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Financial exclusion hindering people in availing opportunities: Acting Governor SBP

Acting Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Mr. Ashraf Mahmood Wathra, has said that financial exclusion is hindering our fellow citizens in availing economic and business opportunities. Speaking at the Bank Alfalah Mobile Commerce Conference in Karachi today, he said that an estimated 2.5 billion adult people worldwide did not have access to formal financial services.

He said that Pakistan's branch network of almost 12,700 was insufficient to serve the millions of unbanked masses. "Banks operating in Pakistan are hosting only 35 million customer accounts including 3.5 million accounts opened by branchless banking providers. Despite phenomenal spread of banking business in Pakistan, we have a long way to go to achieve digital financial inclusion the in country."

Mr. Wathra further said that given the complexities and challenges of limited financial access in the country, SBP had adopted a multi-pronged and long-term strategy to address financial exclusion through structured policy & regulatory actions, and market-development interventions.

He pointed out that Pakistan was amongst the pioneers of mobile/branchless banking in the developing world. "This could not have been possible without an effective and enabling regulatory regime, dynamic, innovative and always eager banking and telecom industry in the country," he added.

He added that SBP was focusing its energies to identify gaps and bring solutions to address those gaps. He told the audience that SBP had formed the National Branchless Banking Consultative Group with representation from branchless banking industry players including banks, mobile operators, and technology service providers. "This group is actively working on different protocols including agent code of conduct, agent sharing models, interoperability schemes and consumer protection framework".
