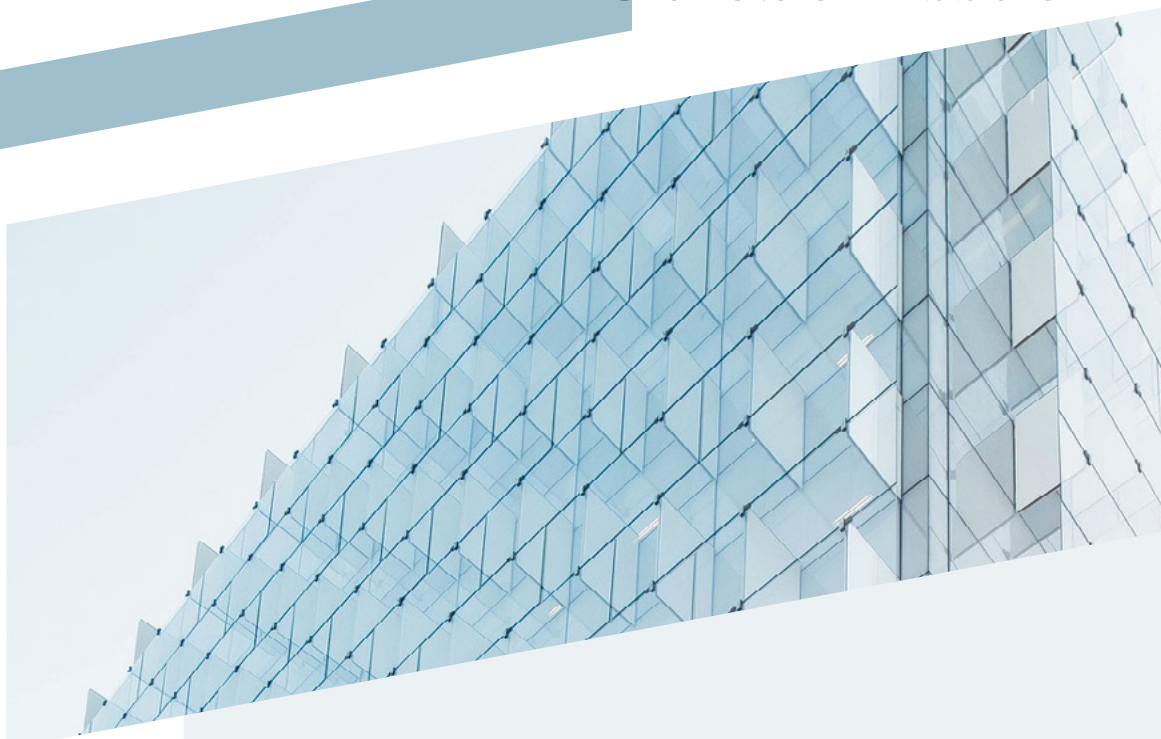
ABA NEWSLETTER

2026

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ASIAN BANKERS ASSOCIATION

About ABA

The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) was initially established in 1981 as Asian Bankers Council as one of the Product and Service Councils of the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI).

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.

From Dialogue to Action: Outcomes of the 42nd ABA Conference

Overview

The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) held its 42nd General Meeting and Conference on September 1–3, 2026, at Niva Kurumba Resort in the Maldives. Hosted by Bank of Maldives (BML), the gathering brought together some 150 bankers and industry representatives from across the region. It was the second time the annual event was held in the Maldives, following the 2018 conference.



Under the theme **"Banking in Asia: Investing to Build Resilience,"** the program combined high-level conference discussions with the ABA General Meeting, Policy Advocacy Committee proceedings and the 66th Board of Directors Meeting. Across these activities, delegates considered how financial institutions can respond to technological disruption, climate-related risks, shifting geopolitical conditions and the demand for stronger regional cooperation.

Opening Ceremony

ABA Chairman Mr. Mohamed Shareef, CEO and Managing Director of Bank of Maldives, opened the Conference by welcoming delegates, speakers and partners. Reflecting on the Maldives' recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its tourism-dependent economy, he emphasized that resilience rests not on the size of an institution or economy, but on preparedness, institutional strength and continued investment during periods of uncertainty.



