

**Global Markets Research**
**Fixed Income**

## *Monthly Fixed Income Perspective –*

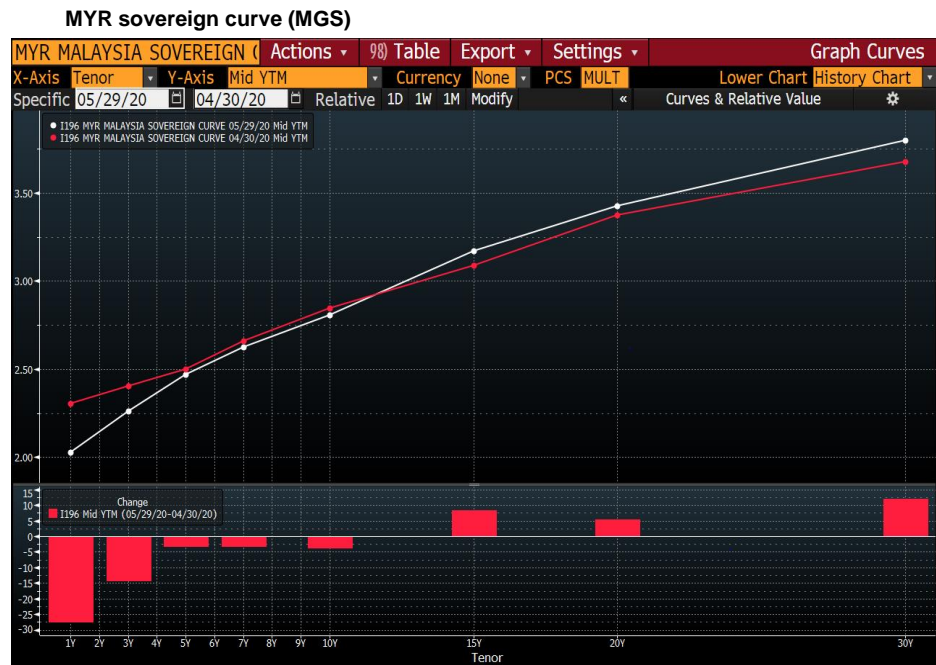
### *May 20 review & June 20 outlook*

#### *US Bond market*

- US Treasuries (UST's)** reversed the strength seen in recent months as May saw the US and global economy trying to emerge from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 viral outbreak. Benchmark **UST yields rose between 2-11bps in May (having also edged up between 3-6bps across the curve the prior month) with the long-end pressured.** This drove the curve steeper with the UST 2Y up by 2bps at 0.19% whilst the much-watched 10Y rose by 6bps, at 0.75%. The yield curve steepened with the 2s10s spread up from +44 to +49bps whilst the 5s30s spread also widened from +92 to +110bps. The US Dollar meanwhile ended weaker against most G10 currencies again save for the Japanese Yen and pound whilst the Dollar Index ended almost unchanged at 98.3 levels and subsequently to the 97.0 levels at the time of writing.
- For June,** we expect the US economy to slowly climb back from its trough as the economy reopens following the COVID-19 virus pandemic. The Fed is expected to leave interest rates unchanged whilst maintaining its monthly purchase of UST's and MBS at \$80b and \$40b each. In the absence of yield curve control, **the 10-year UST is expected to be range-bound between 0.70-0.90%; finding good support at 0.90% levels. The 7Y-20Y tenures potentially offer better risk-reward posture for now.** The IG Corporate Bond space is expected to see the short-medium duration provide cushion for both credit and yield-carry potential in portfolios. We are mildly positive on **IG bond issuances in the 3-7Y tenures in sectors such as logistics, healthcare telecommunication and utilities.**

