

NATIONS TRUST BANK PLC AND ITS FULLY OWNED SUBSIDIARIES

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

NTB maintains growth momentum

At the group level, NTB closed the 9-month period ending 30th September 2011, with post-tax profits of Rs. 1,170 Mn, up 38% over the corresponding period in 2010, while pre-tax profits grew from Rs. 2,020 Mn to Rs. 2,127 Mn, an increase of 5%.

Group net interest income was below the previous year due to narrowing margins which was anticipated for the current year and visible across the industry. Its impact, however, was mitigated by the sustained growth in business volumes especially in the 2nd and 3rd quarters, timely re-pricing of deposits and a shift in the deposit mix towards low cost funds.

Non-funds based income from all core lines of business including credit cards, trade service and treasury service businesses recorded good growth against the previous year. Impact of the reduction in corporate and personal taxation was reflected in increased import/export business volumes and consumer spending together with increased tourist arrivals bolstered these growth levels. Trade finance volumes, both on imports and exports picked up significantly compared to the previous year with the resultant income increasing by 28%. Credit card related non-fund based income recorded healthy growth for the period under review due to increased consumer spend and the roll out of new card acquisition programs. Foreign exchange income too showed significant growth despite the relatively stable exchange rate that prevailed during the period.

During the period, group operating expenses recorded an increase of 5% over the corresponding period in 2010. The increase is in line with the expansion drive initiated in the latter part of 2010 where investments were made in people, premises and systems to support the growth prospects and strengthen risk management. Five new branches were opened during the 9 months to September 2011 with 4 more to be opened before the year end. The increase in operating expenses also reflects investments made during the period to strengthen the NTB brand. As a result the group cost income ratio increased from 55% to 59% over the previous period. However lower tax rates applicable for the current year resulted in the higher post tax profit.

Group NPL Ratio stood at 3.45% compared to 4.82% recorded in December 2010 and 4.8% in June 2011. Growth in the loan book through prudent credit underwriting assisted in lowering the NPL Ratio, despite the upward pressure via a more stringent regulatory environment in respect of NPL classifications coming into force at the beginning of the year. Focused management of collections is reflected in provision reversals during the period.

For the period under review, gross loans and advances recorded a growth of Rs. 12.3Bn up 26%. On a YOY basis, the uplift by 30th September 2011 was over 30% distributed across various industry segments with no particular concentrations. Such growth in loans was supported by the deposit base increasing by Rs. 12Bn to Rs. 61Bn, recording a growth of 25% for the year with low cost deposits growing at a healthy pace of 20%.

In terms of capital, the position strengthened to Rs. 8.2Bn with the conversion of the 2nd tranche of warrants leading to a comfortable Group Capital Adequacy Ratio of 14.01%. The Bank also concluded an unsecured subordinated debenture issue amounting Rs. 2Bn in readiness for further expansion of the loan book.

Review of Operations

The year 2011 commenced with the rolling out of initiatives in line with the Strategic Plan crafted for the Bank's next phase of growth. This entailed aligning the core business segments and strengthening the risk management framework thereby empowering our staff with the right skills and mind set for sustainable growth.

Retail and SME Banking - It was a demanding year as the Branches stepped into new terrain by transforming from the traditional model of only mobilizing deposits to a more holistic approach of both deposits and lending driven channels of delivery. More importantly Branches have also been mapped out to implement the SME strategy of the Bank. Thus their primary focus area during the year was to roll out the branch lending proposition by deploying credit managers within the branch network in a concerted effort to tap into the SME sector. Having acknowledged that SMEs are a vital sector in the economy, they are in the process of strengthening the knowledge and experience base to be rooted in this burgeoning area on a much larger scale as the growth opportunities are significant. Momentum in loan growth remained in the 3Q to give the desired results. In the meantime, the deposit mobilization drive exceeded expectations with a 25 % growth in total deposits and more importantly improving the low cost deposit mix by 2 percentage points. In keeping in line with the strategy of expanding customer touch points to enhance accessibility and convenience, the branch network expanded its footprint by opening full service branches in Horana, Kalmunai, Anuradhapura, Malabe and Piliyandala by 3Q and another branch in Ratnapura by end of October 2011 extending the network coverage to 46 branches.

