

My fellowship experience on APRICOT 2024
- Jonathan Saha

APRICOT 2024 was a fantastic opportunity for hands-on learning, engaging talks, and meeting industry professionals.

I participated in the Practical Virtualisation with Hybrid Strategies workshop. I learned about key technologies relating to cloud and on-premise virtualization solutions, virtualization with Proxmox, container management with Kubernetes, various storage types and solutions, and when to use each one. We also delved into the AWS cloud, where an account with admin access was provided for us to play around, which was amazing for me as I had never explored the AWS ecosystem to this extent before. We deployed test environments in the cloud as infrastructure as code with Terraform, configured and managed backups, and learned to calculate billing to estimate future costs. Additionally, there was a session on comparing cloud, self-hosted, and hybrid solutions and their strengths and weaknesses, which equipped me with a greater understanding of all three approaches.

Learning about Proxmox and Ceph will definitely help me as in my current organisation, we extensively use Proxmox. Ansible and Terraform will also be of great help, as I have already discussed with my colleagues and we are very likely to use these two in our system, which will reduce time and mistakes in deploying and maintaining over two dozen services we use internally. Learning about storage systems will also help me design backup and recovery systems better than before.

I have been wanting to get AWS certifications for a while now, but the ecosystem always seemed too alien. Participating in this workshop gave me much-needed hands-on experience and a boost in confidence.

The conference week was full of events. As it was my first APRICOT in person, I was a bit overwhelmed at the beginning. On the first day, I attended a talk about routing security in the morning and a session about Let's Encrypt in the afternoon. Though I had used Let's Encrypt before, the presentation cleared up quite a few of my misconceptions about the tool.

On the second day, I attended the peering forum and a talk on cyber threat monitoring using Shadowserver. The peering forum was very engaging, and I got to know about many new organisations and their work.

On the third day, I attended the APNIC open policy meeting; this was a new and exciting experience for me. Not only was I able to see how policies are proposed and voted on in person, but I also participated in the process. Additionally, I attended a presentation about the APNIC Community Honeypot Project.

Throughout the conference, I had the opportunity to meet many amazing people from the industry during sessions, lunch breaks, and at social events. Meeting people like this is quite important as in the networking industry, we can only grow if we cooperate and work together. I cannot imagine so many people from academic, business, and operational sides getting under the same roof without an event like this.

The Monday core skill workshop was quite different from the training workshop, as it was not centred around any technical skills. Rather, we learned about communication and cooperation with others: our colleagues, industry partners, employers, and customers. The workshop focused on problem-solving as a team, networking with industry colleagues, and improving spoken communications. Everyone was very sincere and helpful, and the environment was a bit informal and fluid, which helped me to break out of the ice. We had some great team-building exercises, namely the disaster control exercise as a team.

This workshop definitely helped me gain confidence in approaching and talking to someone in a formal way. I have also realised the importance of considering the human side of the other party during formal meetings or negotiations, as connecting with people makes work easier for all parties involved.

Overall, the event was incredibly enriching and positive. Participating in the workshop provided me with invaluable hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of key technologies in cloud and virtualization, and enhanced my skill set and confidence in managing complex infrastructures. Attending APRICOT for the first time in person was a memorable experience. The networking aspect of the event was particularly valuable. Meeting industry professionals from various backgrounds fostered meaningful connections and highlighted the importance of collaboration in the networking industry. In summary, the event left me feeling inspired and motivated to participate more actively in the community, and also equipped me with new skills and perspectives to excel in my career.