# 4EJournazine

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# BITS, BYTES AND ASSETS IN THE NEW INVESTMENT ERA

**The Future of Knowledge Creation**

**Building Tomorrow's Financial Advisory Platform**

**When Harmony Meets Money**

**Ready, Set, Retire? Not So Fast, Malaysia**


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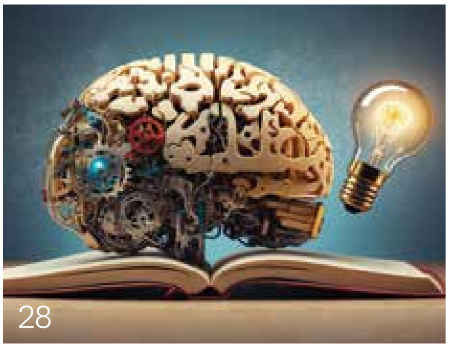

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## Reflecting on Growth and Embracing Our Future

The past six months have marked a transformative period in FPAM's history, defined by remarkable milestones that have strengthened our position as Malaysia's leading financial planning association.

The FPAM's 25th Anniversary celebrations culminated in the Annual Financial Planning Symposium at M World Hotel, Petaling Jaya, with the theme "Shaping Financial Foundations, Securing Wealth for Tomorrow". The event drew over 800 professionals, both in-person and online, to discuss key topics like cyber insurance strategies and AI's impact on financial planning. A memorable highlight was the launch of FPAM's 25th Anniversary Commemorative Book.

Following this success, FPAM's 25th Annual General Meeting demonstrated the strength of our association. Members elected our new Board of Governors for the 2025-2027 term, entrusting leadership to a distinguished team of 13 experienced professionals. I congratulate all newly elected Board members and am deeply honoured to continue serving as President alongside Deputy President Ms Demi Chan and our exceptional Executive Committee and Board members.

Perhaps most significantly, the grand opening of our office at Phileo Damansara 1, Petaling Jaya, marked a new chapter. This strategic relocation represents our commitment to providing enhanced resources to our membership. The modern facility offers professional workspace solutions, including a consultation room for client meetings and a comprehensive training room for workshops and seminars.

These achievements reflect FPAM's ongoing investment in member services and our dedication to supporting professional growth. As we continue to uphold the rigorous standards of CFP certification, I remain confident that our collective efforts will continue to elevate the financial planning profession in Malaysia.

Looking ahead, FPAM stands ready to embrace new opportunities with the same pioneering spirit that has guided us for 25 years. Together, we will continue empowering every Malaysian family to achieve financial security and wellbeing.

**Alvin Tan Chin Cherng** CFP ®
*President*

**4EJournazine**

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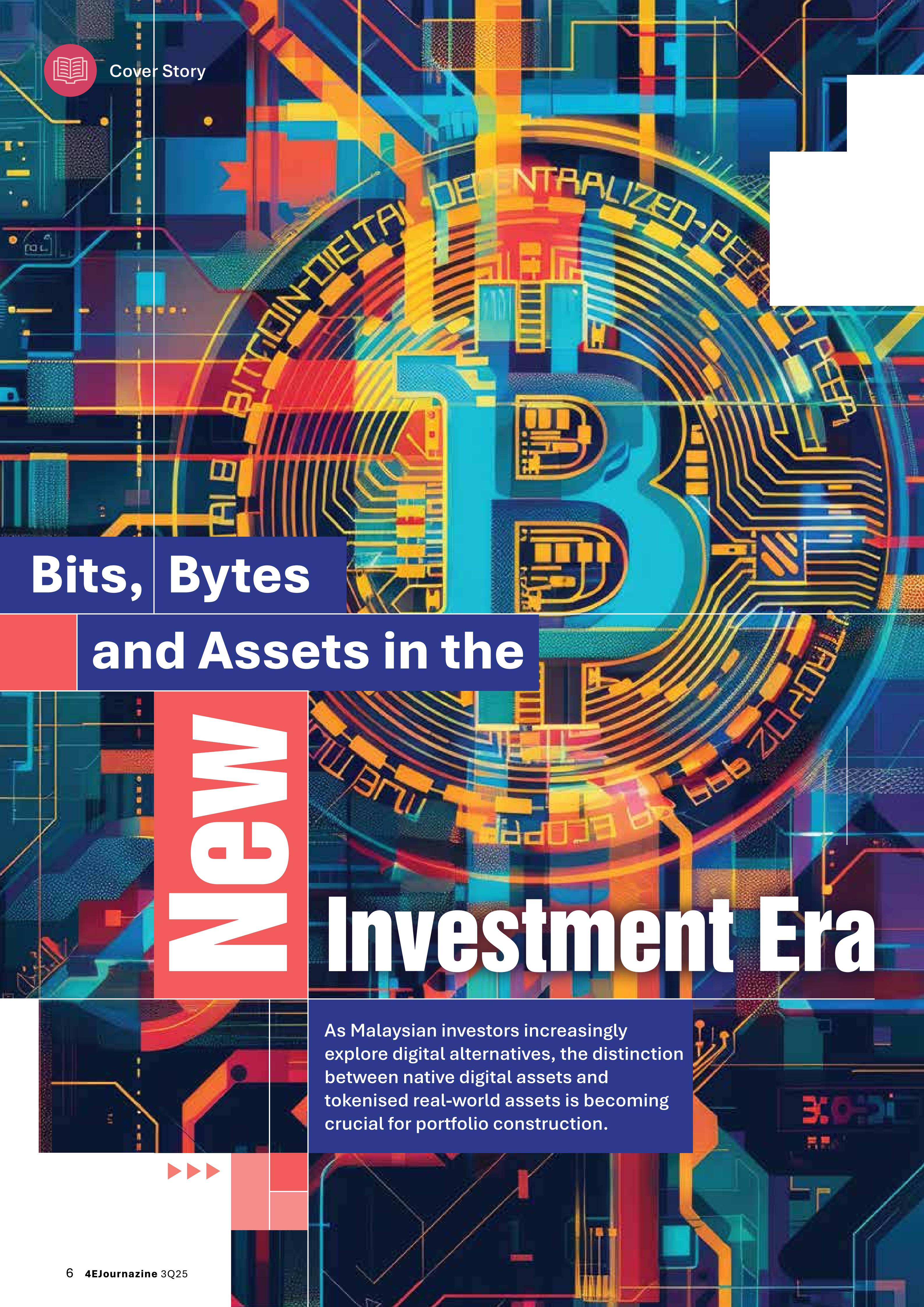


