS Bank Ltd., Hong Kong Branch is a limited liability company incorporated in Singapore.
Indonesia	This report is being distributed in Indonesia by PT DBS Vickers Sekuritas Indonesia.
Malaysia	This report is distributed in Malaysia by AllianceDBS Research Sdn Bhd ("ADBSR"). Recipients of this report, received from ADBSR are to contact the undersigned at 603-2604 3333 in respect of any matters arising from or in connection with this report. In addition to the General Disclosure/Disclaimer found at the preceding page, recipients of this report are advised that ADBSR (the preparer of this report), its holding company Alliance Investment Bank Berhad, their respective connected and associated corporations, affiliates, their directors, officers, employees, agents and parties related or associated with any of them may have positions in, and may effect transactions in the securities mentioned herein and may also perform or seek to perform broking, investment banking/corporate advisory and other services for the subject companies. They may also have received compensation and/or seek to obtain compensation for broking, investment banking/corporate advisory and other services from the subject companies. Wong Ming Tek, Executive Director, ADBSR
Singapore	This report is distributed in Singapore by DBS Bank Ltd (Company Regn. No. 196800306E) or DBSVS (Company Regn No. 198600294G), both of which are Exempt Financial Advisers as defined in the Financial Advisers Act and regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore. DBS Bank Ltd and/or DBSVS, may distribute reports produced by its respective foreign entities, affiliates or other foreign research houses pursuant to an arrangement under Regulation 32C of the Financial Advisers Regulations. Where the report is distributed in Singapore to a person who is not an Accredited Investor, Expert Investor or an Institutional Investor, DBS Bank Ltd accepts legal responsibility for the contents of the report to such persons only to the extent required by law. Singapore recipients should contact DBS Bank Ltd at 6878 8888 for matters arising from, or in connection with the report.
Thailand	This report is being distributed in Thailand by DBS Vickers Securities (Thailand) Co Ltd. For any query regarding the materials herein, please contact [Chanpen Sirithanarattanakul] at [research@th.dbs.com]
United Kingdom	This report is produced by DBS HK which is regulated by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority This report is disseminated in the United Kingdom by DBS Bank Ltd, London Branch ("DBS UK"). DBS Bank Ltd is regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore. DBS UK is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and is subject to regulation by the Financial Conduct Authority and limited regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority. Details about the extent of our regulation by the Prudential Regulation Authority are available from us on request. In respect of the United Kingdom, this report is solely intended for the clients of DBS UK, its respective connected and associated corporations and affiliates only and no part of this document may be (i) copied, photocopied or duplicated in any form or by any means or (ii) redistributed without the prior written consent of DBS UK. This communication is directed at persons having professional experience in matters relating to investments. Any investment activity following from this communication will only be engaged in with such persons. Persons who do not have professional experience in matters relating to investments should not rely on this communication.

Dubai International Financial Centre	This communication is provided to you as a Professional Client or Market Counterparty as defined in the DFSA Rulebook Conduct of Business Module (the "COB Module"), and should not be relied upon or acted on by any person which does not meet the criteria to be classified as a Professional Client or Market Counterparty under the DFSA rules. This communication is from the branch of DBS Bank Ltd operating in the Dubai International Financial Centre (the "DIFC") under the trading name "DBS Bank Ltd. (DIFC Branch)" ("DBS DIFC"), registered with the DIFC Registrar of Companies under number 156 and having its registered office at units 608 - 610, 6th Floor, Gate Precinct Building 5, PO Box 506538, DIFC, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. DBS DIFC is regulated by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (the "DFSA") with a DFSA reference number F000164. For more information on DBS DIFC and its affiliates, please see http://www.dbs.com/ae/our--network/default.page. Where this communication contains a research report, this research report is prepared by the entity referred to therein, which may be DBS Bank Ltd or a third party, and is provided to you by DBS DIFC. The research report has not been reviewed or authorised by the DFSA. Such research report is distributed on the express understanding that, whilst the information contained within is believed to be reliable, the information has not been independently verified by DBS DIFC. Unless otherwise indicated, this communication does not constitute an "Offer of Securities to the Public" as defined under Article 12 of the Markets Law (DIFC Law No.1 of 2012) or an "Offer of a Unit of a Fund" as defined under Article 19(2) of the Collective Investment Law (DIFC Law No.2 of 2010). The DFSA has no responsibility for reviewing or verifying this communication or any associated documents in connection with this investment and it is not subject to any form of regulation or approval by the DFSA. Accordingly, the DFSA has not approved this communication or any other associated documents in connection with this investment nor taken any steps to verify the information set out in this communication or any associated documents, and has no responsibility for them. The DFSA has not assessed the suitability of any investments to which the communication relates and, in respect of any Islamic investments (or other investments identified to be Shari'a compliant), neither we nor the DFSA has determined whether they are Shari'a compliant in any way. Any investments which this communication relates to may be illiquid and/or subject to restrictions on their resale. Prospective purchasers should conduct their own due diligence on any investments. If you do not understand the contents of this document you should consult an authorised financial adviser.
United States	This report was prepared by DBS HK. DBSVUSA did not participate in its preparation. The research analyst(s) named on this report are not registered as research analysts with FINRA and are not associated persons of DBSVUSA. The research analyst(s) are not subject to FINRA Rule 2241 restrictions on analyst compensation, communications with a subject company, public appearances and trading securities held by a research analyst. This report is being distributed in the United States by DBSVUSA, which accepts responsibility for its contents. This report may only be distributed to Major U.S. Institutional Investors (as defined in SEC Rule 15a-6) and to such other institutional investors and qualified persons as DBSVUSA may authorize. Any U.S. person receiving this report who wishes to effect transactions in any securities referred to herein should contact DBSVUSA directly and not its affiliate.
Other jurisdictions	In any other jurisdictions, except if otherwise restricted by laws or regulations, this report is intended only for qualified, professional, institutional or sophisticated investors as defined in the laws and regulations of such jurisdictions.

DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited

13th Floor One Island East, 18 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 3668-4181, Fax: (852) 2521-1812

DBS Regional Research Offices

HONG KONG
DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Ltd
Contact: Dennis Lam
13th Floor One Island East,
18 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
Tel: 852 3668 4181
Fax: 852 2521 1812
e-mail: dbsvhk@dbs.com

SINGAPORE
DBS Bank Ltd
Contact: Paul Yong
12 Marina Boulevard,
Marina Bay Financial Centre Tower 3
Singapore 018982
Tel: 65 6878 8888
e-mail: groupresearch@dbs.com
Company Regn. No. 196800306E

INDONESIA
PT DBS Vickers Sekuritas (Indonesia)
Contact: Maynard Priajaya Arif
DBS Bank Tower
Ciputra World 1, 32/F
Jl. Prof. Dr. Satrio Kav. 3-5
Jakarta 12940, Indonesia
Tel: 62 21 3003 4900
Fax: 6221 3003 4943
e-mail: indonesiaresearch@dbs.com

THAILAND
DBS Vickers Securities (Thailand) Co Ltd
Contact: Chanpen Sirithanarattanakul
989 Siam Piwat Tower Building,
9th, 14th-15th Floor
Rama 1 Road, Pathumwan,
Bangkok Thailand 10330
Tel. 66 2 857 7831
Fax: 66 2 658 1269
e-mail: research@th.dbs.com
Company Regn. No 0105539127012
Securities and Exchange Commission, Thailand