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“ AfrAsia wants to be the Premier Bridge between Global Capital and African Opportunity ”

Navin Ramdoyal

Chief Commercial Officer | AfrAsia Bank

In a conversation with Investor's Mag, Navin Ramdoyal, Chief Commercial Officer of AfrAsia Bank, outlines a broader commercial agenda for the Mauritian lender as The Access Bank UK now holds 76% of its capital. The next phase extends AfrAsia's platform, with trade finance elevated into a distinct business pillar alongside cross-border corporate banking, private wealth and deeper client relationships. The bank is seeking to move beyond its niche positioning and present itself as a strategic bridge between global capital and African opportunity, while keeping Mauritius at the centre of that passage. Its commercial proposition is clear: scale must come with selectivity, liquidity must support real transactions, and banking, even in the age of AI, still rests on trust, judgement and human relationships.

AfrAsia is entering a new phase in its development. From a commercial standpoint, what are your main priorities today?

Since its creation in 2007, AfrAsia Bank Ltd has always occupied a differentiated position in the Mauritian banking industry. The founding vision for the bank was to become the financial conduit to bridge the Africa-Asia corridor with the world by leveraging the Mauritius International Financial Centre (IFC). In 2026, our expanded vision is to connect Africa to the rest of the world and the world to Africa, while confirming our commitment to Mauritius as a trusted, well-regulated and sophisticated IFC.

From a commercial perspective, we have positioned the bank as the preferred strategic financing partner of our clients, supporting them across the full spectrum of their needs - from transactional banking to the most sophisticated financing solutions. We aim to service our existing business segments and enhance the client experience and our responsiveness with tailor-made value propositions. Our goal is to become strategically positioned to accompany our clients on their business transformation journey, in the quest for sustained growth, while continuously innovating to meet our clients' evolving needs and expectations.

Strengthening our regional and international connectivity has a vital role to play to achieve this goal, for which we are well on track, with the bank now being 76% owned by The Access Bank UK. With the pan-African network of Access Group encompassing more than 16 countries, and a presence in key financial market centres such as London, Paris and Hong Kong, we have a unique opportunity to leverage our offering at both continental and international levels, where we can act efficiently and effectively in several important jurisdictions, while contributing to the positioning of Mauritius as the passageway to take onboard the thrust of private sector investment in Africa.

We also have the ambition to continue expanding our international footprint, where the existing presence of Access Group in key financial markets and emerging markets puts us in pole position to accelerate our strategic development and benefit from new commercial prospects.

In terms of growing our lines of business, being majority-owned by a strategic banking shareholder with a proven track record in Trade Finance, we have recently added the Trade Finance segment as an additional business pillar in order to support trade with Africa and also intra-African trade. Trade finance drives cross-border trade, helping foster trust between parties through the use of appropriate financing instruments. We are now well positioned to facilitate such trade finance solutions in key markets in Africa, noting that there is an estimated financing gap of USD120 billion across the continent, according to the African Development Bank.

You have moved from international corporate banking into the role of Chief Commercial Officer. How has that broader mandate changed the way you look at the bank's growth strategy?

I would say that my new role as Chief Commercial Officer has given me a new perspective by fundamentally widening my lens to take account of a bank-wide integrated growth agenda. My focus is to ensure that all business lines work seamlessly in a coordinated fashion to maximise total client value.

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For me, behind every business, there are individuals driving ideas to create wealth. The process is nurtured from the initial idea to the creation of value and growth, then to the protection of the value generated and ultimately to the distribution of the wealth through appropriate succession planning. I have always strongly believed that a banking partner should understand the value chain vividly. My new role allows me to strategise and support clients from a vertical to a horizontal approach, ultimately culminating in an integrated growth perspective. I also believe that it is important to blend technology and customer service in order to provide the best customer experience.

AfrAsia has built its identity around cross-border banking, wealth and international business. Where do you see the strongest commercial momentum at the moment?

It is true to say that we have built our success around strong pillars such as Private Banking, Corporate Banking and Global Business Banking, which will remain key pillars of our commercial strategy, whereby we apply an integrated approach to service our customers from the traditional transactional products to the most sophisticated financing solutions.

With the extended presence of the Access Group in Africa, and leveraging on the Mauritius IFC, the global business and international banking segments remain critical growth engines for the bank alongside the domestic business. If we take the example of corporate banking – a segment I have long been engaged with – it continues to represent a key thrust of our transformation strategy, where last year we registered an increase of 28% on the domestic market and 26% internationally.

While being well positioned to service the businesses, we are also poised to service the key minds behind the business through a dedicated Private Banking team supported with the appropriate investment solutions. We have been working with international banks and investment banks to reposition our Private Banking offering to ensure that we remain a benchmark in this field, creating greater value with truly bespoke services.

