

Leaders in Middle East Banking and Finance

For further enquiries, please contact: Adil Jilla (Publishing Director – MENA & Turkey) / Kaersi Jilla (Associate Publisher – MENA & Turkey) at: MEIAC: Shatha Tower, Office No. 2514, Media City, PO Box. 502118, Dubai, U.A.E. Tel: +971 4 4548690 / Email: k.jilla@meiac-uk.com / www.meiac-uk.com

In association with



2 | LEADERS IN MIDDLE EAST BANKING & FINANCE ARAB BANK



ARAB BANK STRATEGY EXPANDS FRONTIERS

In a fast-changing market, Arab Bank has long demonstrated an ability to navigate difficult market conditions, while ensuring consistent growth in balance sheet and profitability.

An established presence across the Middle East and North Africa — coupled with a strong international network — gives the bank a competitive edge and a platform for expansion.

Strategic planning and prudent risk management have kept Arab Bank on a solid growth trajectory, despite wider market uncertainty. Diversified revenue streams and cost optimisation initiatives exemplify Arab Bank's responsive business model.

Over the past three years, Arab Bank has achieved a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 62% in net profits after tax, which reached \$829m in 2023. Net operating profit over the same period grew at a CAGR of 28% to reach \$1.8bn.

Building on this impressive growth, the bank reported strong financial results for the first half of 2024, reflecting its robust asset base and strong capitalisation.

Net income after tax was up 25% to \$503m. Net operating profit grew by 11%, driven by core banking activities and controlled operating expenses. The bank has a solid capital adequacy ratio of 17.5% and a strong common equity tier one ratio of 15.1%.

In its corporate lending, Arab Bank is taking advantage of concerted efforts towards economic diversification across the region. "This has resulted in a significant growth momentum in many non-oil sectors across several countries, especially in the GCC," says Randa Sadik, the bank's CEO. "We have seen varying levels of growth in several sectors, including renewable energy, real estate, construction, transportation, technology and infrastructure projects, in addition to a steady growth in trade finance triggered by increased trade volumes within the region and beyond."

In the thriving retail space, segmentation and

customer lifecycle management are at the heart of Arab Bank's strategy. "This approach is executed through customised offerings for salaried, professional and self-employed customers, catering to a wide range of the working population," says Sadik. "As over 70% of the MENA region has internet access, digitisation is also an important driver of our retail banking strategy."

Sadik notes that Arab Bank is also witnessing an increase in demand for financial planning and wealth management solutions, across several markets in the region.

"This is opening up new opportunities to deepen our relationship and increase share-of-wallet in this key customer category," she says. "We offer our exclusive programme for high net worth individuals, supported by our wealth management and private banking value propositions."

GROWING THE ECOSYSTEM

Digitisation is not just a feature of Arab Bank's retail offering, but is fundamental to its broader operations. Arab Bank was among the first MENA banks to pursue partnerships with the burgeoning FinTech landscape, accelerating innovation and integrating FinTech solutions into its platforms and systems.

The bank established a FinTech accelerator programme, ABX, back in 2018, and has invested in around 20 start-ups across MENA and beyond. ABX has also engaged with over 25 high growth potential start-ups on pilots and proofs of concept.

Most recently, Arab Bank launched its new banking-as-a-service platform — Omnify — in the United Arab Emirates and Jordan. This provides FinTechs with the opportunity to scale up their innovative solutions in their respective markets with the backing of Arab Bank. "As we enter the era of generative AI, we can see a new level of collaboration with the FinTech community developing cutting edge solutions," she says.

The bank's approach to sustainability and environmental, social and governance (ESG)



"We have seen varying levels of growth in several sectors, in addition to a steady growth in trade finance triggered by increased trade volumes within the region and beyond"
—Chief Executive Officer, Randa Sadik

issues is a holistic one. Arab Bank works to embed sustainability and responsible banking practices into every facet of its operations. "Sustainable finance is an important focus area for us," says Sadik. "Our customers and stakeholders increasingly expect us to finance projects and initiatives that help improve society and the environment."

In 2022, the bank developed and launched a comprehensive Sustainable Finance Framework that lays the groundwork for Arab Bank to issue financial instruments such as green, social and sustainable bonds.

Arab Bank's ESG goals include growing its sustainable finance activities, committing to projects aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, reducing its environmental footprint and improving gender equality and empowerment. Sadik highlights the bank's commitment to ensuring transparency in both measuring and reporting its progress in the space.

