



US FOMC

Patience out, but no rush to hike

- Target fed funds rate (FFR) maintained at 0%-0.25%.
- FOMC statement removes the key word “patient” but indicates no imminent - neither rush to - hike the FFR.
- Maintain our view of Sep 2015 hike at the earliest totalling 50-75bps by end-2015.

No change in FFR. Target FFR stayed at 0%-0.25% at the 17-18 Mar 2015 FOMC meeting.

But change in the forward guidance from “patient” to what is essentially “data dependent”. The FOMC statement removed the line about Fed “*can be patient in beginning to normalize the stance in monetary policy*”, but added that FFR hike in 28-29 April FOMC is unlikely and no specific timing for FFR hike has been decided, which is subject to further improvement in job market with inflation moving towards the Fed’s 2% objective.

Latest assessment on growth lowered amid stable view on job market and inflation. Labour market conditions continued to improve with strong job gains, lower unemployment rate and diminishing labour under-utilisation. Inflation deviated further below the Fed’s longer-run objective mainly on lower energy prices, causing recent market-based measures of inflation compensation to fall substantially, although survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations remained stable. However, growth assessment changed to “*moderated somewhat*” from “*expanding at solid pace*” in 27-28 Jan 2015 FOMC statement, primarily due to weaker export growth amid strengthening US Dollar and uneven global economy, amid continuation of moderate rise in consumer spending and advances in business fixed investment.

But maintain outlook on growth, job market and inflation. Fed continues to expect economic activity to expand at a moderate pace and labor market indicators moving toward levels it judges as consistent with its dual mandate of maximum inflation and stable prices. Near-term inflation is expected to remain around its recent lows but will rise gradually toward 2% over the medium term as the labor market tightens further and the temporary effects of lower energy prices dissipate.

Maintain our view of FFR hike beginning Sep 2015 at the earliest totalling 50-75bps by end-2015 as we believe Fed wants to be sure that growth is entrenched to further tighten the job market that will in turn drive up inflation towards its longer term objective of 2%, hence the cautious and gradual monetary policy normalization.

Economists

Suhaimi B Ilias
(603) 2297 8682
suhaimi_iliias@maybank-ib.com

Dr Zamros Dzulkafli
(603) 2082 6818
zamros.d@maybank-ib.com

Ramesh Lankanathan
(603) 2297 8685
ramesh@maybank-ib.com

William Poh Chee Keong
(603) 2297 8683
william.poh@maybank-ib.com

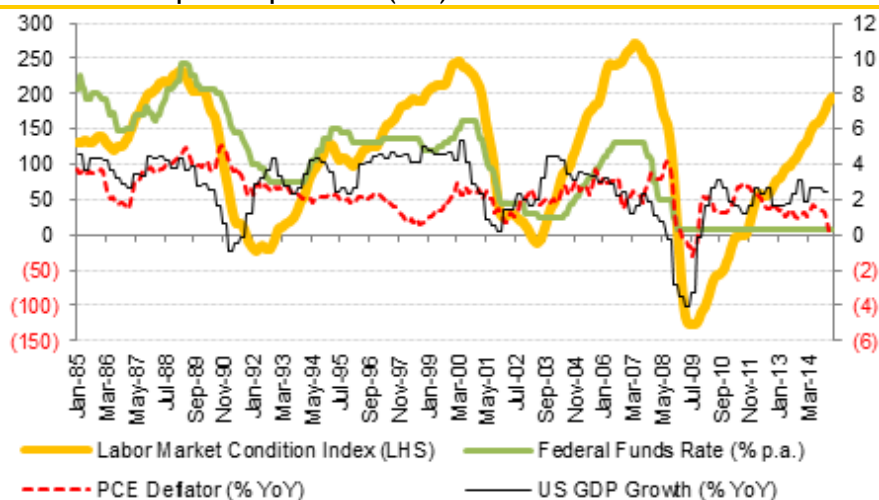
Key macroeconomic forecasts lowered. Fed also revised its 2015-2017 forecasts for real GDP growth, unemployment rate and inflation rate from its Dec 2014's projection:

