AEJ Week Ahead: China PMIs and Politburo meeting, Korea exports, BOT meeting

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Scheduled key data releases for the coming week in Asia ex-Japan include PMIs and the April Politburo meeting in Mainland China, Korea's April exports and March industrial production, and Q1 GDP in Taiwan. Bank of Thailand will also hold a policy meeting next week. Below, we summarize our forecasts and expectations for these releases.

China:

- **China April PMIs (April 30 and May 6):** We expect the NBS manufacturing PMI to decrease to 50.0 in April from 50.4 in March. The emerging industry PMI rose after seasonal adjustment. However, residual seasonality in NBS manufacturing PMI poses some downward pressure on the April reading. In historical years with similar calendar patterns to this year, NBS manufacturing PMI also tended to decrease in April. We expect the RatingDog manufacturing PMI to rise to 51.0 from 50.8 in March. The RatingDog manufacturing PMI tends to have a higher sensitivity to export activity, and high-frequency indicators suggest that the export momentum improved in April vs. March. We forecast the NBS non-manufacturing PMI to fall to 49.7 from 50.1 in March, as the construction PMI and the services PMI probably have softened due to heavy rainfall in southern regions. In contrast, we expect the RatingDog services PMI to edge up to 52.3 from 52.1 in March.
- **April Politburo meeting (late April):** Top leadership is expected to hold the April Politburo meeting around the final week of April to discuss economic policies for coming months. Compared to the Central Economic Work Conference last December and the "Two Sessions" in March, we expect policymakers to maintain their pro-growth policy stance, focus more on the implementation of planned easing measures (especially on the fiscal front), and continue to highlight their long-term strategy to promote high-tech manufacturing, new infrastructure, services sectors, and people's livelihood. Although policymakers would express increased concerns on the global energy shock and heightened geopolitical uncertainties, they may see little urgency for significant policy stimulus in the near-term, in our view, given Q1 real GDP growth at the upper bound of the "4.5-5.0%" growth target for this year. Considering higher energy prices and PPI inflation, we see a possibility that policymakers may downplay their pledge for high-profile monetary easing such as policy rate cuts. Our recent conversations with clients point to low market expectations for incremental stimulus from the April Politburo meeting.

South Korea:

- **Bank of Korea minutes (April 28):** Bank of Korea will release the minutes for the April MPC meeting, at which the board unanimously voted to keep the policy rate unchanged at 2.5%. The meeting minutes will provide details on considerations on upside risks to inflation from elevated energy prices against headwinds to domestic activity from supply shortages. The April MPC meeting was the final policy rate decision meeting of Governor Rhee.
- **Korea March IP (April 30):** We expect Korea's industrial production to rise 1.1% mom s.a. March (Bloomberg consensus not available at the time of writing), after rising sharply by 5.4% the prior month. Moderate gains would be consistent with strong increases in per-day exports as well as gains in auto production during the month. Given that the March IP report follows the Q1 GDP release, focus would be on details of the investment and consumption indicators and changes to monthly tends, especially for petrochemical and refinery sectors.
- **Korea April exports (May 1):** We expect Korea's exports to fall slightly by 0.6% mom s.a. in April, on weak non-tech exports. The pullback would be the first correction after four months of solid gains. Exports during the first 20 days of the month point to sustained increases in semiconductors but broad declines in other products, in particular auto, petroleum and machinery exports. In year-on-year terms, we expect growth in exports to slow to 42.5% (vs. Bloomberg consensus: 46.3% at the time of writing) from 49.2% the prior month, and growth in imports to slow to 10.0% from 13.2% the prior month. Implied trade surplus would remain large, narrowing only marginally to US$24.1bn (15% of monthly GDP) from US$26.2bn the previous month.

Taiwan:

- **Taiwan Q1 Real GDP (April 30):** We are raising our forecast for Q1 real GDP growth to 0.8% qoq sa from -0.2% previously, driven by stronger-than-expected exports, which in volume terms accelerated sharply to 21.7% mom s.a. (non-annualized) in March, after staying relatively subdued during the first two months of the year. For domestic demand components, we expect meaningful slowdown for private consumption after growing 2.2% the prior quarter while we expect a moderate rebound in government consumption and fixed investment after two quarters of contraction. In year-on-year terms, we expect growth to slow to 10.5% (vs. Bloomberg consensus of 11.0% at the time of writing) from 12.7% in Q4 2025. The upward revision to our Q1 forecast mechanically raises our full-year GDP forecast to 7.0% (vs. Bloomberg consensus: 6.6%) from 6.1% previously.

ASEAN:

- **Bank of Thailand meeting (April 29):** We expect the BoT to keep the policy rate unchanged at 1.00% at its April meeting. Thailand is among the Asian economies most exposed to the drag from higher oil prices, and we expect growth to slow sharply to 1.2% in 2026, from 2.4% in 2025. In this environment, raising the policy rate would risk adding unnecessary downward pressure to domestic demand.