Delivering positive ESG impacts for all stakeholders and leveraging digital innovation to deliver superior customer experience are key to the Arab Bank strategy. The bank will continue to build on its position as a leading local and regional bank, using its well-established network to expand into new markets and create new business opportunities for success. ●

KEY COMPANY DATA First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$68.7bn
- Net profit: \$502.8m
- Capital adequacy ratio: 17.5%
- Loan to deposit ratio: 75.4%





QNB'S BRAND SHINES BRIGHT

A lynchpin of Qatar's robust economic growth, QNB is playing a pivotal role in supporting major infrastructure projects in the country. But its strength extends across the whole Middle East and beyond.

A network spanning more than two dozen countries on three continents allows the firm to bring its full-service offering to developed and emerging markets alike.

Underpinning QNB's goal to cement itself as one of the leading banks in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) is a three-pronged approach.

The first component is a strong focus on QNB's core operation as an international wholesale bank. "This means further uplifting our wholesale capabilities by enhancing our value propositions as a solution-led firm," says Abdulla Mubarak Al-Khalifa, QNB's global CEO.

Competition is fierce, but QNB has a winning strategy and stellar profile in its favour. Al-Khalifa points to the firm's strong credit ratings, brand value and relationships across an international network.

QNB is one of the highest-rated banks in the Middle East and Africa, boasting A+ ratings from Standard & Poor's and Fitch. Moody's rates it even higher at Aa3. All three agencies cite QNB's flagship status, profitability and asset quality.

In 2023, QNB Group posted net profit of \$4.3bn, an increase of 8% over the previous year. Operating income was up 11% to \$10.7bn. The impressive results ensured QNB remains the largest bank in MEA and with a market cap of \$42bn one of the world's top 50 banks.

COST CONTROL

A vital factor in the bank's excellent financials is its strategic focus on cost efficiency. QNB Group has been able to maintain a market-leading cost-to-income ratio of 20%. In addition, its capital adequacy ratio remains comfortably high at 19.8%, well above both the Qatar Central Bank and Basel III requirements.

"We continue to grow our brand value that currently stands at \$8.4bn and have maintained our status as MEA's most valuable banking brand," says Al-Khalifa. "With a network that spans 28 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe, we are able to leverage our relationships as a full-service financial institution across a range of hard-to-access frontier and emerging markets."

An international market offering huge growth potential for the bank is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. QNB also sees significant opportunity

for growth in its international branches in London, Paris, Singapore and Hong Kong. "These financial centres allow us to capture market share for trade and investment flows with global and multinational corporate customers, to fuel our growth," says Al-Khalifa.

In its home market, QNB is helping drive the engine of economic growth. The multi-billion dollar North Field natural gas expansion project is a major opportunity for QNB to support Qatar's development in the coming years.

"We are actively supporting initiatives across the value chain, ranging from wells, pipelines, LNG storage tanks, new LNG tankers, all the way through to the expansion of Qatar's refining and downstream capacity," says Al-Khalifa.

EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGY

The second element of QNB's overarching strategy is leveraging innovation as a strategic enabler capitalising on developments such as open banking, platforms, data and analytics, artificial intelligence, digitisation and automation.

Changes in regulatory landscape, customer behaviour and the entry of new FinTech competitors are increasingly challenging the ways of operating in the traditional banking sector. This brings technological disruption, financial disintermediation but also opportunities for banks like QNB at the cutting edge of digital development.

The bank is exploring FinTech opportunities across a range of business segments from payments and digital wallets to solutions that provide further automation, integrate AI and leverage machine learning.

"Our QNB digital 3.0 programme focuses on investing in our IT capabilities to enable digitisation through the adoption of new technologies, and uplifting of our IT architecture and infrastructure," says Al-Khalifa. "This improves efficiency and accelerates decision-making in a more customer-centric manner across our processes end-to-end."



"We are able to leverage our relationships as a full-service financial institution across a range of hard-to-access frontier and emerging markets."

**—Abdulla Mubarak Al-Khalifa,
QNB Group CEO**

The last but by no means least element of QNB's strategy is embedding sustainability across its business and operating model to deliver positive impact across ESG-related topics.

Banks play an important role in contributing to financial stability and economic growth. As the largest financial institution in MEA, QNB recognises the positive influence its operations can have on the environment, society and governance.