- **Real GDP growth for 2015, 2016 and 2017 cut to 2.3%-2.7%** (Dec 2014: 2.6%-3.0%), 2.3%-2.7% (Dec 2014: 2.5%-3.0%) and 2.0%-2.4% (Dec 2014: 2.3%-2.5%) respectively.
- **Unemployment rate for 2015, 2016 and 2017 lowered to 5.0%-5.2%** (Dec 2014: 5.2%-5.3%), 4.9%-5.1% (Dec 2014: 5.0%-5.2%) and 4.8%-5.1% (Dec 2014: 4.9%-5.3%) respectively.
- **Inflation rate as measured by the private consumption expenditure (PCE) deflator for 2015 reduced to 0.6%-0.8%** (Dec 2014: 1.0%-1.6%), but largely maintain 2016 and 2017 forecast of 1.7%-1.9% (Dec 2014: 1.7%-2.0%) and 1.9%-2.0% (Dec 2014: 1.8%-2.0%) respectively.
- **Core inflation rate i.e. core PCE deflator for 2015 and 2016 adjusted down to 1.3%-1.4%** (Dec 2014: 1.5%-1.8%) and 1.5%-1.9% (Dec 2014: 1.7%-2.0%) respectively, while that for 2017 remained at 1.8%-2.0%.

Majority of Fed policymakers sees FFR hike this year but at slower pace. 13 of 16 FOMC participants sees this year as the appropriate time for the firming of monetary policy. At the same time, their median forecasts for year-end FFR dropped further in the latest quarterly projection i.e. to 1.00% by end-2015 (vs 1.38% back in Sep 2014 and 1.13% in Dec 2014) and 2.25% end-2016 (vs 2.88% back in Sep 2014 and 2.50% in Dec 2014) underlining the cautious and gradual monetary policy normalisation to observe its dual policy mandate of maximum employment and stable prices.

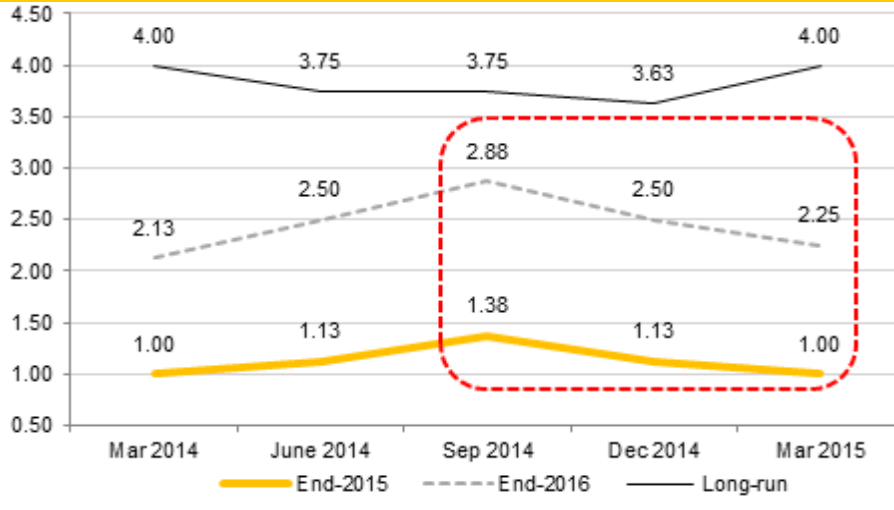
Which is consistent with our view. The latest FOMC's FFR median forecast of 1.00% by end-2015 is also consistent with our above-mentioned view on the timing and quantum of the FFR hikes for this year.