#### *MYR Bond Market*

- In May, MYR govies saw the curve steepen with **most MGS/GII bonds yields mostly mixed-to lower between -13bps to +12bps with the longer ends pressured.** The benchmark 5Y MGS 9/25 saw yields decline 4bps at 2.47% whilst the 10Y MGS 8/29 yields also saw stronger demand resulting in a 9bps decline at 2.80%. Foreign holdings of MYR government bonds (MGS + GII + SPK) saw net inflows of RM1.4b to RM167.2b (i.e. 21.2% of net issuance outstanding). The auctions involving 15Y GII, 10Y MGS and also the recent 3Y GII re-opening and new issuance of 30Y MGS 6/50 (which were successfully completed in June) notched decent appetite with BTC ratios of 2.17x, 1.73x, 2.50x and 2.17x respectively.
- For June, we expect range-trading** levels with both foreign and local demand support on price weakness. We expect no further OPR rate cuts going forward. **The 7-9Y and 15-20Y tenures for MGS/GII reflect decent valuations** on the curve for this month. **We expect the 10Y to range at slightly higher yield levels of between 2.90-3.10%** with strong support pegged at 3.10% levels. **We continue to like both the GG and the AA-space due to both decent liquidity and yield pick-up; especially the 7Y, 20Y GG sector** (current spreads over MGS are~ 16-26bps), **along with the shorter 3Y, 15Y AA-rated papers** (current spreads of 50-94bps).



Source : Bloomberg

***NFP data for May rebounds as US economy emerges from the fury of the COVID-19 virus outbreak; UST's support gives way slightly to risk-on equities flavor...***

**May Non-Farm Payrolls (“NFP”)** unexpectedly jumped by a massive 2.5m (consensus -7.5m) having notched a historical drop of 20.5m in April earlier (April numbers were revised down by 150k). When combined with the Canadian jobs report which also notched strong numbers; it is believed that economists were indeed too pessimistic about the COVID-19 shutdown. Particularly encouraging were rebound in services sectors such as leisure/hospitality and employment gains in cyclical sector such as construction. Until a vaccine becomes available to the general public, businesses will have to adapt to social distancing measures, persistent fear of contagion, and a higher propensity to save, all of which will likely restrain consumer demand, business turnover and hence capacity to hire. Unemployment rate continued to remain elevated at the double-digit of 13.3% in May (prior month: 14.7%) with the participation rate inching up 0.6ppt to 60.8% after having dropped 2.5ppt in April. Nevertheless there were no surprises on the average hourly wages which tanked at -1.0% MOM (previous month: +4.7%) and also pulled back to +6.7% YOY in May (previous month: +7.9% revised).

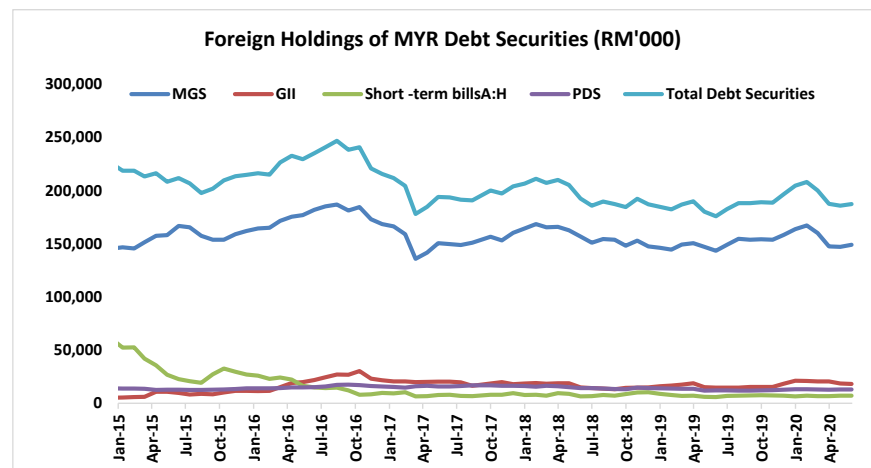
The Fed at its last **FOMC on 11<sup>th</sup> June left rates unchanged**; having earlier caught markets off-guard with several dramatic rate cuts totaling 150bps to-date causing the Fed Funds Rate to drop to between 0.00-0.25%. It projected a far slower economic recovery than portrayed by President Trump; painting a grim picture with millions expected jobless for several more quarters whilst GDP makes its slow ascend back from its trough. Fed Chair Powell put it at best when he stated "We're not thinking about raising rates, we're not even thinking about thinking about raising rates. That echoed an extremely dovish phrase ever uttered by a Fed leader.

