

REPORT ON 21st APABI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2024



The 21st biennial International conference 2024 of the Asian-Pacific Association of Banking Institutes (APABI) has been organized successfully by the Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (IIBF) on 14th November (Thursday) at the Hotel Taj President, Mumbai. The conference was attended by Senior Executives from the Banking Institutes across Asia-Pacific region, e.g. South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia etc., along with senior bankers from public sector & private sector banks in India. The theme for the conference was “Paradigm shift in Banking: Moving towards a resilient, inclusive & sustainable model”.

The aim of the conference was to bring together

educators, industry experts and senior Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) professionals from the Asia-Pacific nations on a common podium, so as to learn from their perspectives and vast experiences in a thought-provoking environment. The theme of the conference was specifically chosen to promote exchange of ideas and share best practices in banking education among peer institutes. IIBF, a pioneer in BFSI education in India for the last 97-years and an alma mater for most of the banking professionals in India today, played the appropriate host.

The conference had an auspicious beginning with the traditional prayer and the lighting of the lamp.

Shri Biswa Ketan Das, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (IIBF) extended a warm welcome to the international and national dignitaries to the conference. He then touched upon the proud legacy of IIBF and set the scene for further deliberations on the theme of the conference by highlighting on the immediate need of upskilling and reskilling to nurture the human capital in a fast-evolving banking ecosystem.

The inaugural address, delivered virtually by Shri Atul Kumar Goel, Managing Director (MD) & CEO, Punjab National Bank and President, IIBF, duly focused on the importance of staying inclusive and resilient in the face of the paradigm shift brought about by fast technological advancements and rapid innovation, to ensure the requisite quality of customer service in banks. Shri Goel has duly highlighted on the importance of inclusivity and financial literacy in banking, by empowering individuals through innovations. He focused on the importance of acknowledging and incorporating climate considerations in the credit appraisal and underwriting process to ensure sustainable banking practices. Shri Goel has also congratulated the APABI members for working cohesively towards a brighter future.

Shri Mahendra Dohare, Executive Director, Central Bank of India, has also highlighted on the importance of capacity building and reskilling & upskilling of bankers to navigate the changing face of BFSI ecosystem. He also focused on the importance of bringing in the climate considerations to ensure sustainability and resilience. Shri Dohare has also highlighted on the pioneering role played by IIBF in the domain of banking education in India and congratulated it for the upcoming centenary.

Shri Gopal Murli Bhagat, Deputy Chief Executive, Indian Banks' Association (IBA), deliberated upon the role played by IBA in bringing together the banks in India to counter the systemic issues and challenges

in banking, like the pandemic. He brought forth the importance of 'digital-first' approach to increase the resilience & inclusivity in banking. He emphasized on the importance of sustainability and the need to decrease the carbon intensity of banks' portfolios to ensure sustainability and resilience. He congratulated IIBF for bringing together the members of APABI to deliberate upon such key issues.

The keynote address by Smt. Charulatha S. Kar, Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), focused on the importance of capacity building to counter the pressing challenges in banking, especially the paradigm shifts brought about technological innovations. She highlighted the importance of staying agile in the face of rapid changes across the banking ecosystem, to provide a tailored and digitized customer journey by leveraging on recent advancements like artificial intelligence, machine learning & blockchain-based Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). She also highlighted on the recent Government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) to promote financial inclusion and also mentioned the recent initiative of 'Unified Lending Interface' to ensure frictionless credit to all. RBI's recent measures, like regulatory sandbox and engagement with FinTechs to promote controlled innovations in digital solutions in banking space have been duly mentioned by her to ensure data security and prevent cybercrimes. Finally, Smt. Kar has deliberated on the measures taken to ensure sustainability in the banking domain by cutting down on carbon footprints. She ended her speech by focusing on HR transformation, targeted learning and capacity building programmes to develop new skillsets in nurturing future leaders in the industry and complemented IIBF for its pioneering role in the capacity building space in India.

The speeches were followed by four highly engaging and insightful panel discussions wherein international and national experts exchanged their ideas,

experiences across geographies and shared valuable inputs in terms of developing the human capital to adapt and progress to the evolving BFSI ecosystem.