Chairman Shareef outlined three priorities for the Association: expanding practical exchanges among member institutions through study visits and short-term programs; strengthening the collective regional voice on cross-border payments, correspondent banking, cyber threat intelligence and sustainable finance; and ensuring that smaller banking markets remain actively represented in regional discussions. He also encouraged existing members to introduce prospective institutions to ABA and invited non-member participants to consider joining the Association.

Host Bank Session

The Host Bank Session examined the financing of the Maldives' economic transformation. BML Deputy CEO Ms. Sahar Waheed described the Bank's role in supporting the country's financial development and its efforts to expand partnerships with international institutions. The session addressed the continuing importance of tourism and the opportunities associated with financing infrastructure, small and medium-sized enterprises, fisheries, affordable housing and sustainable economic activity.



Looking ahead, the host bank identified mobilization of capital, sustainable finance, the SME ecosystem, cross-border payments, and technology and artificial intelligence as key areas of focus. These priorities provided a practical national perspective on the wider conference theme of building resilience through investment and collaboration.

Conference Proceedings: Key Discussions

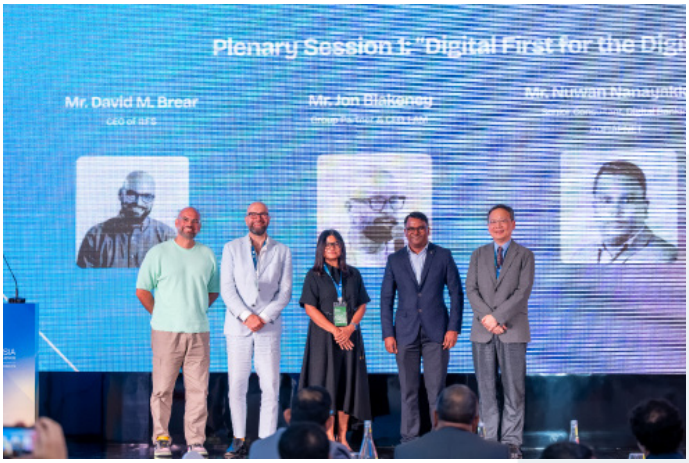
The conference featured four plenary sessions addressing major developments affecting the Asian banking industry. Rather than focusing on individual

presentations, the discussions collectively underscored the need for banks to modernize their services, strengthen governance, respond to emerging risks and adapt to an increasingly interconnected financial environment.

Digital First for the Digital Era

The first plenary examined the banking sector's continuing digital transformation and the need for institutions to adopt technology strategically to improve operational efficiency, strengthen competitiveness and deliver better customer experiences. Discussions highlighted the opportunities created by emerging technologies, artificial intelligence and innovative banking models, while recognizing the challenges posed by legacy-system integration, rising cybersecurity threats, data privacy concerns and the organizational and cultural changes required to support successful transformation.

The session explored innovation strategies, next-generation payment systems, AI-powered growth, financial education in an era of misinformation, agentic commerce and cross-border payments innovation. A central theme was the importance of designing digital services around changing customer needs rather than technology alone. The discussions emphasized that banks must combine investment in digital capabilities with appropriate safeguards, staff readiness and a customer-focused approach to ensure that innovation translates into accessible, reliable and meaningful financial services.



Sustainability: Building Resilience

The second plenary focused on sustainability and the role of environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations in strengthening banking resilience. Participants recognized that ESG issues are increasingly important to risk management, institutional reputation and regulatory expectations. They also discussed the challenges facing financial institutions, including exposure to carbon-intensive lending, the physical effects of climate change on financed assets, data privacy and cybersecurity risks, and the need for strong corporate governance and ethical practices.

Discussions considered financing climate adaptation through both public- and private-sector participation, incorporating sustainability into banking operations and drawing lessons from practical experiences across Asia. The session also examined the blue economy and sustainable tourism finance, issues of particular relevance to coastal and island economies such as the Maldives. Overall, the plenary highlighted the need for banks to integrate sustainability into their financing decisions and operations while supporting climate resilience and long-term economic development.