# Bits, Bytes and Assets in the New Investment Era

As Malaysian investors increasingly explore digital alternatives, the distinction between native digital assets and tokenised real-world assets is becoming crucial for portfolio construction.

From Bitcoin's meteoric rise to tokenised real estate offerings, alternative assets are capturing Malaysian investor attention like never before. Yet confusion persists about how these emerging investments should be integrated into portfolios—and more fundamentally, whether digital assets and tokenised assets should even be considered the same category.

This growing interest mirrors a global acceleration in digital asset adoption that is unprecedented in scale and speed. According to Coinbase's *2025 Cryptocurrency Awareness and Usage* report, digital asset ownership increased from 21% in 2024 to 24% in 2025 among respondents in the U.S., UK, France and Singapore.

Meanwhile, the tokenisation of real-world assets is experiencing explosive growth, with Mordor Intelligence projecting the Asset Tokenisation Market to grow at a CAGR of 45.46% to reach US$13.55 trillion by 2030. This represents a fundamental shift in how both retail and institutional investors are approaching alternative assets globally.

The numbers tell a compelling story. Aaron Tang, Luno General Manager for Asia Pacific, reveals that the platform now serves over one million Malaysians in helping them diversify and future-proof their investment portfolio. This massive adoption signals a shift in how Malaysians view alternative investments, but it also raises important questions about proper asset allocation and risk management.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The starting point for any investor is understanding what they're actually buying. Hann Liew, Founder & CEO of Halogen, offers a practical analogy: "Think of Bitcoin like the Internet's version of gold. It was created to live entirely online, and people value it because it's scarce, secure and not controlled by any single country or company, thus considered a native digital currency."

This contrasts sharply with tokenised assets, which Liew explains differently: "Tokenised assets take the same technological advantages that cryptocurrencies have (immutability, cryptographic security, decentralisation of records), but their price is pegged or tied to a value of a real asset such as a property."

The distinction matters for portfolio construction. While both exist on blockchain infrastructure, their risk-return profiles and economic drivers are fundamentally different. Native digital assets like Bitcoin derive value from network effects, adoption and market sentiment. Tokenised assets, meanwhile, remain tied to the performance of underlying real-world investments.

**Hann Liew, Founder & CEO of Halogen**

**Aaron Tang, General Manager of Luno for Asia Pacific**

## Digital vs Tokenised Assets in a Nutshell

**Imagine this scenario:**
28-year-old Kuala Lumpur marketing executive Sarah Chen buys her first 'piece' of a luxury condominium in Mont Kiara for just RM500. She's not dealing with real estate agents or bank loans—instead, she taps her smartphone, connects her digital wallet, and purchases tokenised shares of the property through a blockchain platform. The same week, her colleague buys RM500 worth of Bitcoin using the exact same process.

While both transactions feel identical on their phones, they've actually purchased fundamentally different types of assets. Sarah owns a digital representation of real estate that rises and falls with property values, while her colleague owns a purely digital currency whose value swings with market sentiment and adoption.

Sherman Tam, Investment Consultant Manager at iFast

Andrew Leelarthaepin, Head of Business Product at Maybank Securities Singapore

## MALAYSIAN MARKET DYNAMICS

Investors in Malaysia are approaching these assets with surprising sophistication. “Malaysian investors are among the savviest investors in the markets we serve. They view digital assets as an alternative asset class to diversify their investment portfolios beyond conventional investment vehicles such as equities, bonds, real estate and precious metals,” Tang observes.

