

FX Flash

SGD: Policy Stance Still Appropriate

MAS Maintains Policy Parameters

The MAS maintained its slope, width and level of their exchange-rate based SGDNEER policy parameters this morning, broadly in line with most market expectations and in line with our view. Some were suggesting that MAS could flatten the slope of appreciation, but this was unlikely in our view given the strong growth and relatively stable (albeit below preferred 2% level) of inflation.

MAS said that it remained in an appropriate position to respond effectively to any risk to medium-term price stability, suggesting that core CPI should average 0.5% in 2025 as a whole, but gradually rise into 2026 as temporary factors that dampen inflation fade. Growth was said to be stronger than expected with MAS expecting positive output gaps in 2025 which should narrow to 0% in 2026. We do not see any further MAS easing at this juncture, with the next MAS meeting likely in Jan 2026. Our economists and MAS remain broadly aligned on the likely trajectories for growth and inflation. Our economists see growth at 3.5% in 2025 (prev: 3.2%) and 2.5% in 2026 and inflation at 0.5% (core) and 0.8% (headline) in 2025, which should rise to 1.1% (core) and 1.2% (headline) in 2026. Our economists note that the expected turn in the core inflation cycle and the stronger than expected and resilient growth outlook were key reasons for MAS' hold.

SGDNEER Edges Higher While USDSGD Buoyant, Resilience to Persist

Ahead of the decision, SGDNEER was trading at around +1.20% above the mid-point with USDSGD trading at 1.2993 levels. The MAS statement continued to refer to the current stance after easing twice as being in "an appropriate position" to address risks to medium-term price stability. Post statement, the SGDNEER was edged higher to +1.25% above the mid-point while USDSGD was slightly lower at 1.2985 levels. SGDNEER strength has recently "ebbed" as noted by MAS, perhaps as some market participants built in a chance for an easing. We maintain our strategic view for a resilient SGDNEER against the uncertain backdrop with MAS policy and Singapore's fundamentals being supportive and indicative of a potential flight to quality.

Maintain our SGD Forecasts, MAS to Stand Pat

We maintain our USDSGD forecasts on the belief that the SGD will continue to stay resilient with the current pace of SGDNEER appreciation (assumed to be 0.5%), solid fundamentals and a potential flight to quality being supportive of the SGD. Therefore, we see an MAS stand pat in Jan as likely with the caveat that it will still be data dependent. An easing would require inflation to remain sustained below thresholds and/or a poorer growth outlook.

