

## **DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE QUARTER ENDED MARCH 31, 2021**

The Board of Directors of MCB-Arif Habib Savings and Investments Limited (MCBAH) are pleased to present Report on the affairs of MCBAH for the quarter and nine months ended March 31, 2021.

### **Principal Business**

The Company is a Non-Banking Finance Company, licensed as an Asset Management Company, Investment Advisor and Pension Fund Manager under the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan's regulatory regime.

### **Economy and Money Market Review**

The first nine months of fiscal year 2021 have been relatively stronger as economic activities resumed to a large extent though challenges from Covid continue to pose risks in the near term. The economic recovery has been better than expectations as stable interest rates and supportive financing schemes from SBP, amnesty to encourage construction sector, resumption in demand and continued strong inflow of remittances have supported economic growth. We therefore expect economic growth to be higher than estimates shared by multilateral agencies. Government had initial expectations of lower industrial growth (targeting a growth of 0.1% over last year) due to Covid-19, which we now believe would also be better than expectations as cyclical sectors have exhibited strong demand and volumetric growth.

Cement sector saw an impressive growth in local dispatches as they witnessed a growth of about 18% over last year in the first nine months of FY21. Sales of 2 and 3 wheeler units also rose at an impressive rate of near 17% over last year in the first eight months of FY21 reflecting on the resilience of economy. Similarly, the demand of petrol and diesel also increased by about 9.5% and 17% respectively over last year during the first nine months indicating a broader recovery in economy. Overall, Large Scale Manufacturing Index (LSM) has grown by about 7.9% in first seven months of the current fiscal year led by the cyclical sectors.

Current account posted a surplus of USD 881 million in the first eight months of fiscal year compared to a deficit of USD 2,741 million in the corresponding period of the last year. The improvement came in primarily on the back of higher remittances which grew at a stupendous rate of about 24% during the first eight months of this fiscal year. Foreign exchange reserves of central bank saw an increase of about USD 2.2 billion during the first eight months due to improved balance of payment position. Subsequently, the PKR/USD appreciated by about 9% during the period.

Inflation remained an Achilles heel for the government as rising food prices continued to create challenges for policy makers. Headline inflation represented by CPI averaged 8.4% over last year during the first nine

months, with food inflation averaging about 13% during the period. The prices of perishable food items along with the price of wheat continued to advance higher as supply side disruptions and mismanagement caused the prices to soar. Nevertheless, core inflation as measured by Non Food Non Energy was still controlled and averaged 6.1% for the period. Monetary Policy Committee maintained status quo throughout the year after successive cuts in previous meetings. While real interest rates remained negative, the central bank was cautious with regards to demand side pressures owing to Covid-19 as well as comfort drawn from better external position.

As the economy started to open up, tax collection also improved and grew by about 10% during the first nine months of the fiscal year which exceeded the target by PKR 100 bn. Fiscal deficit for the first seven months of the period clocked in at 2.9% of GDP, compared to 3.2% of GDP last year. Primary balance was even better at a surplus of 0.9% of GDP compared to last year surplus of 0.3% of GDP.

Yield curve started to slope upward after inflation continued to disappoint investors. The central bank also raised its expectation of inflation as discussed in the minutes of MPC. It now expects it to fall in the upward range of 7-9% compared to earlier expectations of inflation falling in the lower range. 3, 5 and 10 Year bonds saw a rise of 182 bps, 175 bps and 173 bps respectively during the period.

## **Equity Market Review**

After showing strong positive momentum during the first half of this fiscal year, market performance could not display the same riveting momentum and remained dull during the third quarter of this fiscal year. The index posted a return of 1.9% during the third quarter of this fiscal year, taking the cumulative return of nine months to 29.5%. Local investors absorbed foreign investors selling of about USD 290mn. Trading activity at the bourse increased on a YoY basis as the average volumes and value traded amounted to near 483 Million shares (up 149%) and about PKR 19 Billion (up 165%) respectively.

Tech, Refineries and Steel were the major outperformers as they posted returns of 326%/145%/97% respectively during the nine months of the fiscal year. Tech companies saw a massive re-rating in their valuations as investor cherished the changing landscape of tech companies post Covid. Steel sector gained traction during period after a sharp increase in construction demand and prices sent their stocks soaring. Moreover, rumors of a guaranteed rate of return for refineries drove sector returns during the period. On the flip side, Fertilizer remained the major underperformer posting nominal returns of 8% only.

## **Economy & Market – Future Outlook**

GDP growth for FY21 is now projected at around 3% by central bank. We expect GDP growth to be better than general consensus of government and institutions as industrial growth has revived much earlier than our anticipation. Generally, economy appears to be operating close to pre-covid levels gauged by LSM growth, cement sales, auto sales, etc.