Another key outcome of the meeting was the **Fed's intention to increase holdings of bonds** over the coming months' at least at the current pace to smooth markets

which will consist of buying across the curve of approximately \$80B a month in Treasuries and \$40B a month in agency MBS. Separately, the Fed’s preferred inflation measure for April was lower as expected; with personal consumption expenditure (PCE) core index which the Fed officially targets for 2.0% inching lower YOY @ 1.1% versus 1.7% prior month (MOM: -0.3% versus -0.1%). This core index strips out the volatile food and energy costs and is reputed to be a better gauge of underlying price trends. **The Fed’s Dot plot which was not updated earlier in March is now showing the Dots pin rates at zero through 2022 whilst two dots show a lift-off in 2022. Nevertheless, data from the Fed Fund Futures reflect a 97.9% hypothetical probability of rates staying pat whilst CME FedWatch Tool has predicted a 100% chance of a rate pause in the next FOMC on 29<sup>th</sup> July.**

**Foreign holdings of MYR bonds jump; albeit by relatively small margin in May as MYR weakens to ~4.3500 levels...**

Foreign holdings of overall MYR bonds saw levels rose in May by RM1.5bn or a mere 0.8% to RM185.8bn. Non-resident holdings of MGS jumped by RM1.9bn from RM147.2bn to RM149.1bn in May (representing 35.9% of total outstanding) whereas total MYR Government bonds (i.e. MGS+GII+SPK) holdings similarly saw net inflows of RM1.4bn to RM167.2bn (representing 21.2% of total outstanding) amid net issuances of -RM1.87bn for May (April: net issuances of -RM5.8bn). Ignoring the current relief from the FTSE Russell WGBI review (expect announcement on the final decision in September 2020); the rise in foreign holdings for May was mainly due to some risk-on appetite for Asian FX and Rates asset classes as oil prices recovered and the anticipated flattening of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. **Overall MYR bonds saw cumulative 12-month higher rolling net foreign inflows of RM11.4b (YTD May: -RM17.4b) whilst cumulative 12-month net equity outflows was larger at RM19.6b (YTD May: -RM13.3b). We note that YTD outflows in bonds is higher than YTD outflows in equity.** On the currency side, the MYR ended weaker against USD at 4.3465 levels as at end-May. However at the time of writing, USDMYR has strengthened to 4.2780 levels amid slight risk-on mode for EM Asia due to economic kick-start from earlier lockdown across countries and recovery in oil prices.



Source: BNM, HLB Research

**Barring the escalation of downside growth risks, our house view maintains for a pause in OPR as the economy slowly regains**

### footing

BNM didn't bat an eyelid as its monetary policy committee (MPC) delivered a 3<sup>rd</sup> OPR cut of 50bps from 2.50% to 2.00% at the 3<sup>rd</sup> MPC meeting of the year on 5<sup>th</sup> of May and also allowed banks to use local govies to comply with SRR conditions (currently at 2.00%) effective 16<sup>th</sup> of May. The policy easing was deemed necessary as the impact of COVID-19 virus pandemic dented economic activity. With inflation in negative territory and real interest rates at unprecedented highs, there is indeed policy space for further policy easing should downside risks to growth escalate. However with the slow but sure lifting of Movement Control Order (MCO) and also its conscious decision to safeguard the interest of depositors, **we however expect an OPR pause for now after the massive 100bps cut since January, complemented by the mammoth RM295b economic stimulus packages. Our full year estimate for 2020 GDP growth remains at -4.3% (2019A: +4.3%) given the still adverse economic impact from the Covid-19 viral outbreak** and also other downside risks despite recovery in oil prices and the slow process in building back supply chains.