Beyond these well-established service lines, the key additional strategic pillar in our commercial strategy is trade finance, where we can leverage upon the proven track record and

experience of the Access Group in this business. With our expanded international footprint, our teams are now able to track our clients' international flows and are even better equipped to support our mission of connecting Africa to the world and the world to Africa.

In a banking market that is becoming more competitive, what do clients value most today when choosing a bank such as AfrAsia?

Banking decisions are fundamentally anchored in trust and stability. This goes beyond the relationship with the bank but also the wider jurisdiction as clients seek assurance in both the institutional capabilities and the jurisdictional ecosystem that underpins its credibility. AfrAsia has built a strong reputation among its clients for placing relationship banking at the heart of its service, and our robust financial performance also provides reassurance of the stability we bring from our base in Mauritius, which is well recognised and appreciated by our international clients as a reputed IFC.

Our true differentiator lies in our sustained client loyalty, earned through exceptional service, unparalleled responsiveness and the breadth of our market reach. Operational excellence is vital to sustaining high-quality service delivery. As we leverage technology to support our commercial ambitions, we remain committed to the relationship-driven approach that has shaped our success over the years. Even in a digital world driven by Artificial Intelligence, banking remains fundamentally human.

Moreover, in today's globalised environment, clients require banking partners who not only understand complexity, but who can proactively respond with relevant, tailor-made solutions. That is why we place significant emphasis on developing our people, ensuring they are equipped with the skills, exposure, and expertise needed to serve our clients at the highest level. Through strategic staff exchange programmes with our international offices, notably in the UK, we cultivate broader capabilities and global perspectives. At its core, our differentiation lies in how effectively, dependably, and intelligently we support our clients' ambitions across jurisdictions while developing our key talents to offer world-class service quality.

As a bank focused on connecting Africa to the World and the World to Africa, how does AfrAsia translate this strategic positioning into commercial opportunities, in practical terms?

In truth, our brand positioning only matters if it translates into value creation for our clients – and in practice, it does so across a few very concrete levers:

Firstly, in terms of our role as a bridge, AfrAsia is enabling real transactions between Africa and the World. We are positioned with Trade Financing structures and Financial Institution (FI) Funding solutions to create liquidity through the corridor.

Secondly, by leveraging Mauritius' established position as an International Financial Centre (IFC) of repute, we are able to support complex cross-border structures

conglomerates from Mauritius as they seek to achieve their goals of regional expansion. As part of Access Group's broader African footprint, we are now able to offer clients access to even wider regional opportunities while reinforcing our collaborative approach across markets.

You have spent years working on African corporate and financial-institution relationships. How do you see demand evolving from clients doing business across the continent?

Over the years, we have observed a significant shift in how businesses operate across the African continent. As the demand for large-scale infrastructural development grows to support regional growth, many businesses have had limited choice but to become increasingly corporatised to access necessary funding.



that channel investment into Africa and other key markets. This includes enabling holding companies, treasury centres, and investment platforms that drive business opportunities not only in lending, but also across corporate banking, custody, and strategic advisory.

Third, it is notable that many cross-border clients are entrepreneurs or family-owned groups. The 'bridge' allows us to serve both sides of the coin—the corporate (financing, trade, cash management) and the individual (wealth management, succession, diversification)—significantly increasing overall wallet share.

With the rapid growth in trade between Africa and the rest of the world, we have a crucial role to play in supporting these commercial exchanges. We already have a strong track record in accompanying

This evolution has made client requirements far more sophisticated, and solutions-driven. We are seeing a clear transition from one-off trades to the establishment of robust regional platforms, characterised by centralised treasury centres, formalised supply chains and long-term investment strategies for better value optimisation.

Consequently, demand has moved beyond basic lending towards complex cash management, liquidity optimisation and seamless multi-country banking solutions. With our presence in Africa and the established IFC in Mauritius, we are uniquely positioned to accompany these clients at a local, regional and international level.

In an environment of extended payment cycles and global supply chain pressures, there is a rising

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appetite for trade finance and structured working capital solutions that can unlock vital liquidity without overstretching balance sheets. Furthermore, as clients look towards regional expansion, they are becoming increasingly selective, preferring fewer, high-calibre banking partners capable of servicing multiple jurisdictions over managing fragmented, country-by-country relationships.

We also recognise that, in the African context, there is a profound and natural link between ownership and management, where individual minds drive business growth. This necessitates a holistic approach that integrates corporate banking with Private Banking services, focusing on succession planning, diversification and capital preservation. This integrated banking solution is a critical activity for both the bank and our clients.

AfrAsia's growth has been supported by stronger business volumes in several areas. From your perspective, which segments are contributing most meaningfully to that momentum?

