

2025

# ABA NEWSLETTER

June Issue



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## About ABA

The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) began when it took the first step toward forging closer regional links when 217 representatives of 139 banks met in Taipei in May 1981 to establish the Asian Bankers Council (later known as ABA) as one of the Product and Service Councils of the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI). The countries represented included Australia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Thailand.

The Taipei meeting was the largest gathering of bankers with Asian presence to be convened in the region at that time. CACCI sponsored the meeting with the view to exploring banking opportunities in Asia and to enhance the role of bankers in the economic development of the region.

The ABA aims to provide a forum for advancing the cause of the banking and finance industry in the region and promoting regional economic cooperation. Its primary objectives include the following:

- To serve as a venue for an exchange of views and information on banking opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region;
- To facilitate the meeting of bankers in the region in an atmosphere of fellowship and friendship;
- To encourage joint activities that would enhance the role of its members in servicing the financial needs of their respective economies and in promoting regional development; and
- To undertake projects that will encourage trade, industrial, and investment cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.



### 41st ABA General Meeting and Conference Kingdom of Bhutan, September 15-16, 2025

The Asian Bankers Association reminds members and associates to mark the calendars for the 41st ABA General Meeting and Conference, taking place on September 15-16, 2025, in the Kingdom of Bhutan. We are pleased to inform you that the official Conference website (<https://41aba.bt/>) is now live!

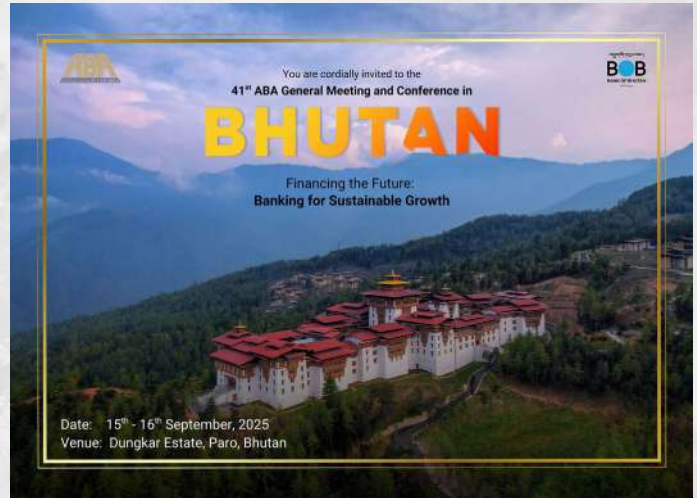
This year's Conference will be held at Dungkar Dzong in Paro, a setting that is truly exceptional. Nestled in the Himalayas, Bhutan offers a rare and serene environment – one that invites both reflection and forward-thinking dialogue. It is a fitting venue for the Conference theme: **"Financing the Future: Banking for Sustainable Growth."**

Discussions will focus on:

- Digital Transformation in Sustainability Banking
- Enhancing Customer and Employee Experience Through Technology
- Innovations in Cross-Border Payments
- Adapting Regulations for a Changing Financial Landscape

There are four Policy Advocacy papers, which will discuss the following topics:

- "Open Banking and Customer Data Privacy Protections"
- "Cyber Security and Cyber Insurance"
- "Money Mule Account Issue in Banking"



- "Ethical Banking and Corporate Governance"

We still welcome suggestions for speakers and moderators for the Conference. Please contact the Secretariat at [aba@aba.org.tw](mailto:aba@aba.org.tw) / [teresaliu@aba.org.tw](mailto:teresaliu@aba.org.tw) should you have any suitable suggestions for any of the above-mentioned sessions.

We sincerely hope you will join us in the annual event in Bhutan!

### ABA Chairman hosted luncheon for Taiwanese members



Mr. Daniel Wu, Chairman, Asian Bankers Association (ABA) extended a warm invitation to all Taiwanese member banks to attend a special luncheon held in Taipei on Wednesday, June 25, 2025. This gathering served as an opportunity for Chairman Wu to personally invite them to actively participate in the upcoming 41st ABA General Meeting and Conference, scheduled to take place in Bhutan this September.

During the luncheon, Mr. Wu underscored the importance of Taiwan's continued engagement in ABA activities and highlighted how the annual conference serves as a critical

platform for exchanging insights on banking and financial developments across the region. In addition, he encouraged Taiwanese members to consider nominating representatives to run for seats on the ABA Board of Directors for the next term, emphasizing that their leadership and perspectives are vital to shaping the Association's future initiatives and priorities.

The event concluded with a reaffirmation of the ABA's commitment to fostering closer collaboration and advancing shared goals within the regional banking community.



## ABA hosts Welcome Dinner for Bank of Bhutan Team

Mr. Daniel Wu, Chairman, Asian Bankers Association (ABA) hosted a Welcome Dinner for a six-person team from Bank of Bhutan in Taipei on Monday, June 16, 2025. This special gathering was organized to warmly receive the visiting team and to further strengthen the ties between the ABA and one of its esteemed member institutions.

Throughout the evening, the group exchanged views on regional banking developments, shared updates on preparations for the upcoming 41st ABA General Meeting and Conference to be held in Bhutan this September, and explored additional opportunities for collaboration.



## Member Highlights

### PEZA taps CTBC Bank to promote Philippines as investment hub

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) has partnered with CTBC Bank (Philippines) Corp. to promote the Philippines as an attractive investment destination.

In a statement, the investment promotion agency (IPA) said PEZA Director General Tereso Panga and CTBC Bank President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Luis Elizaga signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Wednesday, May 14.

"This partnership reflects our shared vision of enabling industries, empowering communities, and positioning the Philippines as a globally competitive and resilient investment destination," said Panga.

Under the MOU, PEZA seeks to harness CTBC Bank's track record in supporting businesses across Asia, particularly through its roots in Taiwan and its more than two decades of presence in the Philippines.

The agency said the bank's sound financial management makes it well-positioned to become a key enabler of growth within PEZA's growing network of ecozones.

"We welcome the participation of international banking institutions as allies in our quest to further promote the Philippines as the prime investment hub in Asia," Panga said.

"Their participation as partners in promoting investments enhances the efforts of PEZA to capture the crème de la crème of global investors," he added.

CTBC Bank is expected to "actively support" PEZA's investment promotion programs and initiatives, leveraging its wide network to help attract both existing and prospective investors to locate and expand their operations.

In a Facebook post, CTBC Bank said the MOU signals its strong commitment to supporting economic advancement in the country, particularly among small- and medium-sized



enterprises (SMEs).

Aside from CTBC, PEZA has partnered with Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp. (SMBC), Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC), and HSBC for trade, commerce, and investments support and facilitation.

For the first four months of the year, investment approvals by PEZA reached ₱63.52 billion, up 112 percent from ₱29.96 billion in the same period last year.

The pledges, which translate to actual investments over time, cover 86 new and expansion projects. These projects are expected to create 24,290 jobs and \$846.74 million in projected exports.

Panga earlier said that he "remains bullish" on the growth trend this year due to the government's "strong commitment towards investment promotion and facilitation."

*Manila Bulletin*



## Member Highlights

### Sustainable Finance Masterclass for Board Members

As a landmark move toward advancing sustainable banking practices in Nepal, Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA) successfully hosted first-of-its-kind Sustainable Finance Masterclass exclusively designed for Board Members of member banks. The session marks a new chapter in strengthening ESG principles at the highest level of banking leadership. It was organized at a crucial juncture, as both global and national attention, and the regulatory requirement on sustainable finance practices is intensifying.

Delivering the welcome remarks, NBA President Mr. Santosh Koirala highlighted the importance of aligning the banking sector with national and regulatory priorities on sustainable finance. He emphasized NBA's proactive efforts to build industry capacity on sustainable finance focused programs. Mr. Koirala further underscored the critical role of board-level leadership in driving the financial sector toward sustainable finance practices.

The Masterclass was enriched by the insights of two distinguished Professors from the UPF, Barcelona School of Management. The session on Managing Social Risk in Sustainable



Finance was delivered by Prof. Dr. Andrei Boar, Head of Business Strategy and Management Department at BSM. He shed light on the social dimension of ESG, emphasizing the importance of identifying and managing social risks in banking operations, particularly in lending practices. He also discussed

about the different frameworks that banks can adopt to identify and mitigate these risks.

Another key session on Governance and Sustainable Finance was led by Prof. Dr. Marcos Eguiguren Huerta, Associate Provost and Secretary General at BSM. Dr. Eguiguren emphasized governance as a critical pillar for building an ethically responsible and sustainable financial sector. He underlined the need for strong leadership, transparent decision-making and accountability frameworks within banks for its sustainability. He stressed that robust governance is fundamental not only for regulatory compliance but also for long-term business sustainability and stakeholder trust.

The program was graced by the presence of over 45 participants, including Chairmen of the Board, Board Members and CEOs from member banks.

### Nepal Impact Investment Forum 2025

Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA), in collaboration with Invest for Impact Nepal (IIN) and Nepal Private Equity Association (NPEA) successfully organized Nepal Impact Investment Forum 2025. This landmark event aimed to strengthen Nepal's growing impact investment ecosystem by fostering meaningful connections between international investors and domestic stakeholders, particularly within the financial sector.

The Forum served as a strategic platform to facilitate dialogue among key actors, including Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), impact investors, financial institutions, government representatives, regulatory bodies, private equity and venture capital funds, and other private sector players. By aligning shared interests and encouraging collaboration, the event sought to unlock new avenues for sustainable investment and inclusive economic growth in Nepal.

The inaugural session of the event was graced by Mr. Dhani Ram Sharma, Joint Secretary – International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance as the Chief Guest. The event featured a series of high – level technical sessions. The session on Scaling Foreign Investment in Nepal was Chaired by Mr. Bam Bahadur Mishra, Deputy Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, and brought together a distinguished panel of experts from diverse backgrounds. The second session, focusing



on Climate Transition Plans for Financial Institutions, was Chaired by Mr. Colin Buckley, Managing Director and General Counsel at BII, and highlighted the evolving role of financial institutions in supporting climate goals. Another key session on Growing the Private Equity and Venture Capital (PEVC) Industry was Chaired by Dr. Nabaraj Adhikari, Executive Director of Securities Board of Nepal, and explored strategies for expanding the PEVC landscape in the country.

The technical session on Unlocking Financing for Women Entrepreneurs was Chaired by Dr. Satyendra Timilsina,





Executive Director of Nepal Rastra Bank, and emphasized the importance of inclusive financing to empower women-led enterprises. Similarly, the session on Accelerating MFI Growth through Foreign Investment was Chaired by Mr. Biggyan Raj Subedi, Director at Nepal Rastra Bank, and focused on the role of international capital in strengthening the microfinance sector. These discussions were complemented by executive one-on-one meetings, which facilitated deeper exchanges on regulatory frameworks, investment readiness, sector-specific opportunities,

and pathways for enhancing collaboration between domestic financial institutions and global capital providers.

The event witnessed active participation from over 14 international institutions, including DFIs and prominent impact investors, alongside senior representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), Securities Board of Nepal (SEBON), diplomatic missions, development partners, international and domestic investment institutions, BFI and media.

## E-wallets in APAC and ANZ are becoming the new face of everyday banking

In many parts of the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region, digital wallets are no longer seen as complementary to banking, they've become central to it. From buying groceries at a roadside stall in Jakarta to paying utility bills through a smartphone in suburban Melbourne, the everyday use of e-wallets has quietly redefined what consumers expect from financial services.

While traditional banking infrastructure still holds a strong presence, especially in countries like Australia and New Zealand, the way people interact with money is shifting towards a mobile-native experiences. Banks that continue to depend solely on card issuance and app-based interfaces are discovering that customers now expect, faster transactions, better integration with lifestyle platforms, and easier ways to manage finances with just a push of a button.

According to [Euromonitor International](#), digital wallets in developing APAC countries have recorded significant momentum, with personal electronic payments growing at a compound annual rate of 43% between 2019 and 2024.

Countries like India, Indonesia, and the Philippines have become case studies in how quickly digital wallets can outpace conventional methods of transaction. The driver behind this growth isn't just government support or technology availability, it's how well digital wallets address longstanding frictions around access, convenience, and real-time payment needs. Even in more developed markets, wallet usage is climbing.

In 2023, [Capital One Shopping](#) reported that 50% of point-of-sale transactions across APAC were made using digital wallets, marking a significant shift in consumer behaviour. This figure is expected to rise further as mobile-native users continue to dominate transaction volumes.

### **Banks without wallets risk being left out of their customers' daily financial lives**

This level of penetration brings with it an important

question for banks, what happens if you don't offer an e-wallet?

For many institutions, the risks are no longer hypothetical. Banks without wallet capabilities are beginning to lose visibility in the customer journey. It's not just about falling behind on innovation; it's about being absent in daily moments of spending. In a competitive market filled with fintech players and super apps, not showing up at the payment moment often means not being considered at all.

Without a wallet presence, financial institutions surrender control over how customers engage with payments, rewards, and even account balances. Instead, that interaction is handled by a third-party provider, which often means losing valuable data insights that could otherwise inform product development, lending models, or personalised user experiences.

At the same time, institutions without wallet offerings often struggle to reach underserved segments.

In countries where banking penetration remains limited, digital wallets have filled a critical gap. For instance, Indonesia's QRIS system has created a unified standard for merchants and consumers alike, making it easier for informal vendors and gig workers to participate in digital commerce. Without a comparable offering, banks have fewer levers to tap into these markets and extend services like microloans or insurance products that could otherwise be delivered through wallet-linked platforms.

### **E-wallets are not just a technology decision, but a strategic one**

This isn't just a technology issue, it's a strategic one. While some banks may hesitate to deploy wallets due to concerns over integration or operational complexity, delaying implementation means missing out on the rapidly growing share of consumers who now equate e-wallets with modern banking.

Consumers who once logged into online banking platforms for daily account management now open their e-wallet



apps first. As the lines blur between banking and commerce, institutions must consider what role they want to play in this evolving financial narrative.

According to [Euromonitor's 2024 data](#), APAC now accounts for over half of the world's paperless financial transactions, much of it facilitated by mobile wallets. That figure alone signals how entrenched this shift has become. While banks still lead in products like fixed deposits, mortgages, and business loans, it's clear they are losing their edge in day-to-day transactions, and with it, customer mindshare.

### BPC's SmartVista eWallet offers a practical path to digital relevance

BPC's SmartVista eWallet is addressing this shift with intent. Designed to help tier-1 and tier-2 banks, fintech, SMEs participate meaningfully in the digital payments space, the SmartVista digital platform offers a broad range of capabilities, from retail purchases and mobile top-ups to person-to-person transfers and bill payments.

"Our platform isn't just a standalone solution, it's built to integrate seamlessly into a bank's existing ecosystem. This allows institutions to retain full customer ownership while meeting evolving digital demands. With a modular approach, banks can modernise without needing to overhaul legacy systems or start from scratch", said Imran Vilcassim, Global Chief Commercial Officer, Digital Banking, BPC.

Security remains a primary concern for digital wallet users, and rightly so.

Imran states that, SmartVista addresses this with strong encryption, multi-factor authentication, and regulatory compliance baked into its design. The wallet isn't simply a skin on top of banking systems, it's an operational layer that connects

data, users, and transaction engines in a way that banks can control and evolve. A product sheet outlining its architecture and features is available on [BPC's official site](#).

### Banks that want to stay relevant need to meet customers where they are

Perhaps one of the most significant advantages for banks adopting their own wallets is the ability to stay relevant across changing demographics.

A 2024 [report by eMarketer](#) reveals that nearly 80% of Gen Z consumers already use digital wallets, underscoring a generational shift in payment preferences. For financial institutions aiming to stay relevant with younger audiences, offering an e-wallet is no longer just a forward-looking investment, it's a present-day necessity.

Banks may still hold the trust advantage when it comes to managing long-term savings and credit. However, in the world of daily finance, coffee purchases, utility bills, digital subscriptions, ride-shares, that trust is slowly shifting toward convenience-first platforms.

To keep up, financial institutions must ensure they have a real stake in the daily digital interactions of their customers. Otherwise, they risk being left behind not by disruption, but by quiet disconnection.

In APAC and ANZ, the path forward is clear. It's not just about catching up with fintechs or expanding mobile capabilities. It's about making sure that banking remains where people spend, save, and live, inside the device they carry every day. And increasingly, that experience begins with a wallet.

*BPC*

## Training Programs

### ABA upcoming Short-Term Visiting Programs

#### State Bank of India (SBI)

The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) is pleased to announce the upcoming Short-Term Visiting Program to be hosted by State Bank of India (SBI)..



- Date: August 18-22, 2025
- Location: Hyderabad, India

More details of the training program will be shared via email to all members and associates soon. Should you have any questions, please contact [aba@aba.org.tw](mailto:aba@aba.org.tw).

#### Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance (TABF)



The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) is pleased to announce the upcoming Short-Term Visiting Program to be hosted by Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance (TABF).

Exclusively designed for banking professionals and executives across Asia, the program offers firsthand exposure to Taiwan's financial innovation and ESG leadership through expert-led workshops, site visits to top financial institutions, and VIP access to FinTech Taipei 2025 – Asia's premier fintech forum.

- Date: October 21-22, 2025
- Location: Taipei, Taiwan

#### Agenda

Time	Day 1 - October 21
09:30-11:30	Opening Ceremony
11:30-12:00	Guided Tour: Financial Explorer 62
12:30-14:30	Lunch
14:30-16:30	Field Visit: CTBC 168 Innovation Lab

Time	Day 2 - October 22 FinTech Taipei International Forum
09:30-10:30	Opening Ceremony



10:50-12:20	<b>Session: Virtual Asset</b> Keynote Speech I: Virtual Asset and Future Finance Keynote Speech II: European Virtual Asset Policy, Development and Global Analysis Panel Discussion: Transcending Borders: Global Perspectives on Virtual Assets
12:30-13:20	Lunch
13:30-15:20	<b>Session: AI Application</b> Keynote Speech I: International AI and Financial Innovation Services Keynote Speech II: Global Applications of AI in Financial Innovation Panel Discussion: AI Shaping the Future of Financial Services

15:40-17:30	<b>Session: Tech-driven Fraud Prevention</b> Keynote Speech I: Technology-Driven Fraud Prevention and Financial Stability Keynote Speech II: Financial Fraud Targeting the Elderly and Practical Tech-Based Prevention Panel Discussion: International Collaboration Against Financial Fraud
18:00-19:30	<b>Fintech Party of Taiwan</b>

More details of the training program will be shared via email to all members and associates soon. Should you have any questions, please contact [aba@aba.org.tw](mailto:aba@aba.org.tw).