### MYR government bond auctions however saw decent bidding metrics for the two (2) auctions in May.....

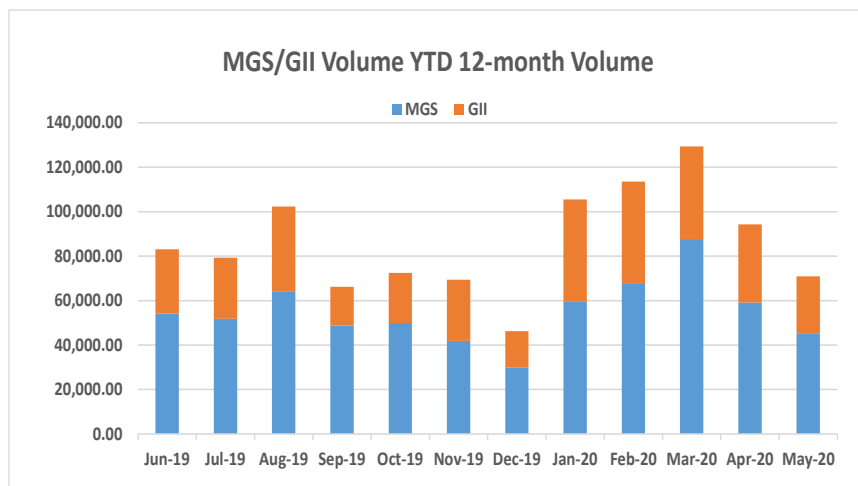
The two (2) government bond tenders concluded for the month of May 2020 under the auction calendar saw a slight decline in average BTC ratios which slipped below the 2.0x handle at 1.92x (April: 3.03x). Both the 15Y GII 11/34 and 10Y MGS 8/29 re-openings notched 2.17x and 1.73x respectively. Auction appetite in May was a tad weaker compared to April's stronger auction demand. At the time of writing, the recently-concluded auction of the 3Y GII 5/23 in June saw total bids amounting to RM11.3b for on a BTC on a BTC ratio of 2.50x (which was awarded at 2.306%).

| MGS/GII issuance pipeline in 2020 |   |              |              |         |             |                                  |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------|--------------|---------|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| No                                | Stock                                   | Tenure (yrs) | Tender Month | Quarter | Tender Date | Projected Issuance Size (RM mil) | Actual Auction Issuance (RM mil) | Private Placement X | Auction Amt Issued YTD | BTC (times) | Low   | Average | High  | Cut-off |
| 1                                 | 7-yr reopening of MGS (Mat on 05/27)    | 7            | Jan          | Q1      | 8/1/2020    | 4,000                            | 3,500                            |                     | 3,500                  | 2.498       | 3.259 | 3.281   | 3.288 | 57.1%   |
| 2                                 | 15-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 11/34)   | 15           | Jan          | Q1      | 14/1/2020   | 4,000                            | 2,500                            | 1,000               | 6,000                  | 3.396       | 3.500 | 3.507   | 3.513 | 42.9%   |
| 3                                 | 3-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 3/23)     | 3            | Jan          | Q1      | 23/1/2020   | 3,000                            | 3,000                            |                     | 9,000                  | 2.183       | 2.837 | 2.858   | 2.875 | 80.0%   |
| 4                                 | 30-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 11/49)   | 30           | Feb          | Q1      | 4/2/2020    | 3,000                            | 2,500                            | 1,500               | 11,500                 | 2.328       | 3.747 | 3.780   | 3.792 | 66.7%   |
| 5                                 | 10-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 08/29)   | 10           | Feb          | Q1      | 13/2/2020   | 3,000                            | 4,000                            |                     | 15,500                 | 2.036       | 2.860 | 2.888   | 2.898 | 80.0%   |
| 6                                 | 5-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 10/24)    | 5            | Feb          | Q1      | 20/2/2020   | 3,000                            | 4,000                            |                     | 19,500                 | 2.776       | 2.817 | 2.845   | 2.852 | 46.2%   |
| 7                                 | 15-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 07/34)   | 15           | Mar          | Q1      | 5/3/2020    | 4,000                            | 3,500                            | 500                 | 23,000                 | 2.247       | 3.008 | 3.027   | 3.036 | 80.0%   |
| 8                                 | 20-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 09/39)   | 20           | Mar          | Q1      | 12/3/2020   | 4,000                            | 2,800                            | 1,500               | 25,800                 | 2.182       | 3.295 | 3.344   | 3.373 | 91.7%   |
| 9                                 | 5-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 09/25)    | 5            | Mar          | Q1      | 20/3/2020   | 3,000                            | 4,000                            |                     | 29,800                 | 2.080       | 3.372 | 3.450   | 3.494 | 80.0%   |
| 10                                | 7.5-yr New Issue of GII (Mat on 09/27)  | 7            | Mar          | Q1      | 30/3/2020   | 4,000                            | 3,500                            | 1,000               | 33,300                 | 2.874       | 3.391 | 3.422   | 3.454 | 100.0%  |
| 11                                | 20-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 05/40)   | 20           | Apr          | Q2      | 6/4/2020    | 4,000                            | 3,500                            | 1,500               | 36,800                 | 1.973       | 3.828 | 3.855   | 3.888 | 14.3%   |
| 12                                | 10.5-yr New Issue of GII (Mat on 10/30) | 10           | Apr          | Q2      | 14/4/2020   | 5,000                            | 4,000                            | 1,000               | 40,800                 | 3.118       | 3.439 | 3.465   | 3.479 | 13.9%   |
| 13                                | 7-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 05/27)    | 7            | Apr          | Q2      | 29/4/2020   | 4,500                            | 4,000                            |                     | 44,800                 | 2.239       | 2.668 | 2.679   | 2.689 | 61.9%   |
| 14                                | 15-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 11/34)   | 15           | May          | Q2      | 14/5/2020   | 5,000                            | 3,500                            | 1,500               | 48,300                 | 2.171       | 3.210 | 3.235   | 3.269 | 50.0%   |
| 15                                | 10-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 08/29)   | 10           | May          | Q2      | 21/5/2020   | 4,500                            | 4,500                            |                     | 52,800                 | 1.732       | 2.777 | 2.799   | 2.820 | 43.5%   |
| 16                                | 3-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 05/23)    | 3            | Jun          | Q2      | 3/6/2020    | 4,500                            | 4,500                            |                     | 57,300                 | 2.502       | 2.285 | 2.306   | 2.318 | 50.0%   |
| 17                                | 30-yr New Issue of MGS (Mat on 06/50)   | 30           | Jun          | Q2      | 12/6/2020   | 5,000                            | 3,000                            | 2,500               | 60,300                 | 2.167       | 4.013 | 4.065   | 4.098 | 78.0%   |
| 18                                | 20-yr Reopening GII (Mat on 09/39)      | 20           | Jun          | Q2      |             | 5,000                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 19                                | 3-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 03/23)    | 3            | Jul          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 20                                | 10-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 10/30)   | 10           | Jul          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 21                                | 15-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 07/34)   | 15           | Jul          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 22                                | 7-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 09/27)    | 7            | Aug          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 23                                | 20-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 05/40)   | 20           | Aug          | Q3      |             | 5,500                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 24                                | 15-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 11/34)   | 15           | Aug          | Q3      |             | 5,500                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 25                                | 7-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 05/27)    | 7            | Sep          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 26                                | 30-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 11/49)   | 30           | Sep          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 27                                | 5-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 09/25)    | 5            | Sep          | Q3      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 28                                | 3-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 05/23)    | 3            | Oct          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 29                                | 10.5-yr New Issue of MGS (Mat on 04/31) | 10           | Oct          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 30                                | 5-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 03/26)    | 5            | Oct          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 31                                | 30-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 06/50)   | 30           | Nov          | Q4      |             | 5,600                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 32                                | 7-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 09/27)    | 7            | Nov          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 33                                | 15-yr Reopening of MGS (Mat on 07/34)   | 15           | Nov          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  |                     |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| 34                                | 10-yr Reopening of GII (Mat on 10/30)   | 10           | Dec          | Q4      |             | 5,000                            |                                  | X                   |                        |             |       |         |       |         |
| Gross MGS/GII supply in 2020      |   |              |              |         |             | 158,900                          |                                  | 12,000              |                        |             |       |         |       |         |