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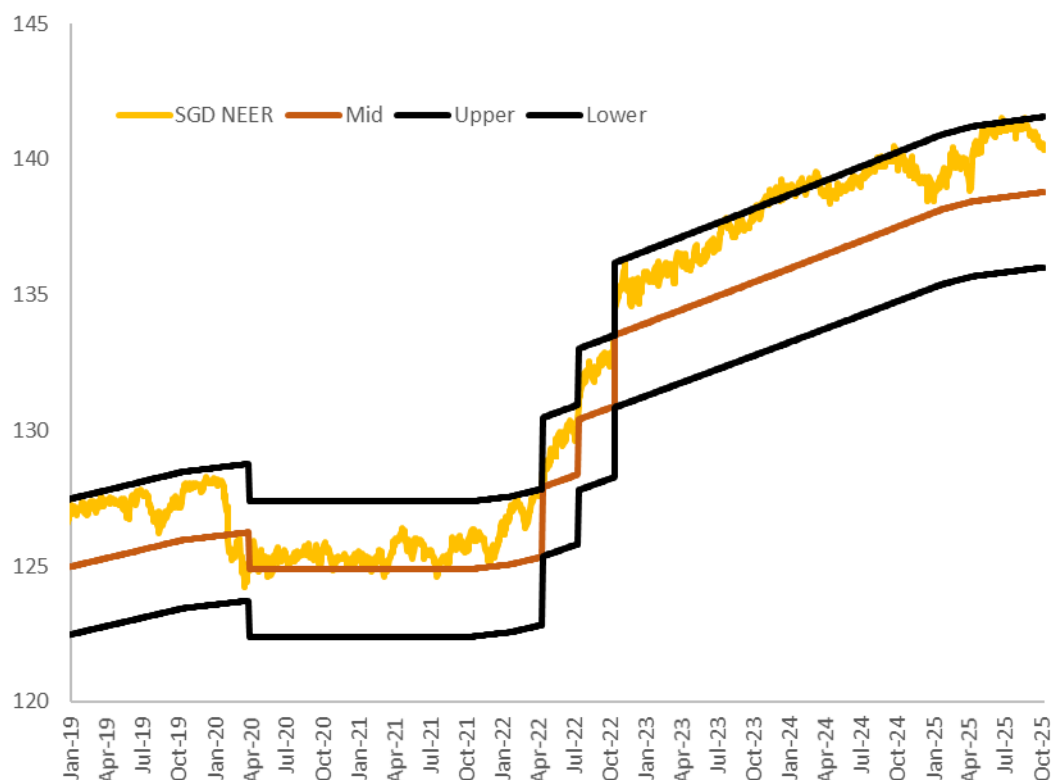
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The SGDNEER edged higher as today's decision was expected by most with some positioning for an easing. This has coincided with a more recent broad USD rebound, with the SGD has continuing to be one of the more resilient currencies and this is evident in the SGDNEER resilience that has been exhibited. The USD (with the HKD) makes up about a quarter of the SGDNEER basket and it is natural to expect some SGDNEER weakness as the USD rebounds, especially so if the SGD does not outperform its peers in the trade-weighted basket.

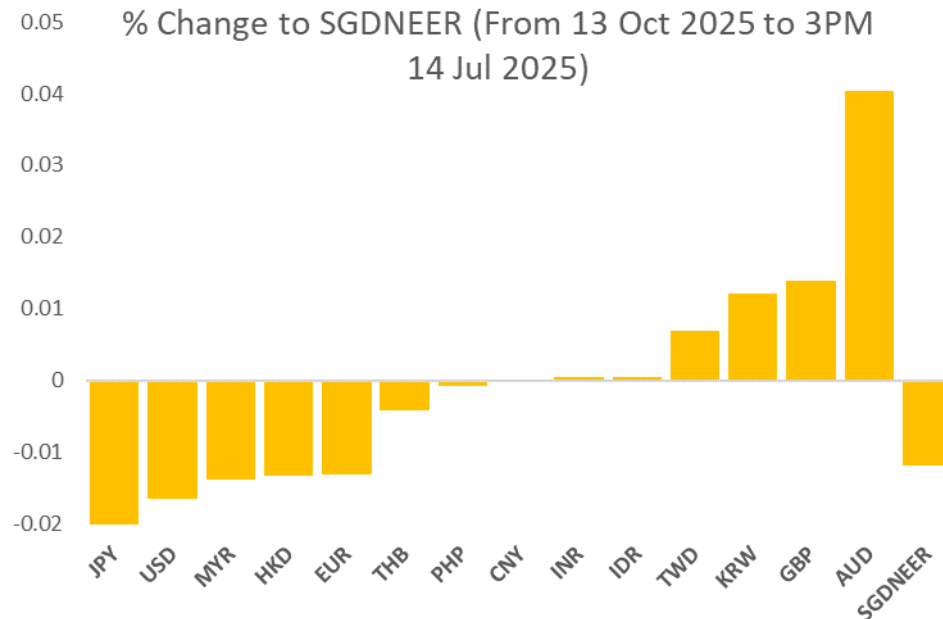
The SGDNEER moves away from the topside of the band (Chart 1) and this could be an indication of a return to days where the SGDNEER does not just hug the topside of the band and instead trades within the band but with a greater degree of variation. This comes amid some continued pricing of downside risks to either growth or inflation, and as such some probability that MAS could elect to ease policy, in contrast to the post-pandemic situation where inflation was the over-arching concern.

