China / Hong Kong Industry Focus Aluminium Sector

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity

Growing consumption to drive price rebound

- Demand from the transportation and power industries drove inventories down to a multi-year low, supporting rebound in prices
- Expect narrower surplus in 2024 on keen demand for lightweight materials and supply shortfall amid production suspension in Yunnan
- Limited risk on bauxite supply disruption; stable cost outlook ahead
- The acceleration of the carbon transition trend will further drive demand and support sector earnings CAGR of >20% (2023-2025); our top pick - <u>CHALCO (2600 HK/601600 CH)</u>

Growing China transportation and power consumption. We expect China's aluminium consumption to continue growing at a rate of 2-3% in 2024, attributable to the increasing demand for aluminium in the transportation and power sectors. On the other hand, we foresee limited new capacity to be added over the next few years, as the sector approaches the industry ceiling of 45m tonnes (2022: 44.5m tonnes). In addition, the output suspension in Yunnan scheduling between October and March would further reduce the available domestic market supply, bringing in a constructive market outlook.

Cost pressure limited from bauxite shipment disruption . As

bauxite shipments from Guinea for Chinese producers are not passing through the Red Sea, we foresee no significant impact on operations from the Red Sea incident. As per latest market price, aluminium product margin improved despite coal cost standing firm during the warming season. Furthermore, energy supply pressure in aluminium production should ease after winter while other key cost components such as alumina, carbon, and caustic soda are expected to remain stable. As such, we believe the overall profitability in subsequent quarters would expand.

Undemanding valuation; top pick CHALCO. For 2024, we expect aluminium price to trade up to RMB19,000/ RMB19,500 in 2024/ 2025, from RMB18,709 in 2023 amid lower interest rates, a soft landing, and stronger demand in global carbon transition development accelerating. The sector is trading at a price-book (P/BV) of 0.7x, against a forecasted ROE of c.9%. Meanwhile, we expect solid support for aluminium prices as aluminium inventory has remained steady at its seven-year low levels, supporting earnings CAGR >20% for CHALCO during the industry's green transition, and thus making it our preferred sector pick.



5 Feb 2024

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ANALYST

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Recommendation & valuation

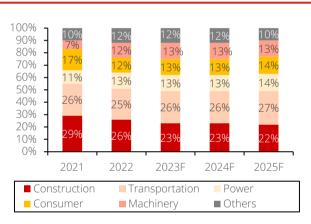
Company	Currency	Price	Target Price	Rating
<u>CHALCO (2600 HK)</u>	HK\$	3.60	4.70	BUY
<u>CHALCO (601600 CH)</u>	RMB	5.50	6.50	BUY

Source: Thomson Reuters, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK")



Healthy China aluminium consumption growth expected

Growing demand from lightweight material in the transportation sector has made China the largest aluminium user in the market. We expect contribution in transportation and power investment to outpace the subdued local construction market this year. In addition, the rising adoption of energy vehicle market penetration and power investment (combined 39% of China total) would require more aluminium. In the meantime, we expect China aluminium downstream market activities' continuous improvement to support metal usage and support our forecast of demand growth at 2-3% in 2024.

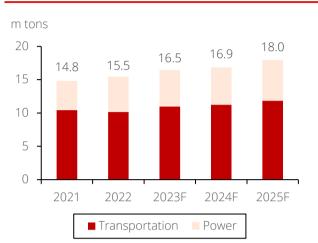


Non-construction consumption drivers

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Growing transportation and power demand in China

China's pure electric passenger cars consumed 188 kilograms (kg) of aluminum per vehicle in 2022, while fuel passenger cars used only 154 kg. According to the industry's energy-saving technology blueprint, the amount of aluminum used will increase to 250 kg and 350 kg in 2025 and 2030, respectively. As such, we foresee the combined demand from the two segments will expand at an above-industry-average of 4.5% CAGR during 2023-2025. China consumption would increase to 41% of total by 2025, from an estimated 38-39% in 2023.



