

Santander Go Asian Equity

10 / 2025

Fund commentary

Performance overview:

Emerging Asia ex-Japan markets performed strongly in October. The resumption of the US rate-cutting cycle, at a time of buoyant AI-related technology spending, supported markets.

The recent meeting between the US and Chinese presidents in Seoul led to slightly lower tariffs and an extension of the truce between the two countries, easing market risks.

The fund posted a positive return but underperformed the benchmark over the period

Drivers of fund performance:

At the market level, allocation had a pronounced negative effect, with the overweighting of China proving to be notably detrimental to returns. Stock selection in Korea weighed on performance.

On a sector basis, stock selection weighed on returns, especially in industrials. Allocation also detracted, but much more modestly. Positive stock selection in IT helped to offset some of the drag.

In terms of stock performance, the strongest returns came from the positions in Samsung Electronics (Korea), ASE Technology (Taiwan) and Chroma ATE (Taiwan).

The weakest performers were the zero weighting in SK Hynix, the underweight to TSMC and the overweight holding in Hanwha Aerospace.

Portfolio activity:

During the month, we added to more defensive names including China Construction Bank (China) and Bharti Airtel (India). On the flip side, we took profit on names that have done well, including AIA (Hong Kong), TSMC (Taiwan), Zijin Mining (China) and Tencent (China).

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Outlook/positioning:

The rally in the Chinese market up until October was fuelled by a more supportive environment for private enterprise and breakthroughs in innovation. Additionally, external factors such as the weaker US dollar and increased asset diversification have boosted Chinese equities. But gains remain concentrated in a few select thematic sectors and the broader economic fundamentals continue to be weak. While robust liquidity from rate cuts and ongoing asset reallocation provides a favourable backdrop for the market rally, domestic economic recovery is still essential for the market to broaden beyond just a handful of thematic sectors.

Lacking AI exposure, Indian markets have fallen out of favour with investors this year. Weak domestic consumption and tariff shocks have further dampened sentiment. The near-term outlook will hinge on the effectiveness of supportive domestic factors, such as the goods and services tax reduction, low inflation and ongoing monetary easing. After a period of sustained foreign outflows, October saw a reversal as foreign investors became net buyers, while robust domestic flows continued to provide crucial support for the Indian market.

In North Asia, improving clarity on AI capex trends is benefiting leading technology stocks in Taiwan and Korea. In Korea, optimism about potential corporate governance reforms under the new administration is also helping to narrow the long-standing discount.

Across the rest of the region, ASEAN markets will remain vulnerable to trade tariffs as well as the trend in the US dollar, where visibility remains limited.

Recent market gains have pushed regional equity valuations above long-term averages, overlooking risks from global growth or tariffs. Market performance is increasingly led by AI, especially in Korea, Taiwan and China, with global AI investment and improved monetisation prospects outweighing local factors. US rate and dollar expectations remain crucial, and any deviation from expectations could challenge current valuations.

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