The first panel discussion was conducted on the topic of “Empowering through knowledge- Preparing future ready banking professionals”. The panel consisted of Ms. Wan-Hsin Huang, AVP & Head of Financial Training Group, Taiwan Academy of Banking & Finance (TABF); Smt. Suranjana Dutta, Chief General Manager (CGM) & Head-Strategic Training Unit (STU), State Bank of India; Dr. Chetna Pandey, General Manager-Learning & Development, Union Bank of India and Prof. Srinivasan R. Iyengar, former Director-Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS). The panel was insightfully moderated by Dr. K. Gangadharan, Director (Academics), IIBF. Shri Krishan Mishra, CEO, FPSB-India, established the context of the panel discussion through his brief yet insightful speech on the importance of professional education and continuous learning. The panel deliberated in detail upon the paramount importance of nurturing the human capital. Ms. Huang talked about banks’ growing investments in generative AI technology. Smt. Dutta talked about challenging the status quo through continuous knowledge. Dr. Pandey talked about fulfilling leadership gaps through upskilling and continuous learning. Prof. Srinivasan, on his turn, talked about knowledge-driven business models. The panel agreed on the immediate need for investing in human capital, leveraging on the technology-driven pedagogies, personalised learning solutions and increased collaboration between industry & academic institutes. The panel also indicated the need for joint research initiatives and industry-focused curriculum.

The second panel discussion focused on the important topic of “Digital Transformation: Redefining the Banking Landscape”. Shri Rajeev Ranjan Prasad, Chief General Manager (CGM)-Digital Banking, State Bank of India, laid the context through his detailed presentation on the digital disruption &

subsequent transformation of the banking system in India, especially in the digital lending & remittance domains. The panel, thereafter, focused on the digital transformation perspectives from other geographies through deliberations from Ms. Carrie Leung, CEO, The Hong Kong Institute of Bankers (HKIB) and Mr. SOU Visal, CEO, Institute of Banking & Finance (IBF) Cambodia, Shri Suresh Shankaran, Senior Vice President-Information Security Group (SVP-ISG), HDFC Bank and Shri E. Ratan Kumar, General Manager-Information Technology (GM-IT), Central Bank of India, put forth the transformational perspective in India. The panel was moderated by Shri LVR Prasad, Director (Training), IIBF. The panel deliberated upon the crucial need to improve customer experiences by leveraging technology, while not compromising on the data security perspective. The panel envisaged that increased collaboration with FinTech companies to improve customer onboarding and relationship experiences would be crucial for banks in the days to come. The panel also saw digital collaborations to be a critical strategy to ensure financial inclusion going forward. The panel concluded on the importance of customer education for ensuring digital security.

The third panel focused on the crucial topic of “Climate Risk & Sustainable Finance-Challenges & Opportunities”. The panel was made up of Smt. Shobana Chawla, Executive Director (ED), Standard Chartered Bank; Shri Ankit Jain, CEO, StepChange; Shri V Chandrasekar, Senior Advisor- Corporate & International Banking (C&IB), Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) and Shri Ashutosh Tandon, FIG Advisory Officer-South Asia, International Finance Corporation. The discussions were moderated by Shri Biswa Ketan Das, CEO, IIBF. The topic was introduced by Shri Sunil T S Nair, Chief General Manager (CGM), Reserve Bank of India through an insightful speech on the need for incorporating climate risks in the risk management processes of banks and highlighted on

the RBI initiative to address the issue of unavailability of standardized & reliable climate data through introduction of 'RB-CRIS', a climate data repository for India. The panel, on its turn, has deliberated in detail about the importance of factoring climate risks in the credit appraisal and underwriting process of a Bank, of calculating the Bank's emissions including financed emissions and to disclose the emissions in an effective and trustworthy manner. The panel has deep-dived on the impact of Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) or similar carbon taxes on India's exports and has also touched upon the necessity of introducing an effective carbon trading market for financing the transition. Moreover, the panel deliberated on the human-side of climate adaptation processes and the importance of funding such initiatives. At the end, the panel has highlighted on the importance of creating the relevant capacity amongst the employees of banks across levels, to create the necessary awareness on climate-related risks and mitigations.