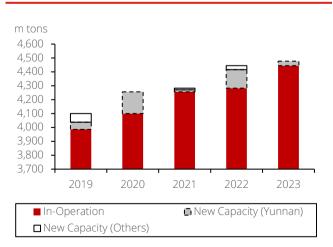
China's aluminium consumption - transportation and power segments

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

China capacity ceiling and curtailment in Yunnan

We expect existing China supply policies to control the industry upper limit at a total capacity of 45m tonnes per annum would cap aluminium output. In addition, China smelters are increasingly swapping their capacity from other provinces into Yunnan, which represents 12-13% of China's total capacity in 2023. With the supply disruption in Yunnan, which started in 4Q23 due to capacity curtailment, expected to continue into the drought season in 1Q24, we estimate that would translate into 1m tonnes of output reduction, or 2% of the expected national supply.

Industry capacity approaching the ceiling



Aluminium inventories at multi-year low levels

As per the latest industry data as of early February 2024, China's aluminium inventory had dropped c.19% from early December, reaching a seven-year record-low – 473,000 tonnes – the second lowest over past decade – and represent less than 40-days of estimated China aluminium consumption. Meanwhile, we predict that the ongoing rebound in aluminium consumption will help the overall inventory levels to maintain at its multi-year low levels, resulting in a solid support to an uptick in future aluminium prices.



Inventories stood at multi-year low level

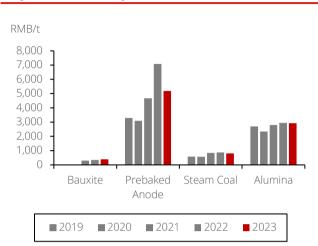
Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Modest supply risk on Red Sea Incident

We noticed that aluminium premiums in the European market spiked up after the news broke but have since stabilised. In contrast, Shanghai premiums have consistently declined over the past month. We believe the market has overreacted to concerns about the Red Sea Incident's impact on China's market supply of bauxite for alumina production. With feedback indicating that operations in Guinea are proceeding normally for leading China aluminium producers, we believe the alumina market will eventually normalise over the next few months.



Major aluminium input cost



Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Price and margins outlook amid global transition

In 2024, we foresee global aluminium output growth to be slow on delayed construction progress in Latin America and India. And we expect market surplus to gradually narrow ahead. Moreover, we believe the implementation of the carbon tax 2026 onwards in the Europe market would serve as an important cost-factor pushing aluminium price upward, which will help green smelters to differentiate from their peers. Meanwhile, compared to a barely breakeven situation in 2020, China's smelters are currently commanding profitability levels of around RMB4,000/tonne.

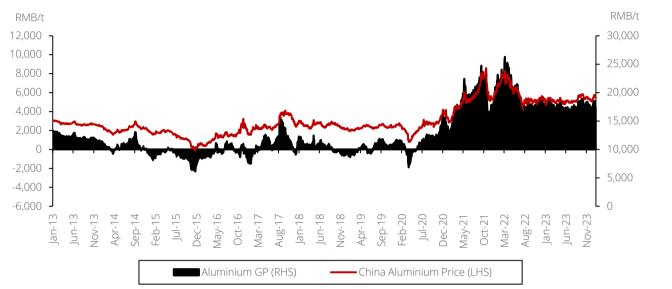
Aluminium product simulated GP



Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Aluminium Sector

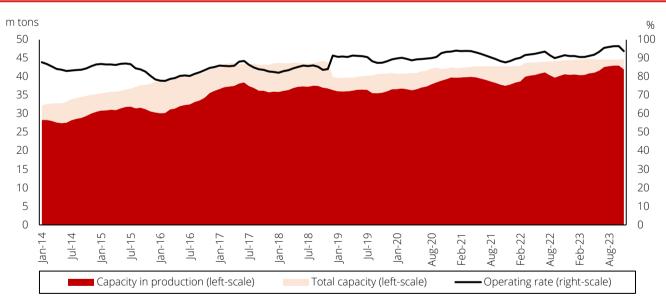




A look at industry's profitability history – aluminium price and aluminium product GP