The regulatory environment has been particularly supportive. Luno currently offers 22 digital assets in Malaysia, all approved through a rigorous process. “Luno has spearheaded 22 of the 23 currently approved digital assets via the Securities Commission Malaysia,” Tang notes, highlighting the platform’s role in expanding access while maintaining regulatory compliance.

Sherman Tam, Investment Consultant Manager at iFast, provides a more cautious perspective on market trends: “Among younger investors, there is a clear interest in digital assets, particularly cryptocurrencies. However, we find that their understanding of risk is often insufficient.”

## THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

From the investment banking side, the approach remains exploratory but strategic. Andrew Leelarthaepin, Head of Business Product at Maybank Securities Singapore, explains their position: “While we do not currently offer digital asset products at this stage, we are exploring how tokenised assets—particularly in fixed income and structured finance—could complement traditional capital markets over time.”

This institutional caution reflects broader industry concerns about infrastructure, custody and regulatory clarity. “Our focus is on strengthening internal readiness, including infrastructure, custody standards and risk management frameworks to ensure institutional-grade compliance and client protection,” Leelarthaepin emphasises.

## PORTFOLIO CONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

The question of how to integrate these assets into portfolios generates varied responses from industry experts. Tam advocates for a satellite approach: “Digital and tokenised assets are slowly carving out a role in modern portfolios, but we still see them as satellite exposures, not core holdings. For clients with higher risk tolerance and longer time horizons, we may suggest a modest allocation, typically at 5-10% (or less) exposure in one’s portfolio.”

Liew takes a more nuanced view, focusing on the underlying asset and its risk profile rather than the category the asset falls into: “What really matters is the underlying asset and its risk profile. Digital assets like Bitcoin or Ethereum are native, highly volatile assets and we treat them as distinct growth-orientated allocations. Tokenised assets, however, are often just traditional assets (like bonds or real estate) in a digital wrapper.”

Tang’s observations from Luno suggest Malaysian investors are naturally gravitating towards this distinction: “Due to the nature of the digital assets approved, they are rarely approached for speculative purposes but rather as portfolio diversifiers and long-term store of value.”

## ADDRESSING COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Education remains a critical challenge. Tang identifies a persistent barrier: “One misconception investors tend to have is that they do not have enough capital to begin investing, seeing that one Bitcoin has already surpassed US$100,000 and has been mainly above RM480,000 in July 2025.”

The solution is straightforward but not always well understood: “Investors can simply buy a fraction of their preferred digital asset with as little as RM1 on Luno.”

# DIGITAL VS TOKENISED ASSETS

## - Key Differences

| ASPECT | DIGITAL ASSETS | TOKENISED ASSETS |
|---|---|---|
| **What it is** | Born digital, exists only on blockchain (e.g. Bitcoin, Dogecoin, Ethereum) | Real-world assets converted to digital tokens (e.g. property shares, company stock, art ownership, gold certificates) |
| **Creation** | Created through code and mining/minting | Physical or traditional assets divided into digital tokens |
| **Backing** | No physical backing - value from scarcity/ utility | Backed by tangible assets or securities |
| **Ownership** | You own the digital token itself | You own a digital representation of a real asset |
| **Price Driver** | Market sentiment, adoption, speculation | Performance of underlying physical asset |
| **Transferability** | Instant global transfer 24/7 | May have restrictions based on asset type/regulation |
| **Storage** | Digital wallet (asset exists only digitally) | Digital wallet (tokens represent real assets held elsewhere) |

Tam emphasises the importance of suitability assessment: "If a client is chasing past returns, we pull the brakes. If they have real conviction and can afford to lose the capital, we frame it as a high-risk, long-term thematic bet, not a core allocation."

### THE TOKENISATION OPPORTUNITY

Beyond speculative digital assets, tokenisation of real-world assets presents compelling opportunities for Malaysian portfolios. Liew explains the liquidity advantage: "One of the biggest breakthroughs here is tokenisation, particularly when it comes to solving the liquidity problem. Alternatives are typically locked up for years. But with tokenisation, we can start to make these investments more cash-convertible, giving individuals greater flexibility and control."

Halogen has already demonstrated this potential, having launched Malaysia's first tokenised income fund (Halogen Shariah Ringgit Income Fund) on Polygon in 2024, under the Securities Commission Malaysia's DIGID initiative, bridging regulated fund structures with blockchain infrastructure to expand access."

### REGIONAL CONTEXT AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

The Southeast Asian region is emerging as a hotbed for digital asset innovation. Leelarthaepin notes: "Southeast Asia is emerging as one of the most dynamic regions for digital asset innovation, supported by progressive regulatory frameworks in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand."

