

PayNet Launches AI Talent Engine to Power the Future of Malaysia's Financial Sector

Second Phase of Program Akar kicks off with 100 students and expands to build digital and AI talent for the financial services industry



Second row: (5th from the left) **Jun Maria Abdullah Tan**, Senior Director, PayNet Akar; (9th from the left) **Farhan Ahmad**, GCEO, PayNet; (10th from the left) **Laurence Si**, Managing Director, Microsoft Malaysia.

KUALA LUMPUR, 25 April 2025 – **Payments Network Malaysia (PayNet)** has expanded Program Akar, its national talent development initiative, with a new phase focused on artificial intelligence and data science. Designed to future-proof Malaysia's financial services industry (FSI), the programme continues to build a pipeline of digitally skilled, industry-ready talent through hands-on training, leadership development and real-world exposure.

The programme gives university students practical skills in digital payments, AI and industry, preparing them for real world roles in the financial services sector. The first cohort will comprise 100 participants, starting with 25 students from Multimedia University (MMU) and expanding to 75 students from other local universities later by the end of the year.

The programme equips students with a three-pillar curriculum focused on:

- **Values-Driven Enrichment** – Cultivating leadership, integrity and a future-ready mindset.
- **Digital Payment Knowledge** – Covering the evolution of money, banking systems, digital payments, and transaction security.
- **AI & Data Science Mastery** – Combining foundational knowledge with critical thinking and real-world applications.

The programme connects students to hands-on learning, mentorship, and job placements within Malaysia's leading financial institutions

Program Akar was first launched in collaboration with AWS in July 2024, focusing on digital payments and cloud technologies. This second instalment, powered by Microsoft as part of its AI for Malaysia's Future (AIForMYFuture) skilling initiative, expands the programme's scope into AI and data science, reflecting PayNet's commitment to staying ahead of industry shifts and continuously building digital talent that meets the evolving needs of Malaysia's financial ecosystem.

The programme is delivered by implementation partners PEOPLEogy Berhad and Futuresparx Sdn Bhd. It integrates Microsoft's cutting-edge AI learning pathways to ensure graduates are equipped with real-world, future-ready skills essential for success in an AI-driven workforce.

The launch event was attended by Farhan Ahmad, Group CEO of PayNet, Ir. Prof. Dr. Zulfadzli Yusoff, Vice President, Market Exploration, Engagement and Touchpoint (VP MEET), and Laurence Si, Managing Director of Microsoft Malaysia, who shared insights on the importance of future-ready talent in Malaysia's journey toward a digital economy.

*"At PayNet, we see talent development as national development," said **Farhan Ahmad, CEO of PayNet**. "Program Akar is about more than preparing students for jobs. It's about preparing them to lead Malaysia's digital economy with purpose. By equipping our youth with future-proof digital skills and connecting them to meaningful industry opportunities, we're strengthening Malaysia's financial ecosystem and building long-term economic resilience."*

*"AI is transforming every role in every industry, including financial services. By collaborating with PayNet through Program Akar, we're helping build a generation of talent equipped with the digital and AI skills to thrive, in line with Microsoft's AIForMYFuture initiative. At Microsoft, we're committed to empowering students with the capabilities needed to succeed in Malaysia's growing AI economy," said **Laurence Si, Managing Director of Microsoft Malaysia**.*

*"Being selected for Program Akar feels like a big step forward," said **Amir Hibban Bin Amir Herman**, a Multimedia University student from the first cohort. "It's not every day you get the chance to learn about AI and digital payments from real industry leaders. I'm excited to see how this can shape my future and help me find my place in Malaysia's digital economy."*

Program Akar is part of PayNet's broader commitment to shaping a future-ready Malaysia. More than a training programme, it's a hands-on effort to develop young talent with the skills, mindset, and values to lead responsibly in a fast-changing world. By working closely with Microsoft and other ecosystem partners, we're building learning experiences that reflect real industry needs and helping to grow a new generation of digital leaders who can make a meaningful difference.

At the heart of it, Program Akar is about creating real opportunities for young Malaysians to thrive and shaping a future we can all be proud of.

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About PayNet

Payments Network Malaysia (PayNet) is Malaysia's national payments network with a mission to accelerate the country's payment flows by making the digital payment infrastructure more accessible, widespread, and secure. Our comprehensive retail payments suite—including DuitNow (QR and Transfer), JomPAY (Bill Payments), FPX (Online), MyDebit (Domestic Debit), MEPS, and IBG (Interbank GIRO)—provides extensive coverage across the nation, forming a core part of daily life in Malaysia. In 2023, this ecosystem enabled a total transaction value of USD 1.4 trillion, equivalent to 3.3x of Malaysia's GDP.

Additionally, PayNet's real-time retail QR payments network, DuitNow, is interoperable with domestic schemes in Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia, facilitating seamless cross-border transactions with these countries. PayNet is committed to promoting a secure, efficient, and innovative payments ecosystem in Malaysia and works closely with its stakeholders to develop new products and services that meet the evolving needs of consumers and businesses. For further details, please visit our website: www.paynet.my