Source: BNM, HLB Research

### Trading volume for MGS/GII pulled back for 2<sup>nd</sup> month in a row...

Trading volume for MYR govies i.e. MGS + GII bonds continued to ease by 24% to ~RM71.4b in May compared to prior month's RM94.2b. Interest was seen mainly across the short-end of the bellies with substantial and frequent trades done predominantly in MGS off-the-run 20-21's followed by GII (altogether RM15.3b for these tenures; thus inching up to ~21% of overall volume; despite lower than the RM16.6b transacted for the previous month. This was followed by interest in the 10Y benchmarks which churned a lower secondary market volume of RM7.6b (April: RM9.5b) whilst the short-end 3Y tenures too saw strong demand of about RM3.2b; outstripping trades in the 5Y, 7Y and 15Y which accounted for about 3.6-4.0% of overall volume for the month. The 33-34's which accounted for RM9.1b (9.7%) of total volume last month fizzled out with a mere RM2.8b (3.9%) of total trades. In short, investors were seen generally long in the short-end and also belly followed by the 5Y, 7Y and also 10Y duration; as investors valued kinks on the curve. We opine that the secondary market volume for local govies may maintain at current levels unlike the huge volumes seen in the 1Q2020 exceeding RM100b following cautious outlook in view of uncertainties pertaining to Interest rate outlook, COVID-19 virus pandemic updates and Forex movements. This along with some supply overhang of another RM10b arising from the latest round of Economic Recovery Plan (i.e. PENJANA) that is expected to boost the local economic climate.