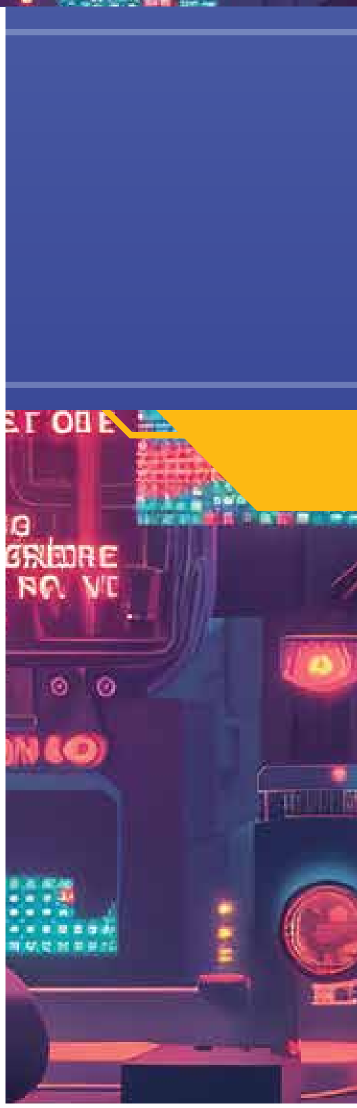
Malaysia's Digital Asset Innovation Hub launched by Bank Negara Malaysia represents a significant development in this ecosystem. The hub provides a controlled environment for fintech companies and innovators to test new products and services, such as programmable payments and ringgit-backed stablecoins.

Tam provides a measured outlook for the next 3-5 years: "In Malaysia, we're still at an early stage. Regulation is moving cautiously, and for good reason. However, I believe we'll see tokenisation emerge first at the institutional level, whether in terms of bond issuance, real estate or even private market structures."

### PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR INVESTORS

The consensus among experts is clear: education and proper risk assessment remain paramount. Liew advocates for a client-centric approach: "At the end of the day, it all starts with understanding the client's risk appetite and investment goals. Whether an asset is digital or traditional, tokenised or not, the core question remains: how much risk is the client comfortable taking, and what are they trying to achieve?"

Tam's evaluation criteria provide a practical framework: "What's backing it? If it's a tokenised asset, we could check whether the underlying is real, verifiable and fairly valued. How secure is it? Custody, legal enforceability and platform risk. These are non-negotiables. Can you exit? Liquidity is key."



### LOOKING AHEAD

As Malaysia continues to develop its digital asset infrastructure, the distinction between speculative digital tokens and tokenised traditional assets will become increasingly important for portfolio construction. The key for investors is understanding that while both may use similar technology, their roles in portfolios—and their risk-return profiles—remain fundamentally different.

The future likely belongs to integrated platforms that can seamlessly handle both categories while maintaining clear distinctions for allocation purposes. As Liew concludes: "Digital, tokenised and traditional assets, all in one unified platform, right here in Malaysia."

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Before investing in digital assets like Bitcoin or tokenised real-world assets like property tokens, assess whether these investments fit individual investment objectives and honestly determine tolerance for potential losses.
- Distinguish between investment conviction and speculation by ensuring decisions are based on understanding the asset's fundamentals rather than chasing past performance or market hype.
- Key evaluation criteria include verifying what backs the asset, ensuring secure storage and legal protection and confirming you can easily buy or sell when needed.

# Machine Learning Transforms Asian Fintech

**Artificial intelligence has emerged as the defining trend reshaping Asia's fintech landscape, transforming customer experiences and financial inclusion while industry players navigate talent shortages and implementation hurdles.**