"As a bank, the most impactful way to address the topic of sustainability is through our financing activities, which are supported by our Sustainable Finance and Product Framework, which offers over 30 sustainable products across all our businesses," says Al-Khalifa. "Ensuring ESG is prioritised across our operations strengthens our governance while reducing environmental and social risks, all with the intent to make a positive contribution to our society and the environment." ●

KEY COMPANY DATA First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$346bn
- Net profit: \$2.2bn
- Capital adequacy ratio: 19.2%
- Loan to deposit ratio: 98.7%



NBK: CREATING NEW GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

In a highly competitive Middle East market, National Bank of Kuwait distinguishes itself through a multi-faceted strategy that underscores its resilience, visionary approach and the strength of its brand.

A well-crafted diversification strategy has allowed the Group to navigate adverse market conditions, mitigate risks and seize new growth opportunities. With a robust presence across four continents, NBK's extensive business portfolio allows it to capitalise on regional and global opportunities.

As the only banking group in Kuwait offering both conventional and Sharia-compliant banking services, NBK has a clear competitive edge in its home market.

This strategic edge not only diversifies the bank's revenue streams but positions it to tap into a growing and dynamic Islamic finance market.

NBK has made concerted efforts to expand the reach of its Islamic arm — Boubyan Bank — beyond Kuwait's borders. "This is part of a broader strategy to build a global Islamic banking network and position Boubyan as a premier source of Sharia finance worldwide," says Isam Al-Sager, NBK's vice-chairman and group CEO.

CUTTING-EDGE SKILLS

Across the broader corporate banking group, there is also an unwavering commitment to extending NBK's market leadership.

This manifests itself in deepening relationships with existing clients, while also seeking out new business opportunities — ensuring that NBK retains its top tier clients and continually expands its customer base.

Exceptional customer service, combined with a robust capital base, plays a critical role in attracting new clients who seek reliability, trust, and tailored financial solutions.

By diversifying across different customer segments and geographies, NBK has effectively mitigated risk, while capturing growth opportunities in various markets.

"This diversification is not just a defensive strategy but a proactive one, enabling the bank to maintain a balanced exposure profile, even in volatile market conditions," says Al-Sager.

"Growth across different customer segments — from large corporates to SMEs — demonstrates NBK's adaptability and its ability to meet the evolving needs of its clients."

At the heart of NBK's long term success is its unwavering commitment to investing in human capital, recognising it as a driver of sustainable growth and innovation. By focusing on nurturing younger talent, NBK aims to build a pipeline of future leaders equipped with the expertise and vision to navigate an evolving financial landscape.

Skill initiatives like the NBK Academy and the NBK Tech Academy underscore the Group's focus on cultivating a skilled workforce that drives innovation and maintains its competitive edge.

WEYAY LEADS THE WAY

NBK's steadfast commitment to advancing its strategic agenda is also reflected in technology investments. The bank excels at digital innovation, consistently delivering transformative banking experiences that align with the evolving needs of its customers. The launch of Weyay, Kuwait's first digital bank, exemplifies NBK's pioneering spirit in setting new standards for the banking industry by offering seamless and innovative banking solutions.

Similarly, Boubyan Bank's launch of Nomo, a digital Islamic bank, is an innovative approach to meeting the evolving needs of modern consumers, who require technological convenience in concert with Sharia compliance. Nomo leverages advanced digital technologies to provide a seamless banking experience, enabling customers to manage their finances according to Islamic principles on a user-friendly digital platform.

A GREEN VISION

NBK's strong brand reputation is



"Growth across different customer segments — from large corporates to SMEs — demonstrates NBK's adaptability and its ability to meet the evolving needs of its clients"

—Isam Jasem Al-Sager, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, NBK

further demonstrated by its efforts to support clients in transitioning to greener business practices. "The bank collaborates closely with its customers, offering tailored financial solutions and advisory services that facilitate the shift towards sustainable operations," says Al-Sager. "This commitment not only aligns with the global emphasis on sustainability but also reinforces NBK's standing as a responsible and forward-looking financial institution."

The Group has made environmental, social and governance principles the cornerstone of its operations and lending philosophy, weaving these elements seamlessly into its overarching business strategy.