Cards and Personal Loans - The Cards Division bounced back with alternative strategies to recover from the interest rate cap introduced in late 2010 which put significant pressure on its top line revenue. The Division performed well with timely re-configuring of the business model to drive the bottom line. Initiatives were rolled out to build scale and enhance top of the mind brand recall. The growth in consumer spend both from local sales and destination business coupled with new card acquisitions contributed in equal measure to generate revenue to bridge the vacuum in earnings created by the interest rate cap.

Card receivables grew by 11% with the card base expanding by 17%. Equally the personal loan business, mainly engaged in the mass affluent segment, recorded substantial growth on the back of pent-up demand. New loan volumes increased significantly as confidence spread across the economy. Both cards and consumer loans recorded improved NPL Ratios and the sustained recovery effort on past due loans helped in posting net write backs to the bottom line.

Corporate and Wholesale Banking - The Division recorded an exceptional performance despite having to balance volume growth vis-a-vis bottom line growth throughout the year as intense competition put pressure on margins. Asset growth in 3Q picked up significantly whilst containing the NPL Ratio to previous year levels. Concentration of the loan book across the key economic sectors were appropriately balanced by keeping a constant watch over industries and sectors which are particularly vulnerable to changing market dynamics.

Leasing and Factoring - Leasing volumes expanded substantially due to the booming vehicle market which resulted in a growth in the leasing book of 45%. The Division sustained their sales drive from both centrally located teams and branches. They also explored and ventured into new customer segments with selective product offerings and unrivalled customer service. Again a focused recovery effort coupled to a healthy NPL Ratio improved profits for the period, posting a growth of 20% over the previous year. The factoring portfolio also expanded by 55% for the period as a result of acquisition of new customers and improved utilization of facilities extended to existing customers. The tailor-made product campaigns re-launched during 2011 gave the much needed media coverage for the business thereby positioning it more in line with customer needs.

Treasury - The primary focus of the unit was to support the growth in the loan book and the core banking business whilst keeping the trading positions at tolerable levels. Like all active treasury operations, it was proactively engaged in re-pricing the assets and liabilities and managing the pressure on interest rate risks in a timely manner. Medium term funding arrangements have been sourced as planned to support the build-up of term assets and Tier 2 Capital.

Other Matters of Interest

Although not directly impacting business revenues in the short term, several initiatives influencing the very foundations of the business of banking is currently taking root. Among them is the application of IFRS across the local banking system. It requires the banks to report their financials on a fair-value basis that will, among its many attributes, enable wider comparison. We have taken several steps towards its implementation and to be compliant at the beginning of 2012. Equally the Central Bank of Sri Lanka has issued directions covering the implementation of BASEL II and a Customer Charter. In implementing BASEL II, the regulator is looking to place the banking system on stable and firm footing for the future.

The Customer Charter equally looks to providing a more open and even market place for engaging in business with banks. On both directions, we have undertaken substantial work to be compliant by the due dates.

Outlook

In a dynamic market, as the one in which we are currently operating, opportunities emerge and challenges unfold daily. Significant effort is deployed to sift through these movements and latch-on to sustainable trends. The outlook for the rest of the year is expected to put pressure on margins, on deposits to fund loan growth and liquidity. We are also conscious of uneven global trends and possible local impact. We believe we remain well equipped with a strong balance sheet, comfortable capital position, a sound risk management framework and most importantly, an energetic skilled workforce to handle all such ups and downs. Overall the macro environment factors remain conducive for continuing business momentum and we look forward to closing the year on a high note.