US: Fed's Labour Market Indicator Index, Fed Funds Rate, Real GDP Growth & Private Consumption Expenditure (PCE) Deflator



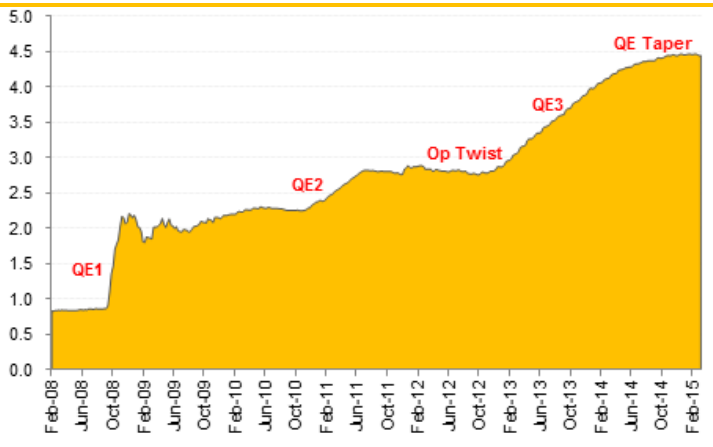
Source: Bloomberg

FOMC's Fed Funds Rate Median Forecasts (% p.a.)



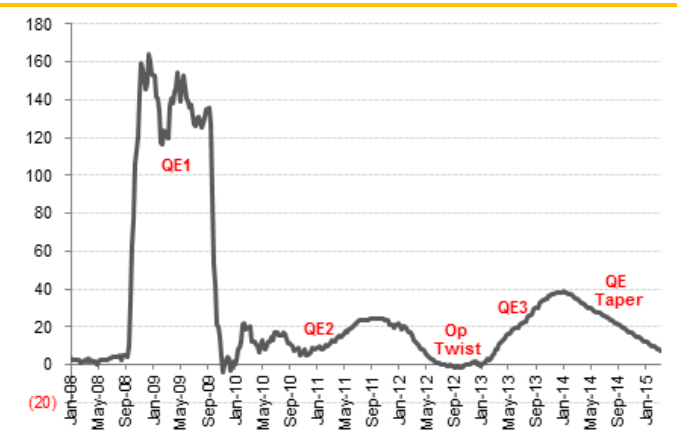
Source: FOMC

US: Fed's Balance Sheet (USDtr)



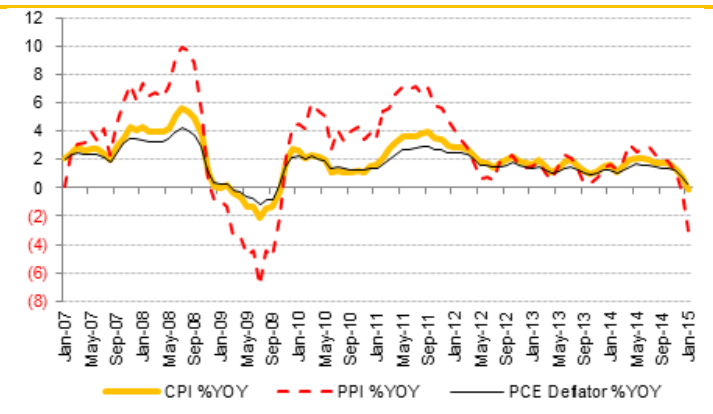
Source: Bloomberg

US: Fed's Balance Sheet (% YoY)