This commitment, crystallised in the Group's 2023 ESG strategy, is built upon several interrelated pillars, across governance, responsible banking, building on capabilities and helping local communities.

This reinforces NBK's dedication to supporting its customer base while driving sustainable growth and adapting to emerging challenges. In the coming years, NBK's priorities are firmly anchored in a visionary approach aimed at reinforcing its standing as the premier banking partner across all market segments, both within Kuwait and on the global stage.



KEY COMPANY DATA First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$122.9bn
- Net profit: \$954mn
- Capital adequacy ratio: 16.8%
- Loan to deposit ratio: 92.1%



CIB: A POWERHOUSE OF REGIONAL GROWTH

An unrivalled ability to grow its core business while tapping into new markets and pursuing new opportunities has solidified CIB's market-leading status. The Egyptian bank's dynamic business model and commitment to integrating leading technology across its operations have ensured a strategy that creates value for its customers, employees, shareholders and society.

"CIB has proven the strength and sustainability of its business model and flexible balance sheet by achieving yet another record year of success, while maintaining top-notch liquidity and solvency levels," says Islam Zekry, the group's chief financial officer.

All of CIB's main business segments have enjoyed significant growth so far this year. The firm's institutional banking loan book increased by 28% in the first half of 2024 to EGP253bn (\$5.2bn) and its institutional deposits grew by 19% to EGP293bn.

Stellar loan growth has not come at the expense of asset quality. On the contrary, the bank's non-performing loan ratio has declined to just over 4%.

The increase in loans and deposits was accompanied by impressive profits. CIB recorded net income of EGP27.5bn (\$570m) for the first half of 2024 — up 96% on the same period in 2023.

"CIB's financial performance, both historically and presently, is a proof of its sustained success and resilience in a dynamic financial landscape," says Zekry. "This success is further evidenced by the bank's ability to adapt to changing market conditions while maintaining strong performance."

Three main themes form the core of CIB's strategy: capitalising on the success of its corporate and liabilities franchises; growing and diversifying revenue streams to achieve sustainability and resilience; and becoming a digital leader in sales, customer service and operations.

CIB recognises that digital transformation is key to achieving business sustainability. Through integrating first class technology into its offerings, the bank strives to provide customers with a seamless and secure banking experience. It consistently prioritises the development of digital channels, data analytics, innovative solutions and customer satisfaction.

This in turn allows CIB to manage costs, ensure sales efficiency and offer distinctive

digital value propositions. Zekry says: "Placing customers' needs at the heart of the bank's products and services has significantly contributed towards CIB's digital transformation."

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

CIB also plays a leading role in the burgeoning sustainable finance market. It was the first Egyptian bank to issue a green bond programme, which funds a diverse range of green projects and has helped drive portfolio growth and green asset utilisation to over \$130m.

In partnership with the International Finance Corporation, CIB has signed a \$100m senior debt agreement for green financing. "This financing underlines CIB's steadfast commitment towards sustainable finance and is a significant milestone that will deliver comprehensive and innovative financial solutions to our clients," says Zekry. "This partnership enables CIB to offer sustainable solutions that will mitigate climate change, such as green buildings, resource efficiency, renewable energy and industrial energy efficiency."

The institutional pillars of CIB's approach to sustainable finance incorporate finance, governance, management, communication, education and innovation. A constantly evolving strategy allows the bank to offer innovative sustainable finance offerings, cultivate risk management, integrate environmental, social and governance practices across its operations and develop its disclosure practices. "CIB acknowledges its vital role in serving the environment and society," says Zekry, "and is committed to leading Egypt's transition towards a green and low carbon economy."

DRIVING TRADE

Long a market leader in Egypt, CIB is bringing its unrivalled strength across all facets of modern banking to new frontiers.



"CIB acknowledges its vital role in serving the environment and society and is committed to leading Egypt's transition towards a green and low carbon economy" —Islam Zekry, Chief Financial Officer, CIB

Its acquisition of CIB Kenya in 2022 was the first by an Egyptian bank in Sub-Saharan Africa. CIB Kenya's focus is on digital banking solutions and trade finance activities — helping drive the growing Egypt-Kenya trade corridor and supporting Egyptian small and medium-sized enterprises and large corporations in Eastern Africa.

CIB Kenya recently opened its seventh branch in Mombasa and underwent a comprehensive product revamp. The Kenyan operation has launched a variety of products to serve corporate banking and retail customers, to provide the Kenyan market with personalised financial solutions.