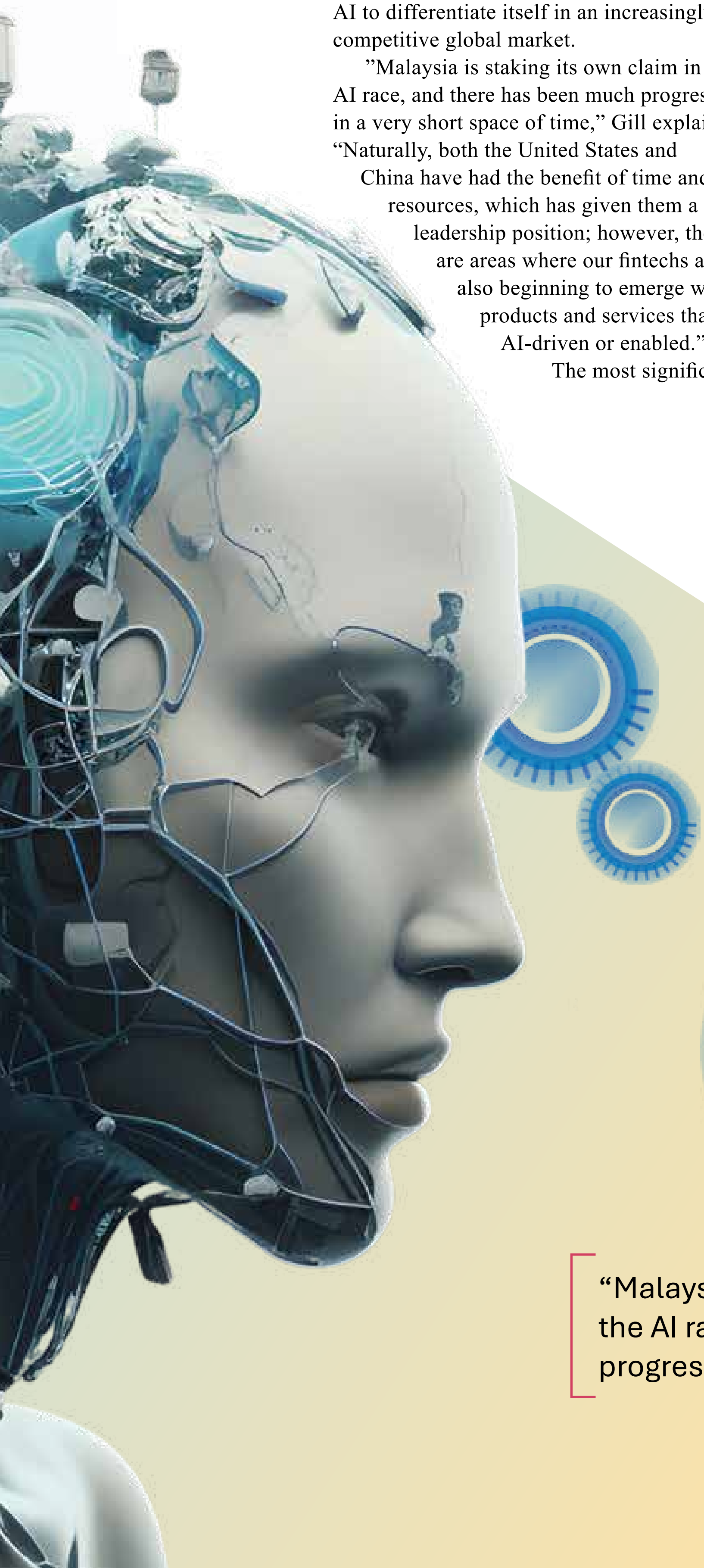
The fintech industry across Asia is undergoing a fundamental transformation, with artificial intelligence (AI) emerging as the defining trend that's reshaping how financial technology companies operate, compete and serve customers. AI has become the cornerstone technology driving fintech innovation across the region, powering everything from hyper-personalised banking experiences to revolutionary fraud detection systems.

The transformation represents more than just technological advancement—it's a complete reimagining of financial services delivery, particularly in markets where traditional banking infrastructure has left millions underserved.

**MALAYSIA'S FINTECH SECTOR EMBRACES AI INNOVATION**

Malaysian fintech companies are increasingly positioning AI at the centre of their value propositions, according to Anil Gill, President of the Fintech Association of Malaysia. The country's fintech ecosystem is leveraging AI to differentiate itself in an increasingly competitive global market.

"Malaysia is staking its own claim in the AI race, and there has been much progress in a very short space of time," Gill explains. "Naturally, both the United States and China have had the benefit of time and resources, which has given them a leadership position; however, there are areas where our fintechs are also beginning to emerge with products and services that are AI-driven or enabled."



The most significant AI applications in Malaysian fintech are emerging in these key areas. "Hyper-personalisation and enhanced customer experience—using the algorithms to uniquely learn the behaviours of each individual customer and recommend bespoke and tailored products and services," Gill describes as one of the primary AI-driven trends transforming the sector.

Digital identity verification has also become another cornerstone of AI-powered fintech innovation. "AI-powered facial recognition and data analysis are streamlining Electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) and digital identity verification processes, making customer onboarding faster, more secure and compliant with regulatory requirements," Gill notes.

Cybersecurity and fraud detection represent perhaps the most critical AI application for fintech companies. "Advanced fraud detection and cybersecurity—both AI and the fast approach of quantum computing have put focus on both fraud and cybersecurity, and AI-powered tools are being used to mitigate these," Gill observes.

**REGULATORY FRAMEWORK SUPPORTS FINTECH AI DEPLOYMENT**

Bank Negara Malaysia's progressive approach has created a supportive ecosystem for fintech innovation while maintaining rigorous consumer protection standards.

"They have established a regulatory sandbox that allows these new technologies to

Anil Gill, President of the Fintech Association of Malaysia

> "Malaysia is staking its own claim in the AI race, and there has been much progress in a very short space of time."

be applied and tested in numerous use cases before being deployed, and they remain committed to the usage of new technologies as long as there is no compromise to the Malaysian consumer and public and no risk to the financial system," Gill explains.