Chart 1: SGDNEER Retreats from Upper Bound

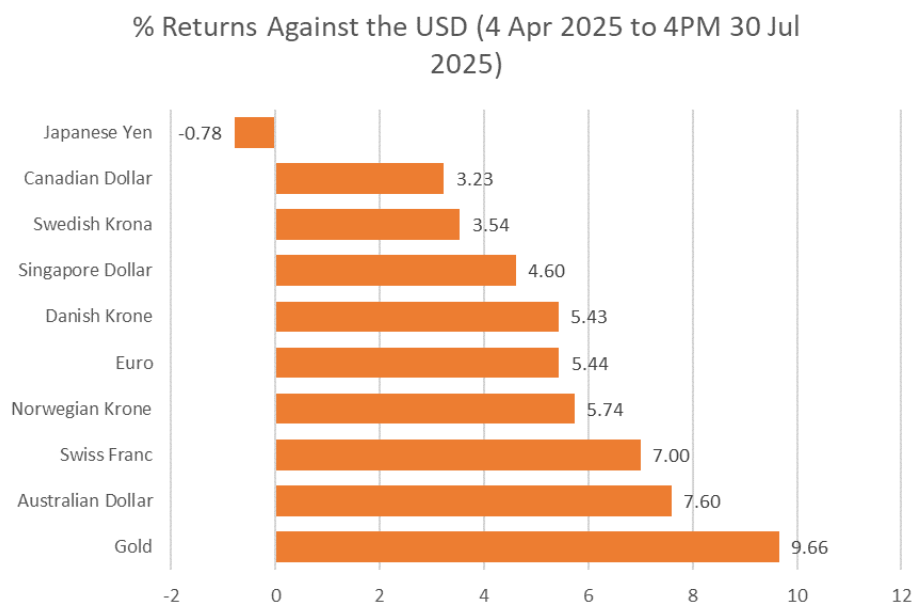
Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy

Decomposing the SGDNEER move against the basket constituents (Chart 2), we see that the SGDNEER, was broadly stronger. Specifically SGD was stronger against AUD, GBP, KRW, TWD (high-betas) while the JPY, USD, MYR and EUR helped to moderate SGDNEER strength. Trade and tariff jitters could be here once again with a recent escalation and hawkish rhetoric between the US and China. China has in no uncertain terms declared that it would engage the US in a trade war to the end, and has perhaps chosen to show strength ahead of much anticipated APEC meeting between Xi and Trump. Against this backdrop, we see continued SGDNEER resilience given the uncertain backdrop and relative certainty that the SGD can provide.

As we suggested earlier, we think a “flight to quality” is still at play. We earlier observed that currencies of countries with a AAA-rating across all major rating agencies have largely performed well in the wake of the escalation in global trade tensions. These countries are Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland. Note that Singapore is the only Asian country that maintains a AAA-rating. Recent broad retracement in the USD notwithstanding, we expect these currencies and gold to do well against the USD, taking reference from the performance of these currencies on 4 Apr 2025 (Chart 3, following China’s retaliation against tariffs post-Liberation Day).