Success Through Synergy: Leveraging Technology for Risk

The third plenary examined how advances in technology are transforming risk management from a largely reactive and manual function into a more proactive, data-driven and real-time discipline. Speakers highlighted the growing use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain and cloud computing to identify, measure and mitigate credit, market, operational and cyber risks. The session emphasized that effective integration of these technologies is becoming increasingly important as Asian banks respond to a more complex operating environment.



Participants discussed the use of risk-management software and predictive analytics to anticipate emerging exposures, alongside risk strategies that can support

continued digital progress. Attention was also given to responsible AI in banking, governance arrangements and board oversight. The session noted that institutions with greater resources and experience in deploying advanced risk technologies can offer useful lessons to other banks, reinforcing the value of sharing practical knowledge and strengthening institutional capabilities across the region.

The New Global Order: Geopolitical Realignment and Its Implications for Asia

The fourth plenary considered how shifting geopolitical alliances, changing trade dynamics, supply-chain realignments and the reconfiguration of global capital flows are reshaping the operating environment for Asian banks. Participants observed that the emergence of a more complex and multipolar global order is affecting investment patterns, cross-border financial activity and the regional economic outlook. In this environment, banks face heightened uncertainty and must remain agile, competitive and resilient in responding to rapid global change.

Discussions addressed geopolitical developments and their implications for the banking sector, evolving trade corridors and regional economic integration, and the opportunities arising from shifts in international capital flows. Participants also examined the challenges associated with economic uncertainty, sanctions and supply-chain restructuring, as well as the importance of forward-looking strategies, regional collaboration and strategic partnerships. The plenary underscored the evolving role of Asian banks in supporting trade, investment and financial connectivity amid geopolitical realignment.



Spotlight Sessions: Cross-Cutting Insights

In addition to the four plenaries, the Conference included spotlight sessions by invited experts on issues of special interest to the banking industry. Taken together, these sessions reinforced several themes running throughout the program: the transition from conventional digital banking toward more personalized and intelligent financial services; the increasing relevance of AI-enabled and agentic commerce; and the need to combine innovation with trust, customer protection and effective oversight.

The sessions also considered the evolution of payment ecosystems, new competitive pressures from technology platforms, responsible investing and the role of financial institutions in supporting inclusive economic growth. Presentations on long-term institutional resilience emphasized the importance of clear purpose, sound governance, strategic focus and the ability to adapt as markets change. These exchanges broadened the Conference's perspective on how banks can invest in both innovation and stability.

ABA Policy Advocacy Committee

The ABA Policy Advocacy Committee, chaired by Mr. Prem Moktan of Bank of Bhutan, convened a plenary session to consider four policy papers prepared under its 2026 work program. The papers addressed Ethical AI Governance and Policies; Fraud and Cyber Security; Green and Sustainable Finance; and Cross-Border Payments. Representatives of member banks and knowledge partners contributed practical experiences and policy perspectives.



On ethical AI governance, discussions emphasized transparency, fairness, accountability, data protection, human oversight and sound model governance. On fraud and cybersecurity, the Committee examined increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, fraud detection, incident response, staff awareness and the benefits of cross-border intelligence sharing and public-private cooperation.

The discussion on green and sustainable finance highlighted the integration of ESG considerations into banking operations, climate adaptation and mitigation financing, sustainability disclosures, and mobilization of private capital. Members also recognized the importance of realistic frameworks that take account of different stages of economic development. On cross-border payments, the Committee considered interoperability, transaction costs, settlement efficiency, AML/CFT compliance and improved correspondent banking links among member institutions.

The Committee unanimously endorsed all four policy papers and resolved to submit them to the ABA Board of Directors for approval and subsequent implementation across member institutions. It also

recommended continued engagement with regulators, policymakers and other stakeholders to facilitate adoption of the recommendations.