### FINTECH COMPANIES NAVIGATE AI IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Despite the promising opportunities, fintech startups face significant operational challenges when implementing AI technologies. These challenges often determine which companies successfully scale their AI capabilities and which struggle to compete effectively in the market.

Gill identifies the primary obstacles facing Malaysian fintech companies: "Primarily Malaysian fintech companies face the following challenges when implementing AI: talent, data and cost."

The talent shortage represents the most acute challenge. "One significant barrier is the shortage of affordable, high-skilled AI talent. Malaysia, has over the last few decades, experienced significant brain drain to more developed countries, and these talents are the exact same that are required for AI," Gill explains. "For a startup, competing with the salaries and resources of established banks and tech giants is incredibly difficult."

Data accessibility and quality issues create another major barrier for fintech companies seeking to develop competitive AI solutions. "AI models, and therefore products and services, are only as good as the data they're trained on. Startups face major challenges in accessing large datasets," Gill notes. The complexity of Malaysia's multilingual environment adds another layer of difficulty. "Data in Malaysia can be fragmented and multilingual (Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil), which complicates extraction."

Dr Jonathan Di Rollo, Director of Development at the Asia Scotland Institute

"AI-powered fintech presents the opportunity for transformation that can accelerate financial inclusion in regions where traditional banking models have struggled."

### DIFFERENT FINTECH MODELS DRIVE AI INNOVATION

Dr Jonathan Di Rollo, Director of Development at the Asia Scotland Institute, highlights models that are proving effective in the region, emphasising the importance of strategic partnerships and product-focused approaches.

"If you look at Maybank's MAE app, you can tell there's proper product thinking behind it," Dr Di Rollo observes. "User experience (UX) is clean and its features solve real problems. It feels intentional and shows they've got a solid internal product team."

The success of fintech companies like Ryt Bank demonstrates how AI-native approaches can create competitive advantages from the outset. "Ryt Bank is another good model. They started as fintech, so the product mindset is already built in and you can see this in their development: fast, focused and practical," Dr Di Rollo notes.

However, Dr Di Rollo emphasises that successful fintech models require genuine product culture from traditional financial institutions, not just superficial adoption of new technologies. "Fintech partnerships, AI pilots, hackathons—all of these only work if the bank has a strong internal product culture. If they don't, it becomes lip service, things don't scale and nothing sticks." This means that everyone in the company works together to focus on helping customers and creating good products for them.

### AI ENABLES FINTECH FINANCIAL INCLUSION BREAKTHROUGHS

One of the most significant opportunities for AI-powered fintech lies in addressing financial inclusion challenges across Asian markets, where traditional banking models have often failed to serve underbanked populations effectively.

"AI-powered fintech presents the opportunity for transformation that can accelerate financial inclusion in regions where traditional banking models have struggled," Dr Di Rollo explains. "Many developing Asian markets face logistical and infrastructure barriers, particularly in rural and remote areas. AI allows for the development of mobile-first solutions, including conversational financial assistants and fraud detection, that are scalable."

The ability to analyse alternative data sources represents a particular breakthrough for fintech companies serving previously excluded populations, enabling them to assess creditworthiness and financial behaviour through non-traditional metrics. "More sophisticated AI can also interpret behavioural patterns, enabling fintech platforms to offer microloans, savings plans and insurance products that are personalised and tailored to local economic conditions," Dr Di Rollo notes.

These innovations are particularly valuable in markets where formal credit histories are limited or non-existent, allowing fintech companies to serve populations that traditional banks have historically overlooked.

## Key Trends Shaping the Fintech Industry

**The fintech industry is shifting from a period of rapid growth to one of sustainable expansion, as detailed in the World Economic Forum's report, *The Future of Global Fintech: From Rapid Expansion to Sustainable Growth*. A survey of 240 fintech firms highlighted several key trends.**

**Stable Customer Growth:** Customer acquisition has stabilised at 37% following a pandemic-related surge.

**Strong Financial Performance:** The sector remains financially robust, with average revenue and profit growth at 40% and 39%, respectively.

**Expanding Financial Access:** Fintech firms are increasingly focused on serving historically underserved populations, including small businesses, women and low-income individuals. This effort is particularly strong in emerging markets, where 70% of firms cater to these groups.

**Digital and AI Integration:** Customer acquisition is now primarily digital, relying on social media and referrals. Additionally, 80% of firms are leveraging AI to boost efficiency and enhance the customer experience.

**Strategic Partnerships:** A significant 84% of fintech firms are collaborating with traditional financial institutions. This strategy helps them leverage new technology, build trust and drive innovation.

Dr Juergen Rahmel, Generative AI Lecturer at University of Hong Kong

"The new question of AI literacy in finance mostly concerns the aim for inexperienced users to have realistic expectations of what AI is capable of—and what it is not."

### EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN AI-DRIVEN FINTECH

As AI becomes central to fintech operations, the industry faces a critical skills gap that requires fundamental changes to financial education and professional development programmes.