"These products underscore CIB Kenya's commitment towards creating a brand that offers exceptional value and a superior banking experience," says Zekry. "CIB Kenya aspires to become East Africa's digital and business hub, helping both countries benefit from regional integration efforts and becoming members in several trade agreements, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area." ●



KEY COMPANY DATA

First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$21.9bn
- Net profit: \$576.3m
- Capital adequacy ratio: 26.2%
- Loan to deposit ratio: 38.7%

6 | LEADERS IN MIDDLE EAST BANKING & FINANCE KFH

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



DIGITAL INNOVATION HELPS KFH HIT NEW HEIGHTS

A financial pioneer with a global presence and outstanding reputation, Kuwait Finance House has created a brand distinguished by credibility and trust. The firm is the largest listed company on the Boursa Kuwait — with a market capitalisation in excess of KD12bn (\$39bn) — and stands out as the most profitable of the nation's banks.

The group's impressive profits and solid financial position are in part down to its reach, which spans 640 branches across 12 countries, including Bahrain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Germany and the UK.

In 2023, the net profit attributable to shareholders reached KD584.5m (\$1.9bn) — an increase of over 63% on the previous year and the highest across the entire Kuwaiti banking sector. For the first half of 2024, the group's profits reached KD 341.2m (\$1.1bn) — an increase of 2.3% compared with the same period in 2023.

Acting group CEO Abdulwahab Al-Rushood says KFH's strong performance across the various markets in which it operates provides a solid foundation for sustainable growth. "KFH's entities, particularly in Kuwait, Bahrain and Turkey, played a crucial role in boosting operating profit," he says.

The group's leadership in Islamic finance is another factor driving success. "KFH's expertise in Sharia-compliant banking has allowed it to capture significant market share over the years, tailoring Islamic financing products to continue attracting new customers in new markets," says Al-Rushood.

KFH has also ensured exemplary performance by managing the challenges of interest rate hikes, inflation and market volatility. A comprehensive approach to active oversight — centred on asset and liability management, hedging, capital adequacy and stress testing — has allowed the firm to weather all market conditions.

In recognition of KFH's financial strength,

market value and respected brand, the firm has received numerous prestigious global awards and maintained a top credit rating from global agencies. Forbes ranked KFH first in Kuwait and 10th in the whole Middle East region for market capitalisation and profitability in its Top 100 Listed Companies in 2024.

DIGITAL TRAILBLAZER

KFH's strategic priorities include making sure its core banking business maintains sustainable profitability, expanding its growing customer base and promoting a solid innovation and digital transformation strategy. The bank prides itself on maintaining excellence across its various digital services and platforms.

"KFH is a leader in offering innovative services and financial solutions," says Al-Rushood. "We are leveraging cutting edge technologies like robotics and artificial intelligence to streamline back office operations, and utilising big data analytics to make informed business decisions."

These advancements showcase KFH's commitment to harnessing frontier and emerging technologies for comprehensive digital transformation. The group has multiple initiatives to create new and improved digital channels.

This includes the creation of Tam Digital Bank, which KFH launched in October 2023 as the first Sharia-compliant digital bank in Kuwait.

Amid the surge of Islamic financial transactions across different markets, Al-Rushood anticipates a further globalisation of Sharia-compliant financial products. "This is a significant challenge that requires maintaining key

influencing factors such as operational efficiency, cost management, innovation, technology and cybersecurity, as well as social responsibility," he says.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Sustainability and environmental, social and governance considerations have become increasingly central to banks' oper-



“KFH's expertise in Sharia-compliant banking has allowed it to capture significant market share over the years”
—Abdulwahab AlRushood,
Acting Group CEO

ations and leadership strategies.

Al-Rushood notes KFH has embedded ESG factors into its core strategies and decision-making processes. This includes developing ESG policies and frameworks to guide the firm's operations and investments. KFH is also including ESG factors in its risk management frameworks, particularly related to climate risk and social responsibility.

"Banks are recognising the importance of sustainability and ESG, as both a responsibility and an opportunity to drive long term value and align with stakeholder expectations," Al-Rushood says. "KFH operates under Sharia principles, which are aligned with goals to develop more sustainable banking practices."