Chart 2: SGDNEER % Moves Against Trading Partners Today

Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy

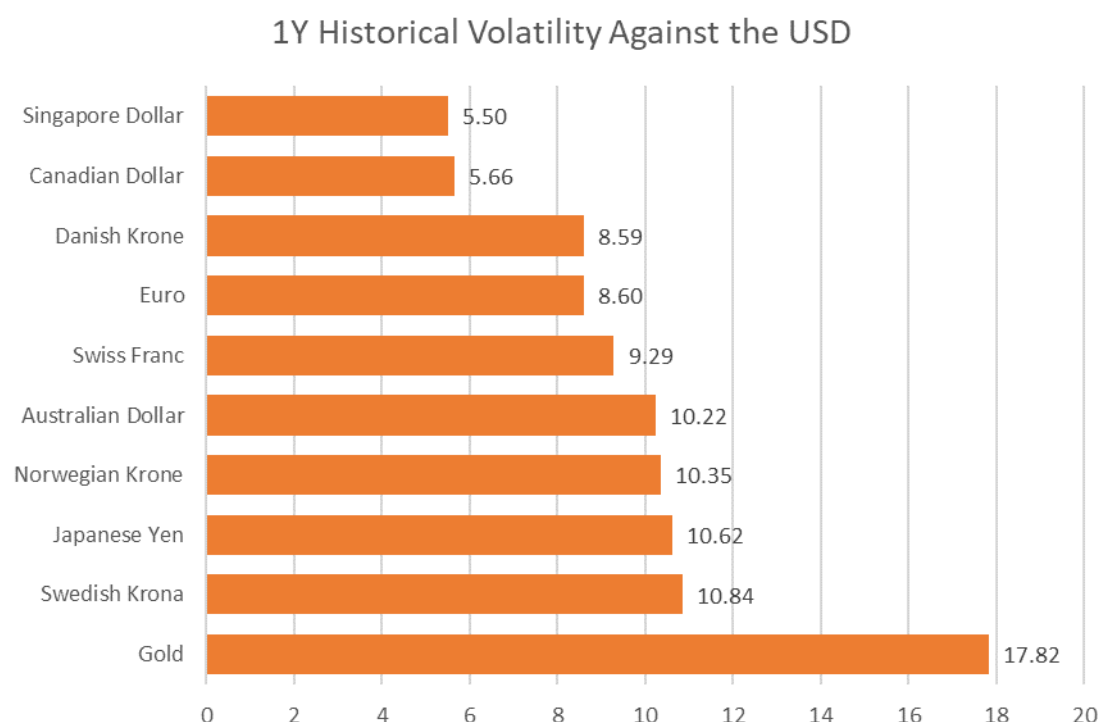
Chart 3: “Flight to Quality” Driver Continues

Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy

We reiterate that while the SGD is in the middle of the pack, it is worth nothing that it still has the lowest historical 1Y volatility against the USD, which could be a quality that is appreciated by investors in times of heightened uncertainty and volatility which we are in (Chart 4) and which we argue is due to the SGDNEER policy. Even as we think that there could be greater variation in the SGDNEER moving forward, the natural caps and preference of MAS to reduce volatility should put the SGD in good stead moving forward. Gold has been the clear outperformer against fiat currencies and that could be driven by talks of the debasement trade, but

that has contributed to some volatility in the precious metal that some may not wish to stomach.

Chart 4: SGD Has Lowest Historical Volatility

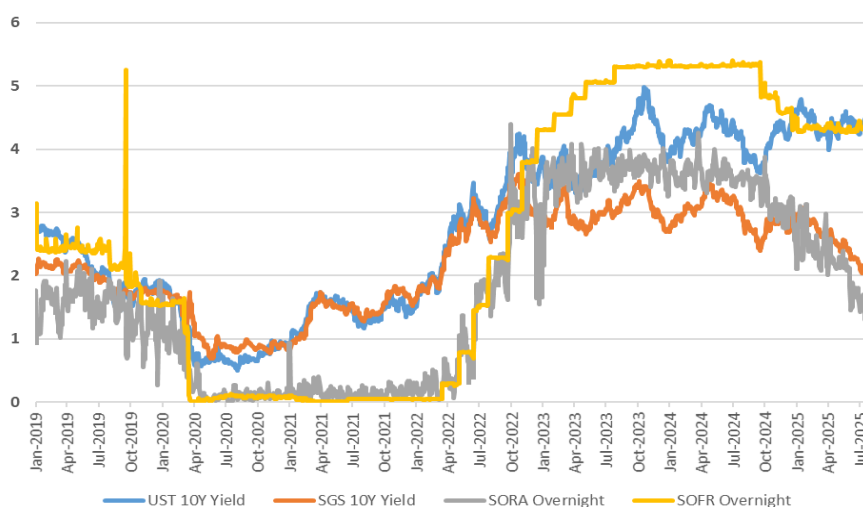


Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy

Note that MAS remains vigilant to defend the SGD to either side and that contributes to reducing volatility. Moreover, the SGD has been a regional safe-haven and we expect that to continue. The flight to quality theme should also persist given that Singapore's solid macroeconomic fundamentals remain intact. These solid fundamentals also give credibility to MAS' policy framework and should become increasingly important against a backdrop of uncertainty and a challenging external environment.