Dr Juergen Rahmel, Generative AI Lecturer at the University of Hong Kong, emphasises the importance of proper educational foundations for professionals entering the AI-driven fintech sector.

"For the acquisition of knowledge in Generative AI it is advisable to start with the 'traditional' elements of machine learning and AI and then expand this with e.g. the Transformer concept (a neural network architecture that excels at handling sequential information, commonly used in large language models) into Generative AI," Dr Rahmel explains.

The education gap extends beyond technical knowledge to practical application literacy, with many professionals struggling to understand the appropriate use cases and limitations of AI tools. "Generative AI brought the unprecedented opportunity that anyone now can interact with the systems merely by formulating questions inside a text box. The new question of AI literacy in finance mostly concerns the aim for inexperienced users to have realistic expectations of what AI is capable of—and what it is not," Dr Rahmel observes.

### MANAGING AI RISKS IN FINTECH APPLICATIONS

As fintech companies increasingly deploy AI in customer-facing applications, risk management has become a critical competitive differentiator and regulatory requirement.

Dr Rahmel emphasises the particular challenges of generative AI deployment in fintech environments, where accuracy and reliability are paramount. "Concern number one should circle around the fact that models provided by the big players are trained on all sorts of data harvested from the Internet. Such data might be highly skewed, biased or even intentionally poisoned and lead to unwanted outcomes."

These risks are amplified in financial services, where incorrect or biased AI outputs can have serious consequences for customers' financial wellbeing and regulatory compliance.

### THE FUTURE OF AI-DRIVEN FINTECH

Looking ahead, the integration of AI in fintech is expected to deepen rather than plateau, with new applications and use cases continuing to emerge as the technology matures.

Dr Di Rollo sees significant potential for AI-powered fintech to contribute to broader economic development goals across the Asian region. "Over the next decade, I believe we'll see AI helping to formalise informal economies by generating credit histories and transaction records."

The cumulative impact extends beyond individual company success to systemic economic benefits that could transform entire economies. "The cumulative impact of these influences won't just be economic growth and prosperity; it will be deeper and more inclusive and can be aligned by companies with the UN Sustainable Development Goals," Dr Di Rollo concludes.

As fintech companies across Asia continue to integrate AI technologies, they're not just transforming their own operations—they're reshaping the entire financial services landscape and creating new possibilities for economic inclusion and development across the region. The companies that successfully navigate the challenges of talent acquisition, data management and risk mitigation while leveraging AI's transformative potential will likely emerge as the leaders in this rapidly evolving sector.

# Ready, Set, Retire?

## NOT SO FAST, MALAYSIA

**As Malaysians live longer and healthcare costs soar, three experts reveal the harsh truths about retirement preparedness and offer practical strategies to bridge the gap between dreams and financial reality.**

Dr Joyce Chuah, CFP®
CEO of Success Concepts Life Planners

The moment of reckoning often comes unexpectedly. Perhaps it's a colleague's sudden health scare or simply reaching that milestone 50th birthday. Suddenly, the comfortable assumption that "I'll figure it out later" crumbles, replaced by a gnawing question: Will I have enough money to retire with dignity?

For many Malaysians, this wake-up call reveals an uncomfortable truth. Despite decades of EPF contributions, the numbers don't add up. With life expectancy approaching 80 and healthcare costs consistently outpacing inflation, traditional retirement planning is proving inadequate.

"It's very common for Malaysians in their 40s or 50s to suddenly realise, 'I haven't saved enough for retirement!' That moment often triggers panic, leading to inaction—doing nothing because it feels too overwhelming," explains Dr Joyce Chuah, CEO of Success Concepts. "But here's the truth: it's not too late, and even small, consistent steps from today can still lead to meaningful change."

### UNDERSTANDING TRUE RETIREMENT READINESS

Dr Chong Kim Mee, Hub Leader of the Active Ageing Impact Lab, advocates for the Capacity Willingness

Dr Chong Kim Mee, PhD, CFP®, Hub Leader of the Active Ageing Impact Lab & Senior Lecturer at Taylor's University

Opportunity Model (CWOM). "Capacity refers to financial resources, health and stability needed for planning. Willingness reflects motivation to prepare for the future. Opportunity considers access to tools, advice and supportive policies."

Dr Chong recommends two practical guidelines: "The 4% rule advises withdrawing only 4% of total savings yearly to make funds last around 25 years. For example, RM1 million provides RM40,000 a year or RM3,333 a month. The 'multiply by 300' rule calculates a savings target by multiplying desired monthly income by 300. For RM4,000 monthly, this means RM1.2 million."

However, gaps persist between theory and practice. "In theory retirement planning assumes steady savings, rational investments and a smooth transition to a debt-free lifestyle. In practice many Malaysians face career interruptions, health issues and family obligations that reduce savings," Dr Chong observes.