As a guest speaker, Mr. Simon Thomson from the Global Capacity Building Coalition, has called for prioritising the capacity building initiatives across the globe to tackle climate change more effectively.

The fourth and final panel deliberated on the topic of "Data driven Banking: Leveraging Big data and Artificial Intelligence". Shri Balaji Rajagopalan, Chief Technology Officer (CTO), State Bank of India provided some valuable insights on the aspect of effective data mining for excellence in customer experiences, followed by a detailed discussion by the panel moderated by Dr. Narinder Bhasin, Head-Professional Development Centre, Northern Zone (PDC NZ), IIBF. The panel was made up of Mr. Reginald C. Nery, Senior Vice President and Chief Audit Executive, Bankers Institute of Phillipines; Shri Rajesh Kumar Ram, General Manager (GM)-Digital Banking, Bank of India; Shri Jalpesh Shah, Head-Data Science, Credit Analytics & Innovation, HDFC Bank

and Shri Burra Butchi Babu, IT advisory board member, Punjab & Sind Bank. The panel discussed the need to incorporate effective data governance models for managing the huge volume of available data ethically and prudently. The panel highlighted the importance of adequate domain knowledge to modulate the data management tools, to create multifunctional data models. The panel has mentioned the need of reskilling and upskilling for existing employees on the areas of big data and artificial intelligence. The panel was unanimous in ensuring data security and ethical data usage to prevent transactional frauds and cyber-threats. The panel concluded by saying that the regulatory framework is required to catch up with the path-breaking developments in the domain, while we move towards a data-driven banking model.

As a part of the conference, the Institute also released its special issue of the 'Bank Quest' on the theme of the conference covering articles on new paradigms in banking penned by Indian and International authors, including senior-most executives from banks & Financial Institutions (FIs) in India, which gave national and global perspectives on banking issues.

39th Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas Memorial Lecture

The prestigious Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas Memorial lecture (39th lecture) was delivered by Dr. Rabi Narayan Mishra, Director, College of Supervisors, Reserve Bank of India on the topic of "From fixing points of instability to setting a state of resilience: Making financial entities distress-immune and future-ready".

Dr. Mishra started his insightful delivery with the epiphany that 'Stability breeds instability', therefore, a prolonged period of stability needs to be monitored thoroughly for inherent systemic risks. Moreover, the era of financial innovations has led to a mushrooming growth of financial products, thereby, increasing the systemic risks exponentially in an interconnected

monetary system worldwide. Resilience of the financial system is synonymous with a sustained state of stability, as he appropriately deliberated. Dr. Mishra has insightfully divided the risks that the financial system faces, into three areas: 'known-known risks', 'known-unknown risks' and 'unknown-unknown risks'. Addressing these risks, in turn, are closely related to the overall resilience of the financial system.

Dr. Mishra has deliberated upon the three different types of resilience that an organization needs to ensure in order to become truly resilient, namely financial resilience, operational resilience and functional resilience. Dr. Mishra has highlighted on the importance of relooking at the existing regulations and

has called to move from sector-agnostic regulations to sector-specific regulations.

Dr. Mishra has emphasized on the critical role of an organization like IIBF for propagation of necessary awareness and knowledge-base for the banking community as a whole, in the critical aspect of increasing resilience in the banking ecosystem.

Dr. Mishra has concluded his address with the very pertinent argument that every CEO needs to be focusing on building their systems & processes in such a way that natural resilience is created within the system. In that way, the internal system can predict in advance and effectively deal with crises or any adverse event, as and when they arise.



21st APABI International Conference 2024



21st APABI International Conference 2024 - 14th November 2024: Welcome Address by Mr. Biswa Ketan Das, CEO, IIBF



Inaugural session- (L-R): Mr. Biswa Ketan Das, Chief Executive Officer; Smt. Charulatha S. Kar, Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India; Mr. Mahendra Dohare, Executive Director, Central Bank of India; Mr. Gopal Murli Bhagat, Deputy Chief Executive, Indian Banks' Association



Mr. Biswa Ketan Das, CEO, IIBF moderating the Panel Discussion

