Good MornING Asia - 18 July 2019

The central banks in Korea and Indonesia are meeting to review their monetary policies today. We see both cutting the policy rates by 25bp.

In this bundle

ASEAN Morning Bytes

General market tone: Risk-off. Investors to move sideways with a downward bias, digesting trade war concerns and the Fed beige book

EM Space: More Asian central banks joining in the global easing wave

- **General Asia:** Asian markets will likely move sideways with persistent downward bias from trading in the US market. The central banks in Korea and Indonesia are meeting to review their monetary policies today. We see both cutting the policy rates by 25bp.
- **Thailand:** As we argued last week's move by the Bank of Thailand to tighten rules on capital inflows in its bid to rein in THB appreciation aren't enough. Indeed, the central bank is considering more curbs. At his quarterly briefing yesterday Governor Veerathai Santiprabhob pointed to the reduction of bond supply among tools they could use for the purpose. Separately, Deputy Governor Mathee Supapongse hinted at easing rules on capital outflows. Any efforts to curb THB appreciation pressure are countered by the USD weakness as the Fed policy rate cuts loom, though a BoT policy rate cut may help to some extent.
- **Indonesia:** Bank Indonesia's (BI) policy decision is expected by 2 pm local time today. We are part of the solid consensus in the Bloomberg survey forecasting BI to slash policy rates by 25bp. The IDR has been performing better this year, while BI's aggressive tightening in 2018 has created room for more easier policy ahead to support growth as inflation continues to be well-behaved.
- **Philippines:** The government is looking to make adjustments to its recently implemented

rice tariff law as the agricultural lobby groups decry the falling farmgate prices for the staple. The new law which allows unimpeded rice imports to help stabilize supply has forced rice prices lower, which in turn has helped push headline CPI inflation within the BSP's policy target. The government intends to study implementing a suggested retail price for imported rice, which could stall the recent precipitous drop in rice prices and temper headline inflation's deceleration.

What to look out for: regional central bank meetings

- Hong Kong policy meeting (18 July)
- South Korea policy meeting (18 July)
- Fed Bostic speech (18 July)
- Bank Indonesia policy meeting (18 July)
- Japan inflation (19 July)
- Fed Williams and Bullard speeches (19 July)

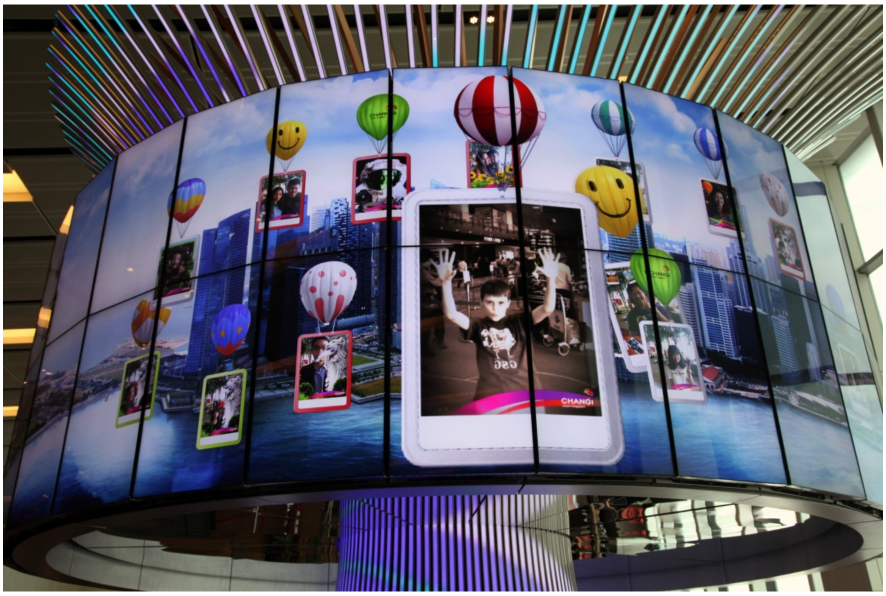
Author

Nicholas Mapa
Senior Economist, Philippines
nicholas.antonio.mapa@asia.ing.com

Article | 17 July 2019 Singapore

Singapore: Another big plunge in NODX...