42nd ABA General Meeting

During the General Meeting, Chairman Shareef presented his report on the Association's activities since the previous annual gathering in Bhutan in September 2025. The report highlighted ABA's efforts to promote regional cooperation, professional exchange and institutional connectivity amid changes in the economic and geopolitical environment. He expressed appreciation to member institutions for their participation in planning and implementing the Association's activities.



Preparations for the 2026 Conference were undertaken in close coordination with Bank of Maldives and the Planning Committee. A Planning Committee Meeting in the Maldives in February 2026 finalized major program arrangements and provided an opportunity for exchanges with the Maldives Monetary Authority and the Ministry of Finance. The Chairman also acknowledged CTBC Financial Holding Co., Ltd., the Conference's Strategic Partner, for its support of the keynote program.

Capacity-building and knowledge exchange continued to feature prominently in ABA's work. Two short-term visiting programs were conducted during 2026: a program hosted by Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation in Manila on June 24–25, focusing on sustainability, open finance, AI, cybersecurity and digital innovation; and a program hosted by State Bank of India at its Staff College in Hyderabad on August 4–5. These initiatives provided opportunities for member banks to share operational experiences and practical expertise.

The Association also continued its "Connecting and Exploring Opportunities with ABA" webinar series, organized webinars and workshops with knowledge partners, participated in regional industry and association events, and published its monthly ABA Newsletter. The Chairman's Report also noted ongoing efforts to strengthen the ABA membership network, including receipt of an application from Synapsys Ltd. of Sri Lanka.

66th ABA Board of Directors Meeting

The 66th ABA Board of Directors Meeting was held on September 1, 2026. The Board reviewed the Association's activities since the previous annual gathering and approved the minutes of the 64th and 65th Board Meetings, the Secretary-Treasurer's Report, financial reports for 2025 and the first six months of 2026, and the proposed ABA budget for 2027.

Importantly, the Board approved the four policy papers endorsed by the Policy Advocacy Committee, covering fraud and cybersecurity, green and sustainable finance, ethical AI governance and policies, and cross-border payments. The Board also approved the establishment of a Planning Committee to prepare for the 43rd ABA General Meeting and Conference, to be hosted by Hatton National Bank in 2027. In recognition of the successful hosting arrangements, the Board resolved to present a Plaque of Appreciation to Bank of Maldives.



Networking and Closing Activities

The Welcome and Farewell Dinners provided opportunities for delegates to renew relationships, strengthen professional networks and explore possible future cooperation. In his remarks, Chairman Shareef emphasized that the Association's value extends beyond formal sessions to the relationships and trust developed among banks across different markets. He expressed appreciation to the speakers, moderators, delegates, sponsors, Bank of Maldives organizing team and ABA Secretariat for their contributions to the Conference.

At the Farewell Dinner, ABA Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Darson Chiu presented a Plaque of Appreciation to Chairman Shareef in recognition of the host bank's arrangements and hospitality. Chairman Shareef also acknowledged the support of conference sponsors CTBC and Pomelo. The gathering reinforced the importance of sustaining the connections and partnerships developed during the three-day event.

Special Sustainability Activities

Alongside the formal program, Bank of Maldives organized activities highlighting marine conservation and environmental responsibility. A Guinness World Records attempt for the most people snorkeling simultaneously at a single venue brought together 314 participants at Niva Kurumba and successfully achieved the record. The initiative was intended to raise awareness of the fragility of the Maldives' reef ecosystems and the importance of protecting the marine environment.



BML also organized a coral planting experience at Kurumba Maldives' house reef, enabling participants to contribute to reef restoration. These activities reflected the host bank's wider environmental commitments and connected the Conference's sustainability discussions with visible community engagement.

Invitation to the 43rd ABA Conference

At the closing gathering, Mr. Damith Pallewatte, Managing Director and CEO of Hatton National Bank and ABA Vice Chairman, invited delegates to Colombo, Sri Lanka, for the 43rd ABA General Meeting and Conference in 2027. He emphasized that the next gathering would provide another platform for Asian bankers to deepen partnerships, exchange ideas and translate dialogue into practical cooperation.