SGD liquidity conditions continue to be flush (Chart 5) and that creates an interesting situation where the current conditions for Singapore mirror that of a "Goldilocks" environment, where growth remains supported, inflation are under control. This would suggest that there is no need for an easing of the slope to neutral, it is likely that interest rates would rise (via a rightward shift of USDSGD forward points i.e. higher USDSGD (stronger USD) expected in the future, ceteris paribus) and that could be counter-productive for MAS' objectives. That is to say an easing may not provide much more support and the current stance is seen to provide sufficient support for growth.

Moreover, we note that at this juncture, several fiscal or political risks abound in the major economies. The US is in an ongoing government shutdown, the Eurozone deals with French political paralysis and Japan is without a PM. In such moments and against such a backdrop, Singapore's solid fundamentals give it reason to stand out. Nevertheless, there are also risks to the outlook, and an all-out trade war could certainly dim global prospects and provide more challenging conditions for a small open economy like Singapore, especially if it is forced to pick a side between two warring titans.

Chart 5: Liquidity Conditions Conducive

Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy

Maintain our SGD Forecasts, MAS to Stand Pat Unless Recession

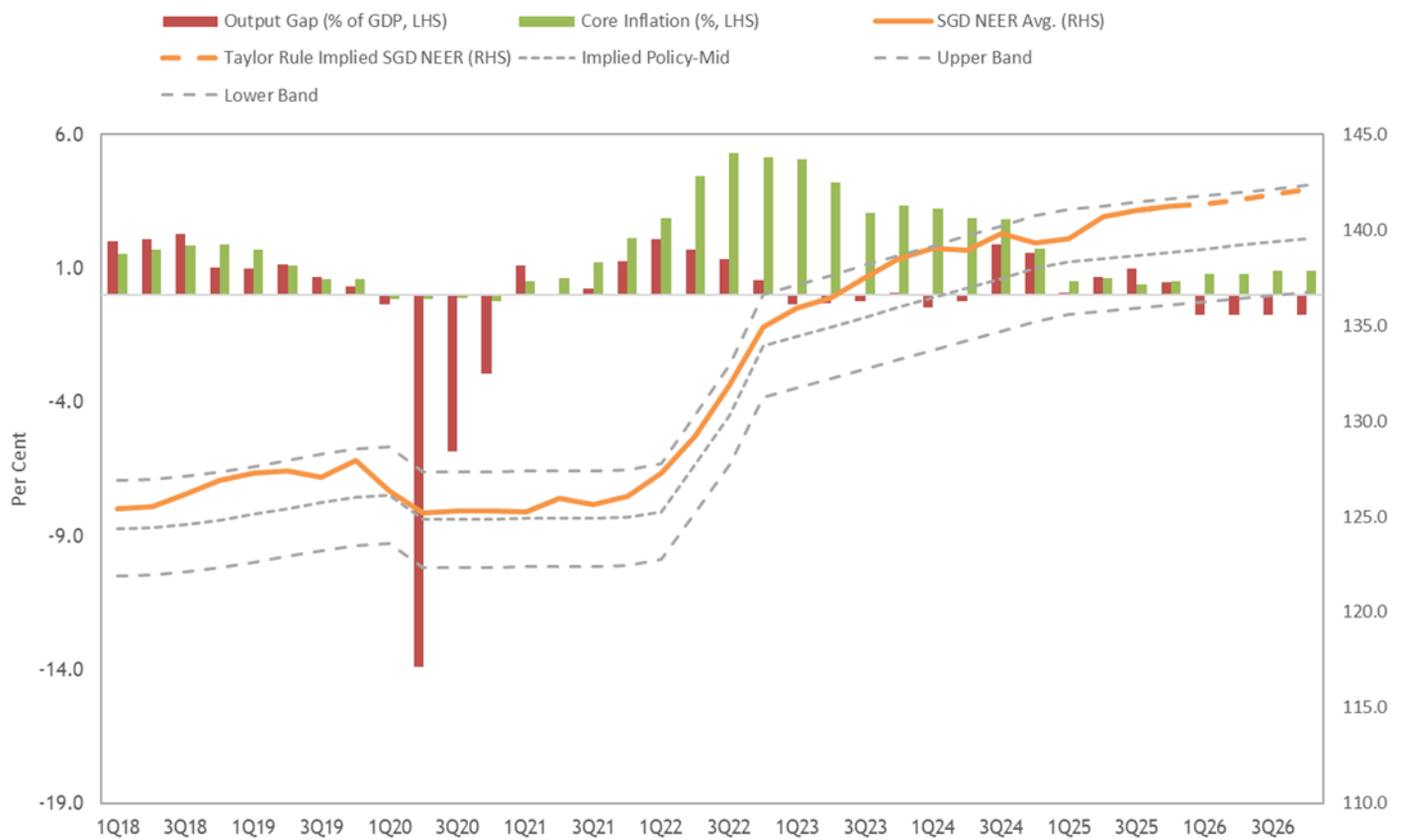
We maintain our USDSGD forecasts on the belief that the SGD will continue to stay resilient with the current pace of SGDNEER appreciation (assumed to be 0.5% p.a.), solid fundamentals and a potential flight to quality being supportive of the SGD. Current spot USDSGD levels are a tad higher than our forecasts, but we prefer to sell the USD on rally. On balance of risks, MAS is more likely to stand pat, which is also consistent with our economists' view and growth and inflation forecasts.

