

Press Release

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The Asian Banker Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards 2009

Al Rajhi Bank wins the award for Best Retail Bank in Saudi Arabia for the third time in a row

- *Al Rajhi Bank wins the award for Best Retail Bank in Saudi Arabia for the year 2008.*
- *Al Rajhi won for the third consecutive time the prestigious award for stable and sustainable performance and improving customer service and satisfaction.*
- *Over 120 banks and financial institutions from 22 countries across the Asia Pacific, Gulf and Central Asian regions were evaluated as part of the Excellence in Retail Financial Services Programme.*

Singapore, 20 March 2009 – Al Rajhi Bank has been named Saudi Arabia's Best Retail Bank in the eighth Asian Banker Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards Programme. The bank received the award at The Asian Banker Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards 2009 ceremony, held in conjunction with the region's foremost retail banking event, the Excellence in Retail Financial Services Convention. The ceremony was held at the Grand Hyatt in Singapore on the evening of March 19th, 2009.

About 120 senior bankers from award winning banks in 22 countries across the Asia Pacific, the Gulf and Central Asian regions attended the formal gala dinner, the industry's celebration of the region's best retail bankers that recognizes their efforts in bringing superior products and services to their customers.

The awards programme, administered by The Asian Banker and refereed by prominent global bankers, consultants and academics, is the most prestigious of its kind.

A stringent three month-long evaluation process, based on a balanced and transparent scorecard, determined the winners and the position of the different retail banks in the region. A full list of winners is attached.

Al Rajhi Bank wins the award for Best Retail Bank in Saudi Arabia for the year 2008

Al Rajhi Bank was awarded Best Retail Bank in Saudi Arabia for 2008 for the third consecutive time, gaining higher scores than the other banks surveyed in the programme, including Samba Financial Group and Riyadh Bank.

The year 2008 turned out to be a difficult year for banks in Saudi Arabia, but Al Rajhi once again determined its dominant role in the domestic market and is also growing influence abroad. Hence the bank reached a high score among the Arabian banks. Al Rajhi's financial

performance remained stable with growth in operating revenues of 6% and slightly lower profits of 3% for the whole year 2008, although the bank was still profitable throughout the first three quarters. The bank also saw a strong deposit growth of 24%, which is very commendable. In addition, the 42% surge in fee income is remarkable given that most other banks suffered from a decline. Remittances were also an important profit generator.

Although profitability criteria like ROE slowly faltered to 28% for the first nine months of 2008 compared to 29.5% in 2007, Al Rajhi Bank still outperformed its peers, which averaged on 22.5% in 2007.

“The largest branch presence in the country, combined with a leading phone, and internet banking market share, helped Al Rajhi Bank win in the penetration and efficiency of distribution channels,” says Mr. Chris Kapfer, head of Excellence in Retail Financial Services Awards Programme at The Asian Banker. He added, “The bank offered superior service to its customers and captivated with fast turnaround times and short waiting times. The effort it put into the training of its employees proved the commitment to its customers.”

The bank capitalized on all of the new opportunities with aggressive sales and marketing activities and successfully acquired many new customers. Its capitalization remains among the strongest in Saudi Arabia and the whole Middle East. In current this proved worthy for banks around the globe.

Al Rajhi won for the third consecutive time the prestigious award for stable and sustainable performance and improving customer service and satisfaction

Al Rajhi’s retail banking group provides a wide range of Sharia compliant products and services to personal customers including current accounts, personal financing products, and mortgages.

Fast and convenient service is one of the most dominant achievements of the bank. Instant-credit products have been introduced such as the fully Sharia-compliant Watani loan, which can be granted within 30 minutes.

Furthermore, on-going investments in leading-edge information and communication technologies were taken into consideration. For example, the adoption of Cisco's Unified Contact Centre solutions will enable Al Rajhi Bank to offer an enhanced suite of services to its customers.

The bank expanded its presence in Saudi Arabia and offered the most extensive branch network in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. 27 new branches were introduced, 25 branches were refurbished during the year and 20 new remittance centers were opened. In addition, the ATM and POS networks were broadened and there were unprecedented levels of transactions using phone and internet banking.

Over 120 banks and financial institutions from 22 countries across the Asia Pacific, Gulf and Central Asian regions were evaluated as part of the Excellence in Retail Financial Services Programme

“This year over 120 banks and financial institutions in 22 countries across the region were evaluated as part of the Excellence in Retail Financial Services Programme. It has become the single most prestigious, comprehensive and anticipated awards programme that recognises the pursuit of excellence amongst retail financial institutions available almost anywhere in the world today,” said Philip Strause, Chairman of The Asian Banker Excellence in Retail Financial Services Programme.

The transparent award evaluation process uses a balanced scorecard approach and a comprehensive methodology to evaluate the strength of individual banks’ retail banking businesses that involves extensive research and probing interviews, and taps on the combined experience of a team of experienced researchers.

Strause, who has over 30 years experience as a principal consultant to leading financial institutions in North America and the Asia Pacific, added: “The Asian Banker Excellence Programme was instituted in 2001 on the premise that an outstanding player in the retail financial services industry should build business franchises that are sustainable, competitive and profitable over a period of time.”

About The Asian Banker

The Asian Banker is the foremost provider of strategic business intelligence on the financial services industry in the Asia Pacific and Middle East regions. The organization has offices in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Beijing and Dubai as well as representatives in Shanghai, London and New York. With a business that revolves around publications, research services, training and forums, the organization is highly regarded in the financial services community for its incisive and independent commentaries on developments in the industry. The company’s website is www.theasianbanker.com.

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