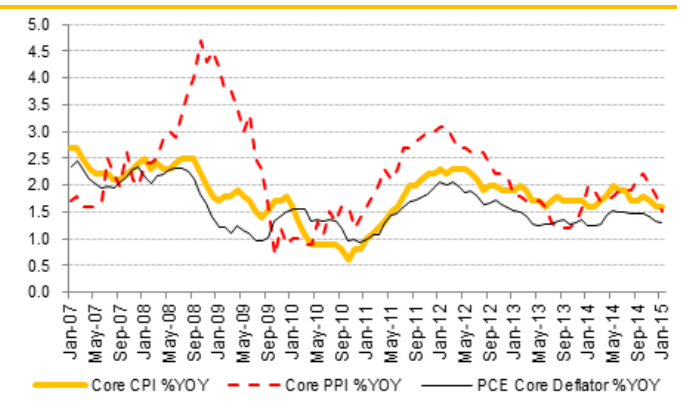
Source: Bloomberg

US: Inflation Indicators



Source: Bloomberg

US: Core Inflation Indicators



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Research Offices

REGIONAL

WONG Chew Hann, CA
Regional Head of Institutional Research
(603) 2297 8686 wchewh@maybank-ib.com

ONG Seng Yeow
Regional Head of Retail Research
(65) 6432 1453
ongsengyeow@maybank-ke.com.sg

Alexander GARTHOFF
Institutional Product Manager
(852) 2268 0638
alexgarthoff@kimeng.com.hk

ECONOMICS

Suhaimi ILIAS
Chief Economist
Singapore | Malaysia
(603) 2297 8682
suhaimi_ilias@maybank-ib.com

Luz LORENZO
Philippines
(63) 2 849 8836
luz_lorenzo@maybank-atrke.com

Tim LEELAHAPHAN
Thailand
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1420
tim.l@maybank-ke.co.th

JUNIMAN
Chief Economist, Bil
Indonesia
(62) 21 2922888 ext 29682
Juniman@bankbii.com

STRATEGY

Sadiq CURRIMBHOY
Global Strategist
(65) 6231 5836 sadiq@maybank-ke.com.sg

Willie CHAN
Hong Kong / Regional
(852) 2268 0631 williechan@kimeng.com.hk

MALAYSIA

WONG Chew Hann, CA Head of Research
(603) 2297 8686 wchewh@maybank-ib.com
• Strategy • Construction & Infrastructure

Desmond CH'NG, ACA
(603) 2297 8680
desmond.chng@maybank-ib.com
• Banking & Finance

LIAW Thong Jung
(603) 2297 8688 tjliaw@maybank-ib.com
• Oil & Gas - Regional • Shipping

ONG Chee Ting, CA
(603) 2297 8678 ct.ong@maybank-ib.com
• Plantations - Regional

Mohshin AZIZ
(603) 2297 8692 mohshin.aziz@maybank-ib.com
• Aviation - Regional • Petrochem

YIN Shao Yang, CPA
(603) 2297 8916 samuel.y@maybank-ib.com
• Gaming - Regional • Media

TAN Chi Wei, CFA
(603) 2297 8690 chiwei.t@maybank-ib.com
• Power • Telcos

WONG Wei Sum, CFA
(603) 2297 8679 weisum@maybank-ib.com
• Property & REITs

LEE Yen Ling
(603) 2297 8691 lee.yl@maybank-ib.com
• Building Materials • Glove Producers

CHAI Li Shin, CFA
(603) 2297 8684 lishin.c@maybank-ib.com
• Plantation • Construction & Infrastructure

Ivan YAP
(603) 2297 8612 ivan.yap@maybank-ib.com
• Automotive

Kevin WONG
(603) 2082 6824 kevin.wong@maybank-ib.com
• REITs

LEE Cheng Hooi Regional Chartist
(603) 2297 8694
chenghooi.lee@maybank-ib.com

Tee Sze Chiah Head of Retail Research
(603) 2297 6858 szechiah.t@maybank-ib.com

HONG KONG / CHINA

Howard WONG Head of Research
(852) 2268 0648
howardwong@kimeng.com.hk
• Oil & Gas - Regional

Alexander LATZER
(852) 2268 0647
alexanderlatzer@kimeng.com.hk
• Metals & Mining - Regional

Benjamin HO
(852) 2268 0632 benjaminho@kimeng.com.hk
• Consumer & Auto

Jacqueline KO, CFA
(852) 2268 0633 jacquelineko@kimeng.com.hk
• Consumer Staples & Durables