Furthermore, a tighter monetary policy would have a limited impact on supply-driven inflation. As such, this supports our view that the BoT will remain on hold.

Key data and events to watch outside the region include: Next week also includes central bank meetings and inflation data in the US, Europe and Japan; durable goods orders, Q1 GDP and PMIs in the US; retail sales, industrial production, and unemployment rate in Japan.

Roundup of last week's economic and policy events

Taiwan

- Taiwan's industrial production (IP) rose 1.4% mom sa in March, rising further from a 5.2% gain the prior month. The outcome was stronger than our forecast as well as Bloomberg consensus. All the headline sequential gains were accounted for by electronic components and basic metals. Wholesale trade increased sharply on tech-related machinery and equipment and chemical materials, whereas retail sales remained relatively subdued, rising modestly by 0.5%.

South Korea

- Korea's GDP rebounded to +1.7% qoq sa, up from -0.2% the prior quarter and recording the strongest momentum since Q3 2020. The outcome was stronger than our above consensus forecast. Contribution from domestic demand rose to 0.6pp from 0.0pp the prior quarter, on a sharp rebound in fixed investment by 2.9% qoq sa, whereas final consumption slowed to 0.4%. Contribution from net exports increased to 1.1pp, the highest since Q2 2023, on a tech-driven rebound in exports. After reflecting the stronger-than-expected Q1 report, our 2026 growth forecast is mechanically raised to 2.5% from 1.9% previously.
- Korea's per-workday exports in the first 20 days of April fell 1.1% mom sa, pulling back after two months of sharp increases. Total exports during the 20 days dropped 6.0% mom sa as prior month's positive workday effects faded. Momentum was weighed down by non-tech products, which dropped 8.9% mom sa, whereas tech exports collectively extended a 7-month streak of gains on robust 8.2% increase in semiconductors. By destination, exports to the US dropped the most and accounted for a third of the sequential contraction. Total imports during the 20 days fell 1.3% mom sa, with two-thirds of the decline driven by crude oil and petroleum products. The trade surplus (not seasonally adjusted) narrowed to US$10.4bn from a historical high of US$12.6bn last month.

India

- In the April 2026 RBI MPC minutes, members noted that the Middle East conflict presents a significant supply shock that has simultaneously raised upside risks to inflation and downside risks to growth. They signaled a data-dependent, wait-and-watch approach, with the neutral stance to retain flexibility, amid a high degree of uncertainty. Based on the minutes, we think the MPC members would want to see evidence of pass-through of higher energy and petroleum product prices in core inflation before taking any monetary policy action. We maintain our forecast of two 25bp repo rate hikes this year, taking the repo rate to 5.75% by end 2026, with risks skewed towards back-loaded hikes rather than earlier in the year.

ASEAN

- Bank Indonesia (BI) kept its policy rate unchanged at 4.75% at its April meeting. The rhetoric surrounding the currency turned noticeably more hawkish, with BI describing the rupiah as “too weak” and “undervalued” and stating that the central bank would go “all out” to defend it. The external backdrop also appears less supportive, as BI now expects a wider current account deficit.

- Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ (BSP) 25bp rate hike in April, which brought the policy rate to 4.50%, signals a clear return to monetary tightening, driven by higher inflation and broadening price pressures. With inflation projected to remain above target and growth expected to recover in H2 2026, the central bank appears confident that it has room to tighten further.
- Singapore’s CPI inflation rose to 1.8% yoy in March, up from 1.2% in February, largely driven by a sharp increase in transport fuel prices. Core CPI inflation also edged up to 1.7% yoy, from 1.4% previously. That said, the underlying inflation picture appears more contained. Sequential increases in core prices were relatively modest, and other measures of underlying inflation similarly indicate only a gradual and measured firming in price pressures rather than a broad-based acceleration.
- Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Pakorn Nilprapunt, said on 20th April, that the government was preparing an emergency decree to authorize borrowing of up to THB500bn to cushion the effects of the Middle East conflict. Meanwhile, the Finance Minister, Ekniti Nitithanprapas, said the authorities are open to raising the public debt-to-GDP ceiling to 75% from 70%. We highlight that if an emergency borrowing decree is approved, funding would likely be spread across fiscal years and raised through a mix of instruments (T-bills, Savings bonds, Promissory notes or even bank loans), and not just government bonds. The THB bond and swap curves initially bear-steepened in response to this news. However, the bond supply concerns appear overdone in our view, and we think there is scope for the Thai curve to bull flatten, once there is more clarity on the timeline and funding plans.