Conclusion

The 42nd ABA General Meeting and Conference reaffirmed the Association's role as a regional platform for dialogue, policy advocacy, knowledge exchange and relationship-building. The discussions underscored that banking resilience depends on more than technological advancement alone: it also requires sound governance, sustainable investment, effective risk management, institutional adaptability and cooperation across borders.

With the approval of four policy advocacy papers, continued capacity-building initiatives and preparations for the next annual gathering, the Conference provided a foundation for further collaboration among ABA member institutions in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Asia's banking sector.

A New Turn in U.S. Monetary Policy: What It Means for Asian Banks

By Darson Chiu, Ph.D., Secretary-Treasurer, ABA

A Changing U.S. Monetary Policy Environment

The U.S. Federal Reserve's decision on September 16 to raise its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 3.75–4.00% marked an important shift toward monetary tightening. The decision reflected persistent inflationary pressures, elevated energy prices, and continued resilience in the U.S. economy.

Recent economic data suggest that inflation remains a major concern. U.S. consumer prices rose 3.7% year-on-year in September, well above the Fed's 2% target. Another interest rate increase therefore remains possible before the end of 2026.

For Asian economies, the direction of U.S. monetary policy has implications beyond American financial markets. It influences global interest rates, exchange rates, international capital flows, and the overall economic outlook for the region.

Higher Interest Rates and Global Economic Uncertainty

One important development is the persistence of relatively high U.S. long-term interest rates. The yield on the 10-year U.S. Treasury bond remained above 5% in October, reflecting concerns about inflation, fiscal deficits, and the outlook for government borrowing.

Higher U.S. yields can attract international capital into dollar-denominated assets, creating downward pressure on Asian currencies and increasing borrowing costs for businesses and governments.

At the same time, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have contributed to elevated energy prices, adding inflationary pressures and uncertainty to the global economy. For Asian economies that depend heavily on imported energy, these developments could weaken trade balances and increase production costs.

Changes in international trade policies and global supply chains have also complicated the economic outlook. Together, these factors make it more difficult for central banks to balance inflation control with the need to support economic growth.

Different Challenges and Opportunities Across Asia

The impact of tighter U.S. monetary policy will vary across Asian economies. Countries with strong foreign-exchange reserves, healthy external balances, and stable economic fundamentals may be better positioned to manage financial volatility. In contrast, economies that rely heavily on imported energy, foreign capital, or U.S. dollar borrowing could face greater pressure.

Nevertheless, Asia continues to benefit from important sources of economic growth. Investment



in artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation, infrastructure, and regional supply chains is creating new business opportunities.

The rapid expansion of AI-related industries has been particularly important for several Asian economies, supporting exports, investment, and technological development. However, concerns about high valuations and the concentration of investment in a limited number of technology companies have recently increased financial market volatility. This suggests that while AI remains an important growth driver, a more diversified economic structure will be essential for sustainable development.

Looking ahead, Asia's economic performance will depend not only on U.S. monetary policy but also on its ability to adapt to technological changes, geopolitical developments, and evolving global trade patterns.

The Role of Asian Banks in a Changing Economy

Against this background, Asian banks have an important role to play in supporting economic stability and development.

First, banks should remain attentive to changes in interest rates, exchange rates, and international capital flows. Maintaining adequate liquidity and prudent risk management will be essential in an uncertain financial environment.

Second, banks can help businesses respond to changing global conditions. Many companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, face challenges arising from higher financing costs, currency fluctuations, and adjustments in global supply chains. Access to financing, trade-related services, and appropriate financial advice can help these businesses remain competitive.

Third, banks should continue supporting investment in emerging industries and long-term economic development. Digital transformation, technological

innovation, infrastructure, and sustainable development will remain important areas for future growth.

In this respect, banks are not merely financial intermediaries. They are also important partners in promoting investment, facilitating international trade, and strengthening economic resilience.

Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Resilience

The recent shift in U.S. monetary policy highlights the close connection between Asian economies and global financial developments.

Although uncertainty is likely to persist, Asia continues to possess considerable economic potential, supported by technological innovation, regional integration, and expanding investment opportunities.