Ka Leong LO, CFA
(852) 2268 0630 kll@kimeng.com.hk
• Consumer Discretionary & Auto

Karen KWAN
(852) 2268 0640 karenkw@kimeng.com.hk
• Property & REITs

Mitchell KIM
(852) 2268 0634 mitchellkim@kimeng.com.hk
• Internet & Telcos

Osbert TANG, CFA
(86) 21 5096 8370
osberttang@kimeng.com.hk
• Transport & Industrials

Ricky WK NG, CFA
(852) 2268 0689 rickyng@kimeng.com.hk
• Utilities & Renewable Energy

Steven ST CHAN
(852) 2268 0645 stevenchan@kimeng.com.hk
• Banking & Financials - Regional

Warren LAU
(852) 2268 0644
warrentlau@kimeng.com.hk
• Technology - Regional

INDIA

Jigar SHAH Head of Research
(91) 22 6632 2632
jigar@maybank-ke.co.in
• Oil & Gas • Automobile • Cement

Anubhav GUPTA
(91) 22 6623 2605
anubhav@maybank-ke.co.in
• Metal & Mining • Capital Goods • Property

Vishal MODI
(91) 22 6623 2607 vishal@maybank-ke.co.in
• Banking & Financials

Abhijeet Kundu
(91) 22 6623 2628 Abhijeet@maybank-ke.co.in
• Consumer

SINGAPORE

NG Wee Siang Head of Research
(65) 6231 5838 ngweesiang@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Banking & Finance

Gregory YAP
(65) 6231 5848 gyap@maybank-ke.com.sg
• SMD Caps - Regional
• Technology & Manufacturing • Telcos

YEAK Chee Keong, CFA
(65) 6231 5842
yeakcheekeong@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Offshore & Marine

Derrick HENG, CFA
(65) 6231 5843 derrickheng@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Transport (Land, Shipping & Aviation)

WEI Bin
(65) 6231 5844 weibin@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Commodity • Logistics • S-chips

John CHEONG
(65) 6231 5845 johncheong@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Small & Mid Caps • Healthcare

TRUONG Thanh Hang
(65) 6231 5847 hang.truong@maybank-ke.com.sg
• Small & Mid Caps

INDONESIA

Wilianto IE Head of Research
(62) 21 2557 1125
wilianto.ie@maybank-ke.co.id
• Strategy

Rahmi MARINA
(62) 21 2557 1128
rahmi.marina@maybank-ke.co.id
• Banking & Finance

Aurellia SETIABUDI
(62) 21 2953 0785
aurellia.setiabudi@maybank-ke.co.id
• Property

Isnaputra ISKANDAR
(62) 21 2557 1129
isnaputra.iskandar@maybank-ke.co.id
• Metals & Mining • Cement

Pandu ANUGRAH
(62) 21 2557 1137
pandu.anugrah@maybank-ke.co.id
• Infra • Construction • Transport • Telcos

Janni ASMAN
(62) 21 2953 0784
janni.asman@maybank-ke.co.id
• Cigarette • Healthcare • Retail

Adhi TASMIN
(62) 21 2557 1209
adhi.tasmin@maybank-ke.co.id
• Plantations

PHILIPPINES

Luz LORENZO Head of Research
(63) 2 849 8836
luz_lorenzo@maybank-atrke.com
• Strategy
• Utilities • Conglomerates • Telcos

Lovell SARREAL
(63) 2 849 8841
lovell_sarreal@maybank-atrke.com
• Consumer • Media • Cement

Rommel RODRIGO
(63) 2 849 8839
rommel_rodrigo@maybank-atrke.com
• Conglomerates • Property • Gaming
• Ports/ Logistics

Katherine TAN
(63) 2 849 8843
kat_tan@maybank-atrke.com
• Banks • Construction

Ramon ADVIENTO
(63) 2 849 8845
ramon_adviento@maybank-atrke.com
• Mining

Michael BENGSON
(63) 2 849 8840
michael_bengson@maybank-atrke.com
• Conglomerates

