



ROUND-UP

New India Assurance set to step into Qatar

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MUSCAT: New India Assurance, a leading global insurance group with a network of 1,600 offices spread over 27 countries in five continents, is keen on being a part of the GCC growth story.

Speaking to the *Times of Oman*, G. Srinivasan, chairman and managing director, New India Assurance, who was recently on a visit to Oman, said, "The GCC markets have been growing with many infrastructure projects in the offing. Non-life insurance is closely linked to the economic development of the countries. So insurance will continue to grow in this part of the world and we would like to be part of this growth story."

New India Assurance is also planning expansion in the region.

"In the GCC, the only market we don't operate in is Qatar, and we actually have plans to enter Qatar shortly. We are going through the approval process," he said.

In addition New India Assurance is looking at entering Canada and Myanmar.

Asked about the company's plans for Oman he said that the company was well represented in the country with three branches and 18 sub agencies.



"As it is, we are a large player," Srinivasan informed, adding that the company had no big expansion plans for Oman.

About his meeting with the Capital Market Authority's insurance authorities, he said, "It was a good meeting. They were happy with the performance of New India Assurance from the regulatory perspective. That is what we want to hear from a regulator."

Talking about the overall performance of the company since he took over its reins last year, he said, "It has been a good year. During the financial year, we did very well and clocked a premium of \$2.1 billion. We now have recorded an asset base of \$8 billion. Both the Indian and overseas operations performed well. We made decent profits in both the sectors. Eighty per cent of the business comes from the Indian market and 20 per cent from overseas market."

"We continue to be the market leader in India," he said.

Sharing information about Oman, he said, "We are the second in the non-life segment. One third of the foreigners business is with New India Assurance here."

Talking about the company's performance in Oman, he said, "The company has been growing steadily over the years. What is important is

that the company has established for itself a very good reputation."

He added that the company brought out good products into the market and provided good service, especially in times of natural catastrophe like Gonu and Phet.

"The country had a large number of claims and we were able to settle those quickly to the satisfaction of our customers. That has given us a lot of trust and confidence in the market. We have been able to maintain ourselves as a major player in this market for many years," he averred.

Talking about the challenges of health insurance, Srinivasan said, "In India, health insurance is big business and is growing. It is a challenging business in terms of maintaining profitability. That is the position all over the world."

Advising how the health insurance segment can be better managed, he said, "What is important is that you need good products and you need to adequately price the products. You should not only manage your claims well by having proper negotiations with the hospitals but also have control on claims whenever someone gets admitted to the hospital. This is the only way health insurance can be managed all over the world."

Stating that the segment has

been a challenge with health costs going up, he said, "There are more and more diagnostic facilities coming, so there is always a temptation on the part of the hospitals to put you through a lot of investigative procedures which may or may not be required. At the end of the day, these are expensive and the cost to the company or the insurance company can be high."

Talking about motor insurance, Srinivasan said, "With accidents, cost of repairs and third party claims is increasing and this has become a challenging portfolio. It is important that we need to do some good underwriting and also manage claims more effectively to make this portfolio more profitable."

Expressing satisfaction with New India's performance in Oman, he said, "We would like to be a very big player than what we are today. Basically, our philosophy is that wherever we operate, we would like to give good products to the customers, provide good customer service, come to the rescue of our customers in times of any accidents or contingency. This is our core philosophy and has kept us in good stead all over the world. We will continue to be strong players wherever we operate. We would like to bring in financial strength to the table."

"In Oman today, we are the second largest and I wish we become the largest in a short period of time. Our core philosophy is to make our customer happy and provide good customer service. If that is done, everything else follows," he said.

Talking about the various accolades received, he said, "New India has received a large number of awards including the best general insurance firm in India for claims settlement processes, underwriting initiative and technology. The latest award we received was in London for the best corporate governance initiatives. In Oman, we have been rated as the best general insurance company since 2010."