The group has participated in several United Nations Development Programme initiatives that have helped it align its strategy and investments across business lines with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. "We are financing initiatives that take carbon emissions mitigation into consideration," says Al-Rushood, "increasingly linking our investment plans with SDGs, and promoting initiatives to build awareness around environmental products, such as green sukuk." ●

SPONSORED REPORT

KEY COMPANY DATA First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$118.8bn
- Net profit: \$1.2bn
- Capital adequacy ratio: 17.15%
- Financing to deposit ratio: 97.25%





BOUBYAN BRINGS EXCELLENCE TO ISLAMIC FINANCE

A trailblazer when it comes to customer-centric innovation and digital excellence, Boubyan Bank has a new five-year plan, to ensure its position as a leading, full-fledged Islamic bank for high value individuals and companies.

Sharia-compliant finance has seen huge developments in recent years, from regulatory evolution and market expansion to product innovation and financial inclusion. There has never been more demand for banks like Boubyan that have the insight and expertise to provide diverse customer groups with cutting edge Islamic services and products.

“Countries like Saudi Arabia and Malaysia continue to strengthen Islamic finance laws and others like the UK have introduced specific regulations to support Islamic banking,” says Adel Al-Majed, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of Boubyan Bank. “Sukuk issuance has grown substantially, driven by demand for Sharia-compliant investment options in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Sovereign and corporate sukuk have become popular financing tools, allowing governments and businesses to raise capital in a Sharia-compliant manner.”

Continuously evolving to meet new challenges and ambitions, Boubyan has already established a reputation for excellence in its provision of Sharia-compliant finance. A new strategy — Boubyan 2028 — aligns with the bank’s overall mission and will integrate environmental, social and governance considerations across its operations.

“Boubyan 2028 aims to grow and strengthen our local and international presence, diversify products and services, and explore new growth opportunities,” says Al-Majed. “We will continue scaling our core businesses, in addition to exploring strategic partnerships to ensure growth momentum.”

Execution of the bank’s strategy will result in continued customer centricity, with the aim of growing market share, innovating on existing and new business lines and creating significant value for shareholders. Boubyan is experiencing strong growth across all its business segments, but in the retail sector Al-Majed singles out the bank’s PRIME and Premium segments for special mention.

PRIME is the youth segment, where

Boubyan is at the cutting edge of developing new products and services. “These efforts have yielded exemplary results,” says Al-Majed. “Today the bank holds a significant market share among the Kuwaiti youth. While maintaining this share year on year is in itself an enormous feat, the bank succeeds in overachieving its expectations by increasing growth every year.”

In the Premium market — affluent customers — growth has been just as impressive. Entering its third year of existence, the Premium segment is a perfect combination of Boubyan’s outstanding customer services, coupled with innovative, state-of-the-art Premium lounges that offer wealthy customers privacy and financial support.

SUPPORTING DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

FinTech and digital technology are changing the Islamic finance landscape faster than ever, providing new avenues for ethical and Sharia-compliant investment. Faster services, growing product options and personalised services are widening the Islamic finance market.

Boubyan has taken a highly structured and active approach to engaging with local FinTech and start-up communities. “We have already launched multiple Hackathons, Accelerators, and innovation challenges, within the bank and externally,” says Al-Majed.

Boubyan is proud to have sponsored almost 80% of the FinTech applicants to the Central Bank of Kuwait’s Regulatory Sandbox. In addition, Boubyan has multiple ongoing engagements with FinTechs for strategic, implementation and operational advice and support.

Boubyan also provides a wide variety of financial services to FinTechs. In addition to the more traditional services, it continues to invest



“ Today the bank holds a significant market share among the Kuwaiti youth ”
—Adel Al-Majed, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Boubyan Bank

heavily to ensure it can provide new services like banking-as-a-service, BIN sponsorship, wallet acceptance and embedded banking.

More recently, Boubyan has started engaging with FinTechs and start-ups from a venture capital perspective, from very early to late stage investments. “Boubyan has made significant progress in this space,” says Al-Majed, “and will shortly be announcing key investments, focusing on strategic positioning in sectors that are critical for Boubyan’s core business and long-term vision.” ●



KEY COMPANY DATA First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$28.9bn
- Net profit: \$161.7m
- Capital adequacy ratio: 178%
- Loan to deposit ratio: 88%

8 | LEADERS IN MIDDLE EAST BANKING & FINANCE **CBQ**

CBQ SETTING INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS

Commercial Bank of Qatar has distinguished itself through a forward-thinking approach and a series of impressive, first-to-market innovations. When it comes to digital technology, CBQ acts and others follow.