Jaclyn JIMENEZ
(63) 2 849 8842
jaclyn_jimenez@maybank-atrke.com
• Consumer

Arabelle MAGHIRANG
(63) 2 849 8838
arabelle_maghirang@maybank-atrke.com
• Banks

THAILAND

Maria LAPIZ Head of Institutional Research
Dir (66) 2257 0250 | (66) 2658 6300 ext 1399
Maria.L@maybank-ke.co.th
• Consumer • Materials • Ind.Estates

Jesada TECHAHUSDIN, CFA
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1394
Jesada.T@maybank-ke.co.th
• Financial Services

Kittisorn PRUITIPAT, CFA, FRM
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1395
Kittisorn.P@maybank-ke.co.th
• Real Estate • Telcos

Sittichai DUANGRATTANACHAYA
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1393
Sittichai.D@maybank-ke.co.th
• Services Sector • Transport

Sukit UDONSIRIKUL Head of Retail Research
(66) 2658 6300 ext 5090
Sukit.u@maybank-ke.co.th

Mayuree CHOWVIKARN
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1440
mayuree.c@maybank-ke.co.th
• Strategy

Padon VANNARAT
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1450
Padon.v@maybank-ke.co.th
• Strategy

Surachai PRAMUALCHAROENKIT
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1470
Surachai.p@maybank-ke.co.th
• Auto • Conmat • Contractor • Steel

Suttatip PEERASUB
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1430
suttatip.p@maybank-ke.co.th
• Media • Commerce

Sutthichai KUMWORACHAI
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1400
sutthichai.k@maybank-ke.co.th
• Energy • Petrochem

Termporn TANTIVIVAT
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1520
termporn.t@maybank-ke.co.th
• Property

Jaroonpan WATTANAWONG
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1404
jaroonpan.w@maybank-ke.co.th
• Transportation • Small cap

Chatchai JINDARAT
(66) 2658 6300 ext 1401
chatchai.j@maybank-ke.co.th
• Electronics

VIETNAM

LE Hong Lien, ACCA
Head of Institutional Research
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8181
lien.le@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Strategy • Consumer • Diversified • Utilities

THAI Quang Trung, CFA, Deputy Manager,
Institutional Research
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8180
thai.thai@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Real Estate • Construction • Materials

Le Nguyen Nhat Chuyen
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8082
chuyen.le@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Oil & Gas

NGUYEN Thi Ngan Tuyen, Head of Retail Research
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8081
tuyen.nguyen@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Food & Beverage • Oil&Gas • Banking

TRINH Thi Ngoc Diep
(84) 4 44 555 888 x 8208
diep.trinh@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Technology • Utilities • Construction

TRUONG Quang Binh
(84) 4 44 555 888 x 8087
binh.truong@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Rubber plantation • Tyres and Tubes • Oil&Gas

PHAM Nhat Bich
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8083
bich.pham@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Consumer • Manufacturing • Fishery

NGUYEN Thi Sony Tra Mi
(84) 8 44 555 888 x 8084
mi.nguyen@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
• Port operation • Pharmaceutical
• Food & Beverage

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Ong Seng Yeow | Executive Director, Maybank Kim Eng Research

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BUY	Return is expected to be above 10% in the next 12 months (excluding dividends)
HOLD	Return is expected to be between - 10% to +10% in the next 12 months (excluding dividends)
SELL	Return is expected to be below -10% in the next 12 months (excluding dividends)

Applicability of Ratings

The respective analyst maintains a coverage universe of stocks, the list of which may be adjusted according to needs. Investment ratings are only applicable to the stocks which form part of the coverage universe. Reports on companies which are not part of the coverage do not carry investment ratings as we do not actively follow developments in these companies.