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK





Aluminium Sector



Global aluminium demand/ supply/ price forecast

(k tonnes)	2020	2021	2022	2023F	2024F	2025F
Bauxite mine production, m tonnes	406	390	396	397	401	409
% у-о-у	12.8	-3.9	1.5	0.3	1.0	2.0
Primary aluminium production	64,007	66,517	68,728	70,417	71,826	73,513
% у-о-у	3.6	3.9	3.3	2.5	2.0	2.3
Primary aluminium consumption	55,850	64,858	66,531	67,955	69,954	71,898
% у-о-у	0.1	16.1	2.6	2.1	2.9	2.8
Market balance	8,157	1,659	2,197	2,462	1,872	1,615
LME aluminium price (US\$/tonne)	1,731	2,485	2,711	2,250	2,300	2,400
% у-о-у	-4.5	43.6	9.1	-17.0	2.2	4.3

Recommendation and valuation

In view of the relatively modest industry growth prospect, we expect producers with new projects on hand would benefit from better volume growth potential. Based on this, we have formulated the following recommendation: BUY CHALCO and HOLD Hongqiao.

Aluminium Corp of China Ltd ("CHALCO", 2600 HK, BUY, HK\$4.7)

Set to be a key beneficiary of the expected rebound in aluminium demand, supported by a constructive industry outlook, CHALCO is our preferred sector top pick. The company has a leading position in the market, with a smelting capacity exceeding 8mtpa (c.18% of China total aluminium capacity), the largest in China. CHALCO is also committed to energy transition, with around 40% of its power sourced from non-thermal energy sources, which it plans to increase to over 50% by 2025. Our target price is



set at 1.1x FY24F price-to-book (P/BV), in line with +1SD to its historical average amid our expected ROE expansion.

China Hongqiao Group Ltd ("Hongqiao", 1378 HK, HOLD, HK\$6.0)

The company plans to relocate almost 60% of its total capacity (6.46m tonnes p.a. or c.15% of China total) to the Yunnan province from 2025 onwards, with the aim of accessing hydropower resources. This relocation is expected to accelerate the company's capacity utilisation and benefit its margins, thus leading to a superior margin compared to its peers. Meanwhile, we assume the company's aluminium gross margins rebound towards 2022's level, supporting earnings CAGR (2023-2025) of >20%. Based on our analysis, we have set a target price of 0.6x FY24F P/BV, in line with the historical average.

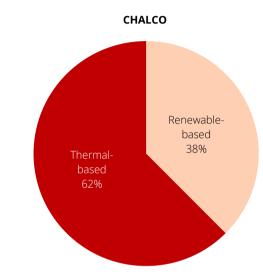
At a glance: CHALCO vs. Hongqiao

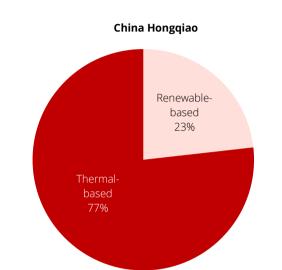
			CHALCO (2600 HK)			Hongqiac (1378 HK)	
		FY22	FY23F	FY24F	FY22	FY23F	FY24F
<u>Operating data</u>	Unit						
Aluminium							
Capacity	'000 tons	8,150	8,150	8,150	6,460	6,460	6,460
Sales volume	'000 tons	6,737	6,573	6,873	5,473	6,000	6,100
Average selling price	RMB/ton	15,622	16,721	17,006	17,582	16,533	16,814
Operating ratios							
Revenue	RMB mn	290,988	319,797	325,139	131,699	130,335	133,692
% у-о-у	%	1.0	9.9	1.7	15.0	-1.0	2.6
Net profit	RMB mn	4,192	4,200	5,061	8,702	7,081	8,321
% у-о-у	%	-27.2	0.2	20.5	-45.9	-18.6	17.5
GPM	%	10.8	7.8	8.9	13.8	11.7	13.8
EBITDAM	%	8.4	7.5	8.1	17.0	16.1	17.2
NPM	%	1.4	1.3	1.6	6.6	5.4	6.2
<u>Liquidity ratios</u>							
Gross debt/EBITDA	%	3.6	3.6	3.3	2.2	2.3	2.1
Net gearing	%	77.0	65.0	45.0	22.0	18.0	7.0