The momentum we are currently experiencing is driven by a combination of complementary segments rather than a single engine, creating a robust and diversified growth trajectory. A defining feature of our bank is that more than 75% of our deposit base consists of non-residents. This provides a natural and significant competitive edge for our Global Banking and International Corporate segments, while simultaneously acting as a vital pipeline for our Private Banking and Wealth Management divisions.

Given the bank's strong liquidity profile, combined with the group's proven expertise in cross-border trade flows on the continent, our international corporate banking business is becoming an increasingly significant engine of growth.

Beyond our ambitions in international markets, our strong commitment and positioning also translate into accompanying our domestic clients throughout their growth journeys, both locally and as they expand regionally. This balanced approach—blending international reach with strong local support—has proven to be a highly successful strategy for the bank and continues to underpin our ongoing success.

The bank now benefits from the presence of The Access Bank UK in its shareholding. How does that change the commercial conversation with clients and counterparties?

The advent of The Access Bank UK as our majority shareholder has been a genuine game-changer for AfrAsia. It marks our evolution from a niche cross-border bank into a strategic gateway, backed by a leading African banking group. This transition resonates strongly with clients who require both international access and a high level of African execution capability. By belonging to one of the largest African banking groups—serving over 60 million customers—we have significantly strengthened our ability to connect Africa to the world and the world to Africa.

The synergy within this partnership is driven by a unique dual-track structure. On the one hand, we benefit from the international footprint of The Access Bank UK, with its presence in key financial hubs such as London, Paris, Malta, Dubai, and Hong Kong. It is important to note that The Access Bank UK is a separate legal entity, regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority in the UK, with its management based in London. This international division, which also includes representative offices in India and China, works in close alignment with Access Group Plc in Nigeria.

On the other hand, the African division, managed by Access Group Plc, provides us with an on-the-ground presence across 16 countries, including Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and the DRC among others. This creates a consolidated bridge that facilitates cross-border flows and capital exchange. We are now uniquely positioned to accompany our domestic clients in their regional expansion through an integrated banking experience, while simultaneously guiding clients from our sister subsidiaries into the Mauritian IFC.

Commercial growth in banking is not only about ambition; it is also about discipline. How do you balance expansion with selectivity in the current environment?

We believe that sustainable growth is only achievable through a careful balance of ambition and discipline. Our expansion strategy is intentionally poised on specific clients, corridors, products, and markets where we have a clear, competitive edge, underpinned by our group's proven track record. This focus ensures that we are not merely chasing transactions, but rather building and leveraging deep-rooted relationships that offer long-term value.

We operate within a strict risk framework and strategy, which prioritises the long-term resilience of our balance sheet. Central to this is a disciplined approach to the risk-return profile. For example, while we have successfully accelerated lending activity across key business segments—reflected in an improved loan-to-deposit ratio of 34% as at December 2025, up from 27% the previous year, we have simultaneously preserved a strong Capital Adequacy Ratio of 18.70%. Our strategy is to improve profitability in a sustainable way

by refining our risk management processes and adhering to a 'Balanced Portfolio' mindset that seeks steady, predictable growth over high-risk, short-term gains.

In the current environment, selectivity is our primary tool for risk mitigation. By concentrating on our core strengths, we ensure that every expansion effort remains aligned with our governance framework. This allows us to meet the increasing sophistication of our clients' needs while ensuring a secure banking environment and capital preservation, even amidst global market volatility.

Looking ahead, what would commercial success look like for AfrAsia over the next two to three years?

I would say that commercial success for AfrAsia over the next two to three years will be defined by growth that is characterised by quality, resilience, and scalability. Our objective is to achieve a growth trajectory that is strictly capital-efficient and remains carefully aligned with our clearly defined risk appetite. We are not just looking for expansion in size, but expansion in stability and value.

A primary marker of this success will be a significantly stronger and more diversified revenue base. While we are firmly advancing our ambition to become a recognised trade finance leader across Africa, our broader mandate remains to support corporate clients as a strategic partner in both domestic development and international expansion, spanning sectors such as hospitality, agribusiness, and beyond. Private Banking will continue to anchor our franchise, distinguished by a premium client proposition and differentiated experience, while future priorities will centre on scaling our international Private Banking offering to capture new avenues of growth.

Equally important to our success is the depth of our client engagement. We are moving beyond transactional banking to deliver deeper, more valuable client relationships. Success will mean an increased wallet share among our key clients, achieved by providing the sophisticated, integrated solutions they require as they grow. Ultimately, we envision AfrAsia as the premier bridge between global capital and African opportunity, recognised for our ability to deliver high-impact results through a disciplined and relationship-led approach.



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Royal Road, Pereybere, Mauritius