Asia ex-Japan Economics Calendar

Asia ex-Japan Economics Calendar

Date Time (HKT)	Region	Indicator/Event	Period	GS Forecast	Bloomberg Consensus	Previous
Mon Apr 27						
#	**China**	**April Politburo meeting**				
9:30	China	Industrial Profits	Mar			5.3% yoy
13:00	Singapore	Industrial Production	Mar		6.2% yoy	-0.1% yoy
Tue Apr 28						
#	*Japan*	*BoJ meeting*	Apr 28		0.75%	0.75%
7:30	*Japan*	*Unemployment rate*	Mar		2.6% s.a.	2.6% s.a.
7:30	*Japan*	*Jobs to applicants ratio*	Mar		1.2% s.a.	1.2% s.a.
16:30	Hong Kong	Exports	Mar			24.7% yoy
16:30	Hong Kong	Imports	Mar			29.9% yoy
16:30	Hong Kong	Trade Balance	Mar			HKD -64.2bn
17:30	**South Korea**	**BOK minutes**				
18:30	India	Industrial Production	Mar		3.1% yoy	5.2% yoy
Wed Apr 29						
15:00	**Thailand**	**BoT meeting**	Apr 29	1.0%	1.00%	
20:30	*United States*	*Durable goods orders*	Mar P		0.4% mom s.a.	0.9% mom s.a.
2:00	*United States*	*Fed meeting*	Apr 29		3.5%	3.5%
Thu Apr 30						
7:00	**South Korea**	**Industrial Production**	Mar	1.1% mom s.a.		5.4% mom s.a.
7:50	*Japan*	*Retail Sales*	Mar		0.9% yoy	-0.2% yoy
7:50	*Japan*	*Industrial Production*	Mar P		2.4% yoy	0.4% yoy
9:00	Philippines	Imports	Mar		7.6% yoy	12.6% yoy
9:00	Philippines	Exports	Mar		9.1% yoy	8% yoy
9:00	Philippines	Trade Balance	Mar		USD -4.5bn	USD -3.7bn
9:30	**China**	**NBS Manufacturing PMI**	Apr	50.0	50.1	50.4
9:30	**China**	**NBS Non Manufacturing PMI**	Apr	49.7	49.9	50.1
9:30	*Australia*	*Private sector credit*	Mar			7.8% yoy s.a.
9:45	**China**	**RatingDog Manufacturing PMI**	Apr	51.0	51.0	50.8
10:00	Singapore	Money Supply (M2)	Mar			5.1% yoy
10:30	Singapore	Unemployment rate	Mar			2% s.a.
12:00	*Thailand*	*Capacity Utilization*	Mar			58.2%
12:00	Thailand	Manufacturing Production Index	Mar		-0.4% yoy	0% yoy
13:00	*Japan*	*Housing starts*	Mar		-28.4% yoy	-4.9% yoy
13:00	*Japan*	*Consumer Confidence Index*	Apr			33.3
15:00	Thailand	Current Account Balance	Mar			USD 2.1bn
15:30	Thailand	Balance of Payment	Mar			USD 373.4mn
16:00	**Taiwan**	**Real GDP**	1Q A	10.5%	11.0% yoy	12.7% yoy
16:30	Hong Kong	Money Supply (M2)	Mar			2.1% yoy
17:00	*Eurozone*	*Real GDP*	1Q A		0.9% yoy SWDA	1.2% yoy SWDA
17:00	*Eurozone*	*Unemployment rate*	Mar		6.2% s.a.	6.2% s.a.
17:00	*Eurozone*	*Harmonized CPI*	Apr P		2.9% yoy	2.6% yoy
17:00	*Eurozone*	*Flash Harmonized CPI*	Apr P		2.9% yoy	2.5% yoy
20:15	*Eurozone*	*ECB meeting*	Apr 30		2.15%	2.15%
20:30	*United States*	*Core PCE inflation*	Mar		3.2% yoy s.a.	3% yoy s.a.
20:30	*United States*	*PCE inflation*	Mar		3.5% yoy s.a.	2.8% yoy s.a.
20:30	*United States*	*Real GDP*	1Q A		2% qoq saar	0.5% qoq saar
21:45	*United States*	*Chicago PMI*	Apr			52.8
Fri May 1						
7:00	*Australia*	*CBA Australia Manufacturing PMI*	Apr F			51
7:30	*Japan*	*Tokyo CPI*	Apr		1.6% yoy	1.4% yoy
8:00	**South Korea**	**Trade Balance**	Apr	USD 24.1bn	USD 23.3bn	USD 26.2bn
8:00	**South Korea**	**Imports**	Apr	10.0% yoy	14.4% yoy	13.2% yoy
8:00	**South Korea**	**Exports**	Apr	42.5% yoy	46.3% yoy	49.2% yoy
21:45	*United States*	*Markit Manufacturing PMI*	Apr F			54.0
22:00	*United States*	*ISM Manufacturing PMI*	Apr		53.3	52.7

* Release date uncertain, date shown is the first possible date of release

Release time uncertain

Italics indicate important events outside the Asia ex-Japan region

Source: Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

Please see Asia Economics Analyst 15/17: "The sensitivity of Asian financial markets to economic data" and Asia Economics Analyst: "How global macro data affect AEJ financial markets" for an analysis of the market impact of regional economic data using high-frequency (intraday) data across ten emerging Asia economies. We find markets have consistent short-term reactions to some of the highest-profile economic indicators, particularly industrial production, GDP, trade data, and inflation.

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