Source: DBS HK

Aluminium Sector







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Live more, Bank less

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Peer valuation

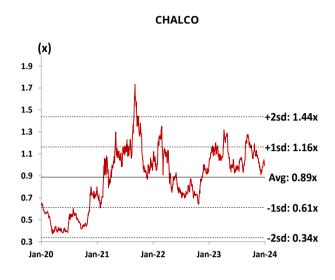
		5 Feb											Dividend	ROE	Net gearing
		Price	Mkt cap	Year	PER	(x)	EPS ch	<u>g (%)</u>	PBR	L(X)	EV/EBI	TDA (x)	vield (%)	<u>(%)</u>	(%)
Company	Ticker	Local\$	US\$ mn	End	2023F	2024F	2023F	2024F	2023F	2024F	2023F	2024F	2023F	2023F	2022
HK listed															
ALUMINUM CORP OF CHINA LTD-H	2600.HK	3.60	93,180	12/2022	8.8	7.8	58.2	12.7	0.9	0.9	6.6	6.1	1.4	11.1	130.6
CHINA HONGQIAO GROUP LTD	1378.HK	5.54	52,494	12/2022	5.0	4.0	9.9	22.8	0.5	0.5	4.4	4.1	12.1	10.7	39.3
UNITED CO RUSAL INTERNATIONA	486.HK	2.41	36,615	12/2022	3.4	2.4	(22.9)	42.9	0.3	0.3	6.3	4.7	na	10.6	50.2
Average					5.7	4.7	15.0	26.1	0.6	0.5	5.7	5.0	6.7	10.8	73.3
China listed															
ALUMINUM CORP OF CHINA LTD-A	601600.CH	5.50	85,745	12/2022	13.1	11.4	61.5	14.5	1.4	1.3	6.8	6.3	0.9	11.1	130.6
HENAN SHENHUO COAL & POWER-A	000933.CH	16.50	37,120	12/2022	6.0	5.2	(25.3)	14.8	1.7	1.4	5.6	5.0	5.9	30.2	153.5
YUNNAN ALUMINIUM CO LTD-A	000807.CH	10.01	34,714	12/2022	7.5	6.2	(6.6)	19.5	1.2	1.1	5.6	4.8	1.3	16.4	24.6
SHANDONG NANSHAN ALUMINUM-A	600219.CH	2.76	32,316	12/2022	9.8	8.2	(10.3)	19.2	0.6	0.6	3.2	2.7	0.8	6.5	na
TIANSHAN ALUMINUM GROUP CO-A	002532.CH	4.91	22,841	12/2022	8.3	6.9	(4.7)	20.8	0.9	0.8	7.3	6.2	6.0	10.1	116.0
Average					8.9	7.6	2.9	17.8	1.2	1.0	5.7	5.0	3.0	14.9	106.2
Overseas listed															
HINDALCO INDUSTRIES LTD	HNDL.IN	584.90	15,788	03/2023	136.8	122.3	0.2	11.8	13.3	12.1	7.5	6.9	0.1	10.1	47.2
NORSK HYDRO ASA	NHY.NO	60.42	11,607	12/2022	19.4	14.9	(64.0)	30.1	1.6	1.5	6.4	5.6	3.2	7.9	na
ALCOA CORP	AA.US	29.49	5,263	12/2023	13.3	1.6	na	749.1	0.2	0.1	8.2	5.1	10.6	0.5	20.4
ALUMINA LTD	AWC.AU	1.10	3,177	12/2022	na	4.7	na	na	0.3	0.3	na	32.4	na	na	6.9
Average					56.5	46.3	(31.9)	263.7	5.0	4.6	7.4	5.8	4.6	6.2	33.8
Grand Average					21.0	17.4	(0.4)	87.1	2.1	1.9	6.2	5.2	4.2	11.4	79.1

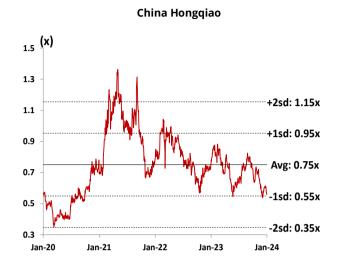
Source: Thomson Reuters, Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Aluminium Sector



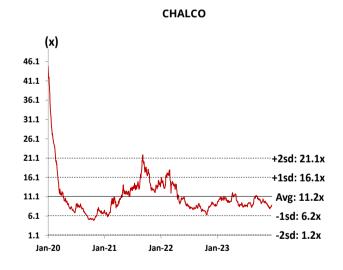
Historical PB band



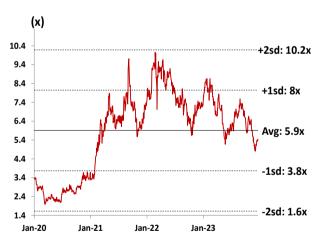


Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Historical PE band



Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.