Malaysia

Maybank Investment Bank Berhad
(A Participating Organisation of
Bursa Malaysia Securities Berhad)
33rd Floor, Menara Maybank,
100 Jalan Tun Perak,
50050 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: (603) 2059 1888;
Fax: (603) 2078 4194

Stockbroking Business:
Level 8, Tower C, Dataran Maybank,
No.1, Jalan Maarof
59000 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: (603) 2297 8888
Fax: (603) 2282 5136


Philippines

Maybank ATR Kim Eng Securities Inc.
17/F, Tower One & Exchange Plaza
Ayala Triangle, Ayala Avenue
Makati City, Philippines 1200

Tel: (63) 2 849 8888
Fax: (63) 2 848 5738


South Asia Sales Trading

Kevin Foy
Regional Head Sales Trading
kevinfoy@maybank-ke.com.sg
Tel: (65) 6336-5157
US Toll Free: 1-866-406-7447

Malaysia

Rommel Jacob
rommeljacob@maybank-ib.com
Tel: (603) 2717 5152

Indonesia

Harianto Liong
harianto.liong@maybank-ke.co.id
Tel: (62) 21 2557 1177

New York

Andrew Dacey
adacey@maybank-keusa.com
Tel: (212) 688 2956

Vietnam

Tien Nguyen
thuytien.nguyen@maybank-kimeng.com.vn
Tel: (84) 44 555 888 x8079


Singapore

Maybank Kim Eng Securities Pte Ltd
Maybank Kim Eng Research Pte Ltd
50 North Canal Road
Singapore 059304

Tel: (65) 6336 9090


Hong Kong

Kim Eng Securities (HK) Ltd
Level 30,
Three Pacific Place,
1 Queen's Road East,
Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2268 0800
Fax: (852) 2877 0104


Thailand

Maybank Kim Eng Securities
(Thailand) Public Company Limited
999/9 The Offices at Central World,
20th - 21st Floor,
Rama 1 Road Pathumwan,
Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Tel: (66) 2 658 6817 (sales)
Tel: (66) 2 658 6801 (research)


North Asia Sales Trading

Alex Tsun
alextsun@kimeng.com.hk
Tel: (852) 2268 0228
US Toll Free: 1 877 837 7635

Thailand

Tanasak Krishnasreni
Tanasak.K@maybank-ke.co.th
Tel: (66)2 658 6820

India

Manish Modi
manish@maybank-ke.co.in
Tel: (91)-22-6623-2601

Philippines

Keith Roy
keith_roy@maybank-atrke.com
Tel: (63) 2 848-5288


London

Maybank Kim Eng Securities
(London) Ltd
5th Floor, Aldermay House
10-15 Queen Street
London EC4N 1TX, UK

Tel: (44) 20 7332 0221
Fax: (44) 20 7332 0302


Indonesia

PT Maybank Kim Eng Securities
Plaza Bapindo
Citibank Tower 17th Floor
Jl Jend. Sudirman Kav. 54-55
Jakarta 12190, Indonesia

Tel: (62) 21 2557 1188
Fax: (62) 21 2557 1189


Vietnam

Maybank Kim Eng Securities Limited
4A-15+16 Floor Vincom Center Dong
Khoi, 72 Le Thanh Ton St. District 1
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Tel : (84) 844 555 888
Fax : (84) 8 38 271 030


New York

Maybank Kim Eng Securities USA
Inc
777 Third Avenue, 21st Floor
New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Tel: (212) 688 8886
Fax: (212) 688 3500


India

Kim Eng Securities India Pvt Ltd
2nd Floor, The International 16,
Maharishi Karve Road,
Churchgate Station,
Mumbai City - 400 020, India

Tel: (91) 22 6623 2600
Fax: (91) 22 6623 2604


Saudi Arabia

In association with
Anfaal Capital
Villa 47, Tujjar Jeddah
Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz
Street P.O. Box 126575
Jeddah 21352

Tel: (966) 2 6068686
Fax: (966) 26068787