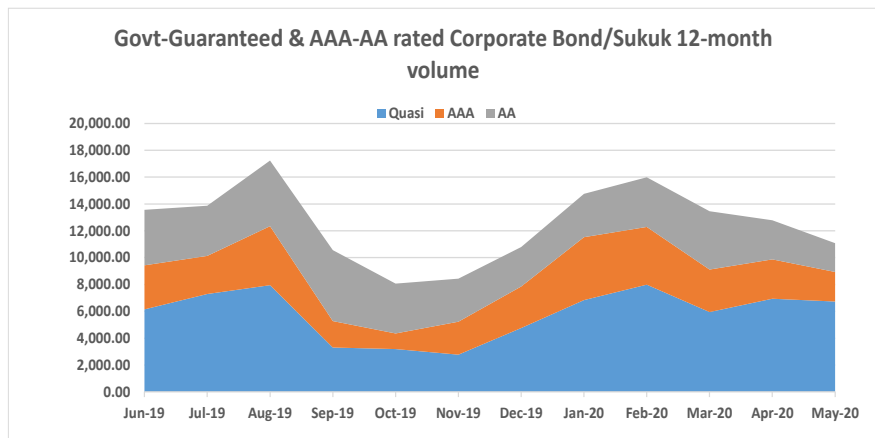


Source : BPAM, Bloomberg, HLB Research

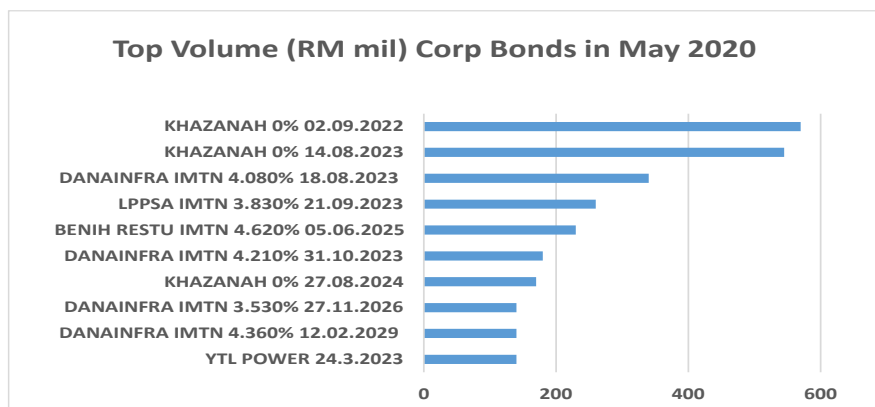
### Corporate Bonds/Sukuk activity however eased in May...

Overall Corporate Bonds/Sukuk (including Govt-Guaranteed bonds) notched lower secondary market trading volume of~ RM11.7b in May (a 35% drop compared to RM17.9b in April). This was mainly due to five (5) public holidays. Nevertheless, momentum was still decent based on average daily volume of RM710m versus RM810m in April. Fund managers continued to bid for decent credits on liquid names whilst comparing credit spreads relative to MGS with yields closing lower between 4-35bps in the GG-segment, between 2-29bps for AAA-rated bonds and also between 2-26bps in the AA-segment which altogether saw the steepest decline in yields for 1-7Y tenures. Nevertheless, Corporate Bonds/Sukuk saw foreign holdings inch lower by RM30m to RM12.9b. Total transactions for GG bonds rose by 7% to form ~54% of overall volume compared to AA-rated ones which fell to form ~19% of overall secondary market volume. Bulk of investor interest in this segment was again mainly centered on DANAINFRA, PRASARANA, PASB, LPPSA, KHAZANAH and PTPTN bonds. Bonds that garnered top volume for the month were govt-guaranteed KHAZANAH 9/22 and 8/23 tranche followed by DANA 8/23.