For Asian banks, the challenge is to remain financially sound while continuing to support the real economy. Greater regional cooperation, exchanges of experience, and a better understanding of global economic trends can help financial institutions navigate an increasingly complex environment.

The greatest challenge for Asian banks is not simply to respond to changes in U.S. interest rates, but to help their economies adapt to a rapidly changing global environment. By doing so, banks can contribute not only to financial stability but also to sustainable economic growth across Asia.

2026 IMF–World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok: Building Resilience in a Changing Global Economy



The 2026 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group, held in Bangkok, Thailand, from October 12 to 18, brought together central bankers, finance and development ministers, private-sector leaders, international organizations, academics and civil society representatives to examine the global economic outlook and pressing financial and development challenges. The Asian Bankers Association (ABA) was represented by Deputy Secretary Mr. Amador Honrado, who attended the meetings and related events.

Across high-level seminars, policy discussions, analytical sessions and publication launches, a recurring message was the need to reinforce economic and financial resilience amid geopolitical fragmentation, elevated debt, limited fiscal buffers and rapid technological change. For Asian financial institutions, discussions on artificial intelligence (AI), financial stability, digital infrastructure, cyber-enabled fraud, capital mobilization and regional integration were particularly relevant.

Global Economic Outlook and Financial Stability

A major theme was the capacity of economies to withstand repeated shocks while sustaining balanced and inclusive growth. The "Debate on the Global Economy: Forging Resilient and Dynamic Economies for the Future" noted that, although the global economy had demonstrated resilience, that strength was increasingly tested by persistent inflation pressures, elevated debt, dwindling policy buffers and divergent growth trajectories. Geopolitical developments and the AI-driven technology cycle were identified as powerful forces reshaping trade, investment and productivity. Participants considered how sound policy frameworks, innovation and structural reform could support growth in an increasingly fragmented environment.

The October 2026 World Economic Outlook examined near- and medium-term global prospects, while the Global Financial Stability Report assessed market conditions, systemic vulnerabilities and financing challenges, including those affecting emerging-market borrowers. The Fiscal Monitor addressed the role of better tax design and implementation in supporting production, investment, employment and innovation without undermining public revenues. Discussions accompanying the Fiscal Monitor also highlighted rising public debt and the importance of credible, well-sequenced fiscal adjustment.



Sessions on sovereign risk and public debt management emphasized fiscal credibility, transparency, sound governance and effective debt-management frameworks. The forthcoming update to Public Debt Management Guidelines was discussed in the context of a more difficult sovereign financing environment. Another session examined the 2026 review of the Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP), which aims to make assessments more risk-based, tailored and responsive to interconnected financial systems, the growing importance of nonbank financial institutions and digital financial services.

Asia's Economic Transformation and Regional Resilience

Asia's long-term prospects received particular attention with the launch of the IMF flagship book, "Shaping the Future of Asia: Opportunities and Challenges." The publication explored demographic transition, rising protectionism, geoeconomic fragmentation, evolving trade and financial integration, technological transformation and the energy transition. Its accompanying discussion considered how the region could preserve strong, inclusive and resilient growth through reforms that address structural change.



A Thailand-focused seminar, "Bangkok 1991–2026: Thailand's Path to Resilient, Inclusive Growth," examined the policies and institutions behind the country's economic transformation and its response to successive shocks. Panelists considered high household debt, demographic change, climate risks and slower productivity growth, alongside the opportunities presented by digital finance, AI and closer ASEAN integration. A separate session on ASEAN discussed how regional economies could maintain resilience and strengthen medium-term growth amid global uncertainty.

Trade diversification emerged as another important response to disruption. Discussions highlighted how expanding markets, products and trade routes can reduce exposure to external shocks, provided that diversification is supported by sound macroeconomic policies and regional cooperation. For banks, these shifts reinforce the importance of financing trade, supporting businesses adapting their supply chains and facilitating cross-border investment.