The firm was the first lender in Qatar to launch a dedicated merchant app accepting mobile and QR code payments. It was the first to issue digitally signed statements and the first to offer augmented reality, which helps customers locate merchants with exclusive offers for CBQ cardholders.

“Commercial Bank is at the forefront of FinTech innovation and digitalisation, continuously evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly digital economy,” says Omran Al-Sherawi, head of assets and liability management.

Unsurprisingly for a firm dedicated to setting a benchmark for digital banking solutions, the CBQ Mobile App is ranked number one in the Middle East.

The platform combines a seamless and intuitive user experience with best-in-class security protocols, ensuring customer data is safeguarded in an evolving digital landscape. Peerless functionality such as 60-second cross-border remittances is revolutionising the speed and ease of international transactions.

The launch of CBQ’s digital wallet with tap-to-pay functionality has also enhanced customers’ payment experience. Whether making payments locally or internationally, customers enjoy faster, safer and more efficient transactions.

The CB Wallet also provides greater control over card usage and is designed to improve speed and security at point-of-sale transactions.

The focus on innovation extends throughout the bank’s corporate operations. A prime example is its recently updated corporate trade portal. This advanced platform streamlines and enhances the trade finance experience for businesses through greater efficiency and transparency in transactions.

“This portal represents a significant leap forward, especially since we are the first bank to incorporate Optical Character Recognition technology in Qatar,” says Al-Sherawi. CBQ has introduced new fields and artificial intelligence-

powered tools to improve client experience and reduce turnaround times.

A GREEN LEADER

CBQ is leading the way on sustainable finance as well. Its issuance of a debut green bond — a highly successful Swiss franc transaction — underscores its role as a responsible financial leader. The Sfr255m bond was the largest Swiss franc green deal from Qatar and the largest Swiss deal of any kind from the country for over a decade.

“Our issuance of a green bond underscores our role as a responsible financial leader, channelling capital towards environmentally friendly projects,” says Al-Sherawi.

This commitment is evident in CBQ’s A rating in MSCI’s ESG rating scale, testifying to its strong environmental, social and governance practices. “The bank places significant value on ESG and will be focussed on this theme across both the financing and client offering space,” says Al-Sherawi.

The firm’s mindset is to view challenges as opportunities to advance the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. CBQ has launched a series of initiatives as part of its commitment to supporting Qatar’s National Strategy for the Environment and Climate Change.

They include a CB Green Mortgage Loan, which offers competitive rates and supports sustainable property investments. A CB Green Vehicle Loan promotes electric and hybrid cars. “In 2023, we financed QAR2m worth of electric vehicles and collaborated with BYD and Volvo to boost electric car adoption,” says Al-Sherawi. “Our operational efforts also include reducing our carbon footprint, with a 25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions targeted by 2030.”

A LEAP FORWARD

Ultimately, the bank’s strategic priorities are



“Commercial Bank is at the forefront of FinTech innovation and digitalisation, continuously evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly digital economy”

—Omran Al-Sherawi, Head of Assets and Liability Management, CBQ

inspired by its Five Cs approach, which revolves around five themes: Corporate Earnings Quality, Client Experience, Creativity and Innovation, and Culture and Compliance.

CBQ has showcased its strong execution of an initial five year strategic plan elaborated in 2016, which resulted in excellent bottom line momentum and outstanding financial performance.

Impressive growth is evident across both corporate and retail segments. A dynamic card business provides a wide array of tailored promotions and exclusive benefits that resonate strongly with CBQ’s diverse clientele.

The firm’s wealth management division has seen a remarkable expansion. The bank provides highly personalised and bespoke financial solutions designed to meet the unique needs of its high net worth clients, and offers a dedicated team of experts.

Meanwhile, the Bank’s own diversified investment strategies and robust risk management practices have allowed it to combine growth and profitability with stability and reliability.

“Our focus is to build on this success to ensure sustainable growth,” says Sherawi, “while embracing the new innovations around digitisation, artificial intelligence and ESG to help our clients thrive.”●

KEY COMPANY DATA

First half of 2024

- Total assets: \$44.2bn
- Net profit: \$432m
- Capital adequacy ratio: 172%