... raises the odds of the Monetary Authority of Singapore easing monetary policy well ahead of the next scheduled semi-annual policy review in October



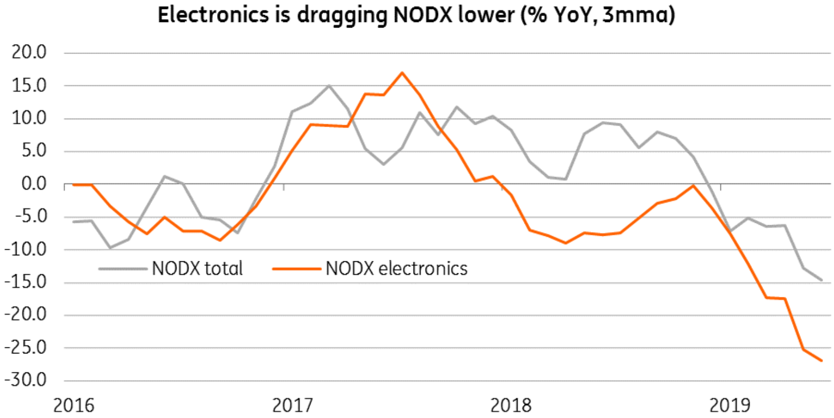
17.3% June NODX fall on year

Worse than expected

Electronics exports dents NODX, again

Singapore's non-oil domestic exports (NODX) tumbled by 17.3% year-on-year in June, almost twice as bad as the consensus median estimate of -9.6% in a Bloomberg survey. This comes on top of a 16.3% fall in May. Likewise, the 7.6% month-on-month (seasonally adjusted) NODX fall was double the consensus of -3.5% MoM, and this more than reversed a 5.8% bounce posted in the previous month.

Electronics continues to be the weak spot with a more than 30% YoY decline in shipments for the second consecutive month, while an outsized surge in pharmaceuticals shipments in May was also partly retraced. By destination, the weakness was across the board except for shipments to the US, which are still growing on the back of strong consumer spending in that economy. The persistently large decline in exports to China, Japan, and Europe were the standouts otherwise.



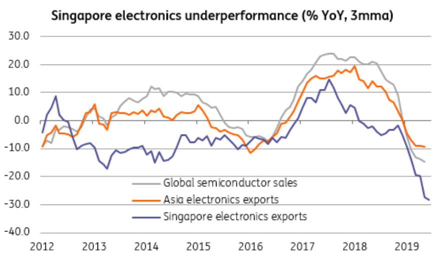
Source: Bloomberg, CEIC, ING

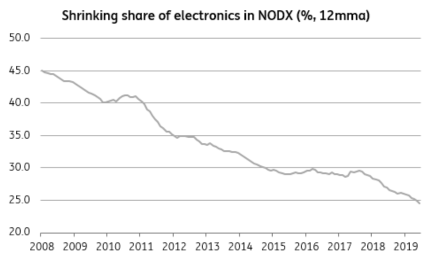
What's happening to electronics?

Bar a positive month last November, electronics exports have been on a steady declining streak since December 2017, led by semiconductor exports, which make up nearly half of the electronics cluster. It's not just the growth rate that's been on a downward trend, the share of electronics in total exports has also been waning.

The weakness of electronics exports squares with the prevailing downturn observed in the global tech cycle. However, a significant underperformance of Singapore's electronics relative to other Asian electronics heavyweights (e.g. Korea, Taiwan) as well as intermediary processors (Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand) suggests some structural shift underway. This can also be inferred from the steadily falling share of electronics in total NODX, which at 25% (12-month average through June 2019) is down from over 40% a decade ago.

From this, we surmise Singapore is losing out on its electronics market share to other Asian countries.





Source: Bloomberg, CEIC, ING

Weak NODX imparts downside risk to GDP growth

The June NODX report follows on from last week's disappointing GDP report for the second quarter, showing 'only' 0.1% YoY (-3.4% QoQ SAAR) growth. Even though the advance GDP estimate is typically based on data for the first two months of the quarter, we think the latest one may have already factored in a weak June NODX turnout.

However, this will be tested by the industrial production data for June due later this month (26 July). IP growth is closely correlated with manufacturing GDP growth and this will offer clues about how GDP growth is likely to be revised when the final estimate is released in mid-August. Downside growth risk has intensified, not just for 2Q GDP but also for the rest of the year in our view.

Easing is imminent - earlier the better

As for most other global central banks, the economic data has increasingly favoured easing by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

The earlier the MAS moves, the better it will be for the economy. Talk of an off-cycle policy adjustment, before the next scheduled semi-annual review in October, has gained traction since the MAS's Managing Director Ravi Menon recently hinted at such a policy action. We continue to expect easing either this month or next via a reduction or even flattening of the slope of the MAS's policy trading band for the SGD nominal effective exchange rate.

For further insight into the ING house view of MAS's policy, please see our Asia Chief Economist Rob Carnell's latest note on Singapore.