Artificial Intelligence, Jobs and the Future of Finance

AI featured prominently throughout the meetings, from macroeconomic policy to financial-sector operations and labor markets. An Analytical Corner session drew on millions of online job postings to examine how AI is reshaping employment in Asia and the implications for workers and policymakers. The IMF Inspired session, featuring AI entrepreneur Dr. Ayesha Khanna, considered AI's economic and social consequences, the future of work and the importance of empowering women and girls in the digital age.

The session "AI and the Global Economy: From Risk to Opportunity" examined the technology's potential to raise productivity, reshape industries and global value chains, and generate new business opportunities. It also considered labor-market disruption, concentration risks, cybersecurity, financial stability and the policies needed to spread the benefits of innovation more widely. Discussions on technology for prosperity in emerging and developing economies similarly emphasized the importance of building institutions, skills and infrastructure that allow new technologies to translate into inclusive economic growth.

The New Economy Forum explored tokenization and agentic AI as emerging elements of financial infrastructure. Tokenization is moving beyond pilot projects into payments, capital markets, collateral and settlement, while agentic AI could change liquidity optimization, risk management and cross-border transactions. These developments offer the prospect of more responsive, interoperable financial markets, but also raise new operational and governance questions for financial institutions.

Other discussions examined whether tax systems should adapt to an AI-driven economy, including questions about the taxation of large technology companies, the balance between labor and capital taxation, and the need to preserve innovation while addressing inequality and fiscal pressures. A youth dialogue led by IMF First Deputy Managing Director Dan Katz explored the skills, entrepreneurship and policies needed to prepare young people for technological change.

Cybersecurity, Fraud Prevention and Financial Integrity

The growing interaction between AI and cyber risk was addressed in sessions on macroeconomic and financial stability. Participants examined how advanced AI capabilities are changing the cyber threat landscape, increasing the importance of system-wide resilience and requiring policymakers and financial institutions to balance technological opportunity with effective safeguards.

A notable development was the launch of the

"Bangkok Blueprint for Fraud-Resilient Financial Services," developed by the IMF and World Bank in partnership with the Bank of Thailand. The framework promotes a whole-of-ecosystem response to cyber-enabled fraud, emphasizing coordination across sectors and borders, international cooperation and preventive technologies. Its 12 Key Considerations are intended to guide policy alignment, dialogue and future action. The initiative is particularly relevant to banks confronting increasingly sophisticated fraud across digital payment and financial-service channels.

Financial integrity also featured in the launch of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Corruption Thematic Fund (AMLAC), a capacity-development platform designed to help member countries address money laundering, terrorism financing, illicit financial flows and corruption. The initiative prioritizes fragile, low-income and high-risk jurisdictions while allowing for regional and thematic support. Together, these discussions underscored the importance of robust governance, effective supervision and coordinated action in protecting financial systems.

Digital Public Finance and Policy Institutions

Several sessions explored how governments and central banks can adapt their institutions to technological and economic change. Workshops on digitally connected public finance examined how interoperability across revenue and spending agencies can improve fiscal operations. The "Digital-by-Design" workshop emphasized that successful digital reform must be guided by policy objectives, user needs, institutional incentives and governance rather than technology alone. Other discussions addressed improved statistics, data systems and public financial management as foundations for more effective policymaking.

Central bank governance and communication were also discussed in a session on committee decision-making during uncertainty. Participants compared institutional approaches to deliberation, consensus, transparency and public communication. Governor Talks examined monetary-policy trade-offs in Korea amid the AI upcycle and Middle East uncertainty, as well as the changing responsibilities of central banks in Europe and Georgia. These exchanges highlighted the value of credible institutions and clear policy communication in maintaining confidence.

Mobilizing Private Capital and Financing Development

The World Bank-related discussions placed considerable emphasis on turning development priorities into investable opportunities. Sessions examined how financial instruments, credit enhancement, catalytic equity and public-private cooperation can mobilize capital for infrastructure, housing, health and other development needs. In emerging and developing markets, local-currency financing and domestic institutional investors, including pension funds, were identified as important potential sources of long-term investment.