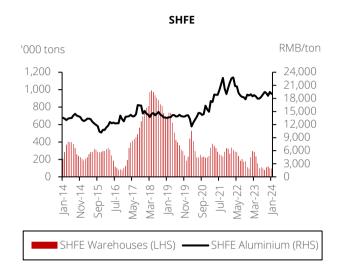
China Hongqiao

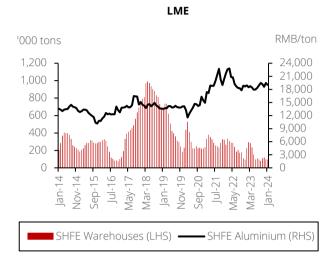
Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.

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Aluminium Sector





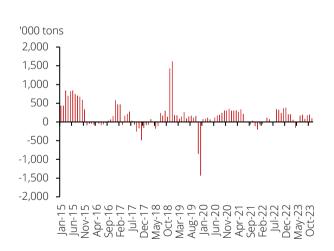


Aluminium forward price and inventory at warehouses

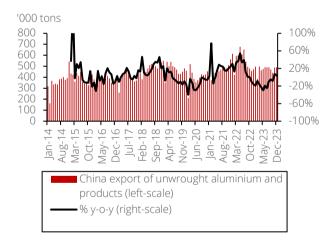
Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P.

China primary aluminium production (change on year) China export of unwrought aluminium and products

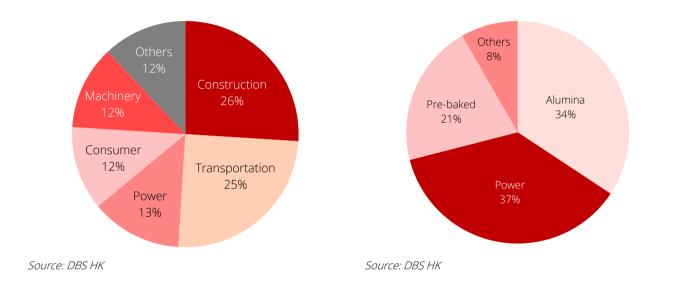






Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK





China primary aluminium demand breakdown, 2022 China primary aluminium cost breakdown, 2022

China aluminium supply/demand balance

	2047	204.0	2010	2020	2024	2022	20225	20245	20255	20265
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023F	2024F	2025F	2026F
Unit: mn tons										
Al output	32.3	35.8	35.0	37.1	38.5	40.2	41.0	41.9	42.5	42.8
% у-о-у	1.2	10.8	-2.2	6.0	3.8	4.4	1.9	2.2	1.4	0.7
Export	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Import	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.1	1.6	0.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Net export/ (import)	(0.1)	(0.1)	0.0	(1.1)	(1.6)	(0.5)	(1.2)	(1.4)	(1.4)	(1.4)
% у-о-у	7.3	(32.0)	(100.9)	(167,122.1)	48.8	(69.4)	156.7	11.0	0.0	0.0
Apparent consumption	32.4	35.9	35.0	38.2	40.1	40.7	42.2	43.2	43.8	44.1
% у-о-у	1.0	10.7	-2.4	9.0	5.0	1.5	3.7	2.5	1.4	0.7
Capacity	43.6	39.9	41.0	42.6	42.8	44.5	44.8	44.9	45.0	45.0
Capacity utilisation (%)	74.2	89.8	85.4	87.2	89.9	90.4	91.5	93.3	94.3	95.0
Shanghai price (RMB/t)	14,559	14,256	13,909	14,104	18,958	19,980	18,709	19,000	19,500	20,000

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, China Customs, Thomson Reuters, Bloomberg Finance L.P., DBS HK

Aluminium Sector



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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)

**Share price appreciation + dividends*

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

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Aluminium Sector



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