Our Taylor rule implied SGDNEER (Chart 6) also supports our view as the SGDNEER appreciates, albeit at a more gradual pace, even as output gaps revert to the mean as growth momentum slows. Inflation is expected to pick up slightly in the quarters ahead. At the same time, the SGDNEER should not go out of the band edge, which suggests that further tightening by MAS is not necessary.

One should also not forget that MAS also has the option of intervening as a means to influence inflation. We suggest that they could be in a similar situation to Switzerland, where intervention could be the preferred mode of inflation management over a more structural drastic shift such as a policy easing. Switzerland has declared that there would be a high bar to move to negative rates, and while MAS likely will not declare that there is a high bar to move to a flat slope, the fact remains that such a move has only in the past been a response to crises that necessitated such shifts. This is consistent with our read that MAS' default policy stance should be some positive appreciation of the SGDNEER.

In conclusion, the current monetary policy stance should enable MAS to achieve its goals, namely that of medium-term price stability and sustainable non-inflationary growth. There are risks on the horizon for both growth and inflation, but today's statement suggests that MAS is comfortable with the current stance until tail risks become reality. At the same time, current flush liquidity conditions also allow for a mildly supportive stance to remain sufficient for now. Therefore, we see an MAS stand pat in Jan as likely with the caveat that it will still be data dependent. An easing would require inflation to remain sustained below thresholds and/or a poorer growth outlook.

Chart 6: Taylor Rule Suggests SGDNEER to Continue to Challenge Top Edge of the Band



Source: Bloomberg, Maybank FX Research & Strategy Estimates; Note: The Taylor Rule implied SGD NEER shows the path that SGD NEER should take given a set of inflation forecasts and estimated output gaps for the economy.

Table 1: USDSGD Forecasts

Forecast	4Q 2025	1Q 2026	2Q 2026	3Q 2026
USDSGD	1.2650	1.2600	1.2550	1.2550

Source: Maybank FX Research & Strategy Estimates

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