## THREE COMMON MYTHS THAT DERAIL PLANNING

Dr Chong highlights key psychological and behavioural barriers that hinder effective financial planning: "Present bias leads individuals to prioritise immediate spending over long-term future needs, while overconfidence may cause people to overestimate their financial preparedness and readiness."

Additionally, Dr Chuah recognises three pervasive misconceptions that undermine retirement planning. The first involves underestimating retirement costs. "Many people overlook the true cost of retirement, especially the long-term impact of inflation. Rising prices, particularly in healthcare and medical insurance, can erode their retirement savings," she explains. While some believe expenses will drop during retirement, medical care, travel and leisure activities often increase significantly.

The second myth involves underestimating longevity. "Many people quietly assume they won't live that long, so they plan for a short retirement. But with today's improving healthcare and living standards, retirement can easily stretch 20, 30 or even more years. The bigger risk isn't leaving money behind; it's outliving your savings," Dr Chuah warns.

The third misconception is over-reliance on EPF. "While EPF is a solid foundation for retirement income, it can be depleted quickly without proper withdrawal (decumulation) planning, especially if it's the only source of retirement funds," she cautions. The solution involves diversification through voluntary EPF contributions, PRS and personal investment portfolios across different asset classes.

## ADAPTING TO FINANCIAL UNCERTAINTY

The past decade has altered the retirement planning landscape. "Inflation plays a critical role in retirement planning. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rising cost of healthcare, which consistently outpaces general inflation," Dr Chuah emphasises.

Market volatility presents challenges for those approaching retirement. "Market ups and downs are part of investing, but they tend to feel a lot heavier as you approach or step into retirement. This is where a well-structured decumulation plan and a sound asset allocation strategy become crucial."

The overlooked dimension is emotional preparation. "Retirement is often seen as a reward for decades of hard work, but the reality is that it can also be one of life's toughest transitions," Dr Chuah notes. "Many new retirees are surprised to find themselves struggling with boredom, a loss of identity or feeling like they've lost their sense of purpose."

Her advice: "Start by picturing what your days will actually look like after you retire. What will get you excited to wake up in the morning?" She recommends creating a "retirement vision board" filled with meaningful activities and relationships.

For those feeling overwhelmed, Dr Chuah offers structured steps: "The first step to overcoming that initial paralysis in planning your retirement is to gain clarity on your retirement goals. Visualise how you would like to live out your retirement years. Once clarity is achieved, take immediate action. Some examples include automating your monthly savings top-up, whether into EPF (via i-Saraan or self-contribution) or PRS."

"Most importantly, don't do it alone. Working with a CFP professional can certainly help, as they will give you more than just a plan. It is never too late to take that first step toward financial security."

The message is clear: retirement readiness extends beyond savings to encompass emotional preparation, health planning and social connectivity. As Dr Chuah concludes, "Ultimately, retirement readiness isn't just about having enough money—it's about having a life worth waking up to each and every day."

## Southeast Asia Retirement Readiness Snapshot

Dr Chong Kim Mee's research reveals how Malaysia's retirement readiness compares to other Southeast Asian countries.

**MALAYSIA**

**Platform:** Employees Provident Fund (EPF)
**Strength:** Structured contributions, consistent returns
**Challenge:** 40% of informal workers don't contribute regularly
**Reality Check:** Over 50% of those nearing retirement have <RM50,000 as per EPF reports

**SINGAPORE**

**Platform:** Central Provident Fund (CPF)
**Advantage:** Higher contribution rates, broader coverage

**THAILAND & INDONESIA**

**Challenge:** Limited pension schemes, greater obstacles

**Key Issues Across Malaysia:**

- Early withdrawals for housing/emergencies reduce balances
- Coverage gaps in informal sector

**Solutions Needed:**
Stronger discipline (consistent contributions, avoid early withdrawals), wider coverage, better public education

# The Three Levels of Retirement Readiness

**Linnet Lee, CFP®,** IFP®, CEO & Licensed Financial Planner at Resolute Planning Sdn Bhd, Industry Fellow at University Malaysia's Social Well-being Research Centre & founding committee member of Women in ETF Malaysia

**Linnet Lee, CFP®, IFP®, CEO and Licensed Financial Planner of Resolute Planning Sdn Bhd, Industry Fellow of Social Well-being Research Centre under University Malaysia and one of the founding Committee Members of Women in ETF, Malaysian Chapter, breaks down the different levels of retirement readiness and strategies to deal with each stage.**

### NOT READY

**Characteristics:** No (not a contributor) or minimal savings with an EPF balance far below recommended thresholds, high dependency on continued employment or family support, lack of financial literacy and retirement planning, significant debt including personal loans or credit card debt.

This category often includes workers in the informal sector or gig economy or those with interrupted work histories who may rely heavily on government assistance like BR1M/Bantuan Sara Hidup.

**Key Strategies:**

- Start with awareness and basic financial literacy education by attending workshops, community programmes or online courses on budgeting, debt management