Balance of Payment worries are at bay for the near term with current account deficit expected to be about USD 1.1 bn for this fiscal year. We expect Current Account Deficit to settle near 0.4% of GDP in FY21 which could be easily financed from foreign investments and debt flows. However, the recent surge in commodity prices and growth momentum would require better financial management to fund the current account deficit over next year. Any reversal in trend of remittances would also be a concern for Balance of Payment management next year. With Real Effective Rate for Feb-2021 at 97.1 any significant movement in commodities may cause relative inflation and balance of payment to weaken further and thus can cause currency to weaken swiftly. Continuation of the IMF program is a good omen which would allow better financial flows from various institutions allowing better financial management. We expect foreign exchange reserves to further increase by about USD 2.7 bn from current levels by year end.

Inflation has exceeded our earlier expectations as food prices have sky rocketed. We expect CPI to average near 9.1% for FY21, slightly higher than the expected range (7.0-9.0) of central bank. For the next fiscal year, we expect CPI to average close to 9.1%. Central bank for the first time has provided guidance on interest rates in the short term which will perhaps bring more certainty in investor expectations. The central authority vowed to keep the existing accommodative monetary policy stance to support recovery while keeping inflation expectations well anchored. Given the guidance by central bank, we now expect interest rates to adjust by 100-150 bps over the next fiscal year.

From capital market perspective, particularly equities, markets are watchful of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of Covid cases which do pose risks in the near term. As growth momentum continues, the valuations are catching up with historical norms. Barring any external shock, we think equities have potential to provide decent returns to investors. Given that low interest rate environment is likely to continue for the short to medium term, we believe equities will continue to attract flows. Risk premiums vis a vis 10-year bonds is right now at 3.3%, compared to historical average of 1.3% suggesting some upside due to re-rating would be possible. Alongside, earnings growth will be a key driver for the next few years as they have lagged behind nominal GDP growth during the last couple of years. We believe a micro view of sectors and stock will remain

more important this year and investment selection should focus on companies which trade at a deep discount to their intrinsic value. Similarly, focus should also revert back to companies that are expected to exhibit stellar earnings growth over the medium term.

For debt holders, we expect Money Market Funds to continue to seamlessly mirror policy rates throughout the year. On the other hand, government bonds have priced in the anticipated yield curve. We remain cautious at the current levels of bond yields and would continue to monitor the data points to capitalize on opportunities.

### **Mutual Fund Industry Review**

The Net Assets of the open end mutual fund industry increased by about 28.6% to PKR 954 billion at the end of the first nine months of the fiscal year. Money market funds and Fixed Income funds experienced an influx of investment as corporate liquidity swiftly moving towards mutual funds. Total money market funds grew by about 33% during the period to PKR 418 billion. Within the money market sphere, the conventional funds dominated as they grew by about 31% to PKR 271 billion. Equity and related funds surged rapidly by 27% from PKR 224 billion to PKR 284 billion over the quarter. Most of the rise in equity and equity linked fund assets can be attributed to a positive uptick in the market that was up ~29% YoY owing to favorable investor sentiments.

In terms of the segment share, Money Market funds were the leader with a share of around 44%, followed by Equity and Equity related funds with a share of 30% and Income funds having a share of 26% as at the end of the calendar year.

### **Mutual Fund Industry Outlook**

Record decline in interest rates have reinstated the confidence in risk asset classes. We expect liquidity to gear up towards equity and related funds. The sustainability of liquidity will however depend on how the economy transitions through this phase of pandemic. Our operations remained seamless and given our competitive edge due to aggressive investment in digital access and online customer experience, the environment provides an opportunity with growing number of investors available online.

### **COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

In the month of October 2020, the Company achieved highest Asset Manager Rating of AM1. The rating reflects the Company's positioning as one of the leading players in the Asset Management Companies;

supported by strong control environment, structured Investment processes, good governance framework and qualified management team.

As on March 31, 2021 the Company has Assets Under Management (AUM) of Rs.148 billion, a growth of 47% in AUMs as compared to corresponding period of March 31, 2020 when company had AUMs of Rs. 101 billion. Resultantly, the Company recorded a gross income of Rs.586.5 million compared to 525 million earned in corresponding period, which includes management / investment advisory fee and processing income. Moreover, due to active fund management coupled with KSE-100 increasing by over 29% the Company was able to earn Rs.151.1 million (March 31, 2020: 48.9 million) through investments and placement of excess funds.

After accounting for administrative, operating & financial expenses and marketing expenses of Rs.374.2 million (March 31, 2020: 382.1 million), the Company during the nine-months of FY 2020-2021, earned Profit Before Tax of Rs. 366.5 million compared to Rs. 192.9 million in corresponding period. After paying taxes, the Company earned profit after tax of Rs. 287.8 million compared to Rs. 127.5 million earned in the same corresponding period.

The Earnings per Share of nine months ended March 31, 2021 is Rs.4.00 as compared to Rs.1.77 per share in the corresponding period.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Board of Directors of the Management Company is thankful to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the management of the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited for their continued support and cooperation. The Directors also appreciate the efforts put in by the employees of the Company for their commitment and dedication and shareholders for their confidence in the Company.

For and on Behalf of Board

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**Muhammad Saqib Saleem**  
Chief Executive Officer

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**Nasim Beg**  
Director/Vice Chairman

April 16, 2021