Frequency and volume of trades in the pure credit space were seen mainly in conglomerates (i.e. DRB-HICOM 22-29's, UMW 21's and perps, MMC 20-28's, GENTING-related bonds 22-34's, DANUM 23-35 and infrastructure-related names including sub-sectors such as construction/property (i.e. PUTRAJAYA 24-37's, AMAN 22-24's, DANGA 26-33's, COUNTRY GARDEN 23-27's, UEM Sunrise 21-25's, utilities encompassing power/energy/water (i.e. AAA-rated TENAGA 26-36's, MANJUNG 21-31's, AA-rated YTL Power 21-28's, EDRA 23-28's, JEV 23-31's, SEB 21-33's), toll-operators (i.e. PLUS 24-37's, telcos i.e. TELEKOM 24-25's and also BENIH Restu 2025. The banking sector saw Amlslamic, MAYBANK, MBSB and also Muamalat names traded. We note the continued interest in odd-lot denominated trades involving unrated Mah Sing, YNH PROPERTIES Berhad, ECO World International 21-23's, Eco Capital 22-24's, Tropicana Perps and IJM land perps.



Source : BPAM, Bloomberg, HLB Research



Source : BPAM, Bloomberg, HLB Research

**Primary issuance print doubled in May:**

| Notable issuances in May-20                                  | Rating | Amount Issued (RM mil) |
|--|--------|------------------------|
| Cagamas Berhad   | AAA    | 100                    |
| Danainfra Nasional Berhad                                    | GG     | 2,800                  |
| Danum Capital Berhad   | AAA    | 2,000                  |
| Great Realty Sdn Berhad                                      | AAA    | 50                     |
| Hap Seng Management Sdn Berhad                               | NR     | 800                    |
| Hektar Black Sdn Berhad                                      | NR     | 32                     |
| Konsortium KAJV Sdn Bhd                                      | AA3    | 35                     |
| KYS Assets Sdn Berhad  | NR     | 5                      |
| Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Selangor                          | AA3    | 225                    |
| Radimax Group Sdn Berhad                                     | NR     | 40                     |
| RHB Bank Berhad  | AA3    | 500                    |
| Setia Fontaines Sdn Berhad (fka Setia Recreation Sdn Berhad) | NR     | 6                      |
| Sunway Treasury Sukuk Sdn Berhad                             | NR     | 100                    |
| SunREIT Unrated Bond Berhad                                  | NR     | 100                    |
| Tradewinds Hotels & Resorts Sdn Berhad                       | NR     | 4                      |
| Tropicana Corporation Berhad                                 | A1     | 200                    |
| UEM Sunrise Berhad   | AA3    | 105                    |
| <b>Total</b>   |        | <b>7,102</b>           |



Source : BPAM, Bloomberg, HLB Research

Total fresh issuances for all ratings of Corp Bonds/Sukuk doubled to RM7.1b (April: RM3.2b) with govt-guaranteed DANAINFRA Bhd and DANUM Capital Bhd being the more prominent issuances. DANA (GG) issued 7-30Y bonds totaling RM2.8b at coupons between 2.86% and 3.89% whilst DANUM successfully arranged 5-10Y bonds (AAA) amounting to RM2.0b at coupons between 2.97-3.29%.

## Outlook for June 2020

### **Expect yields to remain range-bound as investors are expected to remain cautious on additional supply concerns**

The MYR bond market which saw weaker bidding metrics (BTC ratio: 1.92x) in May 2020 saw better auction results in June for both the reopening of the ultra-short benchmark 3Y GII 5/23 and long bond MGS 6/50 @ 2.5x and 2.17x amid huge submission of bids amounting to between RM17-12b. This is testament to the resilience of the local govvnies market. Nevertheless potential supply concerns will continue to weigh on bond price movements whilst various sectors of the economy continue to re-open following the COVID-19 virus pandemic. **The Federal Government's estimate of fiscal budget deficit which has been revised higher to 5.8-6.0% of GDP following the latest round of PENJANA package is slightly lower compared to our revised house view at between 5.9-6.4%** due to the twin effect of lower GDP output and higher deficit requiring govvnies issuances to the tune of RM159.4b. The current OPR level is deemed to be at a fair level which denotes a low interest rate regiment for the local govvnies and may not be compelling enough for traders and real-money investors to absorb the additional supply of MGS/GII of RM10b arising from the latest round of PENJANA stimulus. We do not expect further rate cuts in the next July MPC meeting as BNM continues to assess the full effects of the earlier three (3) rate cuts. The USDMYR pair which rose to 4.35 levels last month-end has strengthened to 4.2700 levels at the time of writing as a result of risk-on flows for EM Asia coupled with USD weakness.

**Hence, we expect range-trading levels with both foreign and local demand support on price weakness.** The positive interest-rate differentials may continue to attract offshore real money investors like pension funds and lifers into the sovereign debt space. **The 7-9Y and 15-20Y MGS/GII space reflect decent valuations on the curve for this month. We expect the 10Y to range at slightly higher yield levels of between 2.90-3.10%** with strong support pegged at 3.10% levels. We note that there is a smaller RM5.5b of GII maturity this month with opportunities for rollover into a larger projected RM15.0b of new MGS/GII issuances. We expect the shorter-end i.e. 21-23's and benchmark 5Y, 10Y bonds to continue to see investor/trader interest for liquidity reasons. **We continue to like both the GG and the AA-space due to both decent liquidity and yield pick-up; especially the 7Y, 20Y GG sector (current spreads over MGS are ~ 16-26bps), along with the shorter 3Y, 15Y AA-rated papers (current spreads of 50-94bps).** Expect some continued spillover down the credit spectrum into un-rated bonds on yield-enhancement opportunities. Potential sectors to avoid include oil & gas, retail, tourism, gaming, leisure and pure-property debt issuances. We foresee toll-related concessionaires to recover as transportation of people and goods improve from the eventual lifting of the MCO.

***UST's will continue to remain beneficiaries of safe-haven bids as COVID-19 fallout fears continue to haunt; expect the Fed to maintain current Fed Fund Rate***

Market volatility in May was less prominent than April as several lifting of lock-downs in parts of US and Europe took place as the COVID-19 virus outbreak curve was seen flattening and oil prices recovered in anticipation of a pick-up in demand. As such yields rose slightly between 2-11bps across the yield curve with the UST 2Y yields edging up 2bps at 0.19%, 10-year rates fell by 6bps at 0.75%, and 30-year rates dropping 11bps to 1.41%. The Federal Reserve which maintained its policy rate at between 0.00- 0.25% had earlier announced a QE program encompassing a combination of fiscal and monetary packages to help support the economy and maintain liquidity in financial markets as follows:

- \$7.8b emergency COVID-19 spending bill
- \$500m telehealth programs by Medicare also known as Families First Coronavirus Response Act
- \$2.3 trillion stimulus for tax-payers, business and revenue-starved state governments and lately

However the fear of a 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of COVID-19 virus infections may continue to keep UST's supported whilst the duration remains murky as the economic fallout from the earlier closure of businesses is likely to have an impact on financial conditions and performance of entities. However, the recent opening of various sectors of the economy in stages and recovery in oil prices may be neutralized by the simmering tensions between the US and China that could still provide safe-haven bids in the fixed income space. The surprise jump in the May jobs data (strong NFP data spiking by 2.5m) along with ISM manufacturing and non-manufacturing index rising from 41.5 and 41.8 in April to 43.1 and 45.4 respectively will however need to be monitored and remains to be seen if it will transcend down to entities and individuals.

Nevertheless we opine that rates may stay pat at the next FOMC meet on 30<sup>th</sup> July after the two (2) recent emergency cuts in March followed by its decision to stay pat in April and recently in June. The downside risks to our forecast are the finding of cures/vaccines for COVID-19 followed by the swift restoration of jobs, businesses and the global supply chain. The upside however will be the grim resurgence of a 2<sup>nd</sup> round of COVID-19 infections. In the absence of yield curve control, **the 10-year UST is expected to be range-bound between 0.70-0.90%; finding good support at 0.90% levels for this month. The 7Y-20Y tenures potentially offer better risk-reward posture for now.**

In the Credit/Corporate space, Investment grade (IG) debt issuances have spiked from \$479b during the Jan-March period to \$528b in both April and May. However, IG bonds have seen generic spreads narrow further from 190bps to 144bps (reference is made to the Bloomberg Barclays US Aggregate Index for Investment-Grade Corporate Bonds). Note that the Fed facilities have an estimated \$750b capacity to buy corporate bonds. We continue to advocate caution following the recent credit downgrade of several brand names like Kraft Heinz, Macy's Inc and also Ford Motor Corp. Short-medium duration may cushion credit and yield-carry potential in portfolios. Hence, we are mildly positive on **IG bond issuances in the 3-7Y tenures in sectors such as logistics, healthcare telecommunication and utilities.**



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