

Boom Time In Banking

With the uptick of economy, banking sector is aiming to grow at a faster clip. The *BT-KPMG Best Banks* awardees reflect the spirit of the times.



Best In Business: Winners (From left) Bhaskar Ghose, CEO, IndusInd Bank, HDFC's Aditya Puri, Chanda Kochhar, ED, ICICI Bank with Vilasrao Deshmukh, CM of Maharashtra, A. K. Ravi Nedungadi, CFO, UB Group and Sanjoy Narayan, Editor, *Business Today*

THE BANKING SECTOR IS ROLLING IN interesting times. With profits on the rise, non-performing assets shrinking, M&A activity gathering pace, bankers are all geared up for the opening up of the sector in 2009. The third edition of the *Business Today* Best Banks Awards held in Mumbai on February 9, 2006, reflected the upbeat mood. The awards are based on an annual survey the magazine undertakes in collaboration with KPMG, which is now in its 12th year. The event, sponsored by UB Group, kicked off with *BT* Editor Sanjoy Narayan's welcome address. He said, "*BT* had pioneered this survey (12 years back) long before any publication could think of it." He mentioned how the findings of the survey revealed all-round improvement in the performance of all scheduled commercial banks, in particular the public sector banks including

Corporation Bank, Andhra Bank, Punjab National Bank. These banks have greatly improved their scores over the past year.

Talking about the RBI roadmap in 2009, which may allow foreign banks to acquire Indian banks, he said it would be quite a challenge for the industry. At the same time, it would be an opportunity for banks to get their growth strategies in place.

Moving on to the highlights of the survey, KPMG's Executive Director, Pradip Kanakia, said, "the landscape in the financial sector has been changing all the time." Pointing the RBI roadmap for foreign banks, he said, "it is likely to change the face of the banking industry. It will be a precursor to open markets in the financial sector." He added that 2009 was going to be a watershed as by that time banking industry would have a compounding impact on the Indian economy.



HDFC's Aditya Puri receiving the award from Vilasrao Deshmukh



Bhaskar Ghose, CEO, IndusInd Bank accepts the award



A. K. Ravi Nedungadi, CFO, UB Group



Chanda Kochchar (ICICI Bank) receiving the award

Releasing the *BT* special issue, Vilasrao Deshmukh, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, congratulated the magazine for its initiative to honour the best banks in the country. He said, “the survey is based on several contemporary issues and is an eye opener to all of us.” Adding that the authentic data reflect the undercurrents and trends prevailing in the country, Mr Deshmukh said, “Our country is passing through a very important phase. The Sensex has touched the golden 10,000 mark and even the US President George Bush has recently indicated that in future USA would be competing with only two countries—India and China.” He added that India’s education in engineering, medicine, pharmacy and management are better than those available in the world. This is very significant fact that it will lead the country in achieving our goal of economic superpower.

Talking about the present banking scenario, Mr

Deshmukh said, “there are concerns that banks have not been able to reach the underprivileged sections of the society. In critical times, the response of financial institutions and banks are found to be discouraging.”

On the actual award front, there weren’t many upsets from the last year. The first award of the evening, which was for the India’s fastest growing bank, went to ICICI Bank. Chanda Kochchar, Executive Director of the ICICI Bank received the award. While for the India’s most productive bank award, the winner was Hinduja Group’s IndusInd Bank.

The final and the biggest award of the evening, that for India’s Best Bank, went to HDFC Bank. The bank retains its top perch for the third year in a row. Accepting the award Aditya Puri, CEO, HDFC Bank, said, “the bank has made substantial strides in the past few years. In the new India, we are not scared of foreign banks. We can beat them. ■