Other discussions explored how private-sector partnerships can strengthen urban and water infrastructure, how innovative financing can support health services and how startups and venture capital can accelerate responsible AI adoption. The wider message was that sustainable investment requires credible policy frameworks, effective risk-sharing mechanisms and institutions capable of translating financing commitments into measurable outcomes.

GCC–Asia Economic Forum: Strengthening Cross-Regional Banking Cooperation



Alongside the Annual Meetings, ABA Deputy Secretary Mr. Mig Moreno attended the GCC–Asia Economic Forum on October 14, 2026, in Bangkok. Hosted by the Kuwait Banking Association and co-organized with the ABA, the closed-door forum convened senior government officials, bankers, investors and financial-sector leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Asia to explore practical cooperation in banking, investment, capital markets and cross-border finance.

The program focused on three areas: core banking and balance-sheet partnerships; cross-border investment, capital markets and deal flow; and digital, AI and financial infrastructure for cross-border finance. Participants included H.E. Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, Secretary General of the GCC; H.E. Dr. Yaqoub Yousef Al-Refaei, Minister of Finance of Kuwait; Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, Chairman of the Kuwait Banking Association; and Chartsiri Sophonpanich, President and Director of Bangkok Bank, an ABA member. Senior executives from leading Japanese ABA member banks also participated.

The Forum provided an opportunity for ABA members to establish relationships with institutions and decision-makers from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Japan and other important markets. It also opened discussions on opportunities in banking, investment, energy, AI, infrastructure and related financing, reinforcing the potential for stronger GCC–Asia financial cooperation.

Implications for Asian Banks

The meetings illustrated how financial institutions

are operating at the intersection of several major transformations. Banks must remain attentive to sovereign and market vulnerabilities, manage liquidity and operational risks, and respond to increasingly sophisticated cyber threats. At the same time, they have opportunities to support AI-enabled productivity, resilient supply chains, digital finance and the mobilization of private capital for long-term development.

For the ABA and its member banks, the discussions reaffirmed the importance of regional and cross-regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, prudent governance and continued innovation. Strengthening financial resilience while supporting the real economy will remain central to the banking sector's contribution to sustainable and inclusive growth across Asia.

ABA Webinars and Training Programs

ABA and LexisNexis Risk Solutions Hold Webinar on Strengthening Fraud Defenses under AFASA

The Asian Bankers Association (ABA), in collaboration with LexisNexis Risk Solutions, an ABA Associate Member, successfully held a webinar titled "AFASA: How Banks Can Operationalize and Strengthen Fraud Defenses" on October 22, 2026. The webinar aimed to provide insights into the evolving regulatory landscape for fraud prevention in the Philippines and explore practical approaches for financial institutions to strengthen their defenses against increasingly sophisticated financial scams.

The discussion focused on the Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act (AFASA) and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Circular No. 1213, which have introduced enhanced requirements for financial institutions in addressing fraud-related risks. The webinar highlighted the importance of strengthening fraud detection and prevention capabilities, improving transaction monitoring, and adopting effective authentication measures to safeguard customers and maintain trust in the financial system.

Among the key topics covered were real-time fraud monitoring, early identification of mule accounts and fraudulent networks, risk-based authentication, and the integration of fraud prevention measures into banks' operational and governance frameworks. The session also explored how financial institutions can leverage technology, data analytics, and risk management practices to meet regulatory expectations while ensuring a secure and seamless banking experience for customers.

The webinar was moderated by Mr. Alexander Ngo, Sales Director, LexisNexis Risk Solutions, and featured Mr. Thahn Tai Vo, Director, Market Planning, Fraud & Identity – APAC, LexisNexis Risk Solutions, and Mr. Derick Adil, Head of AI, Data and Privacy Governance, Globe Telecom, who shared their perspectives on emerging fraud risks, regulatory developments, and approaches to strengthening financial institutions' fraud prevention capabilities.

The webinar formed part of ABA's continuing efforts to promote knowledge sharing and professional development among its members. Through collaborations with industry partners such as LexisNexis Risk Solutions, ABA seeks to keep member banks informed of emerging challenges and developments affecting the banking sector, while encouraging the adoption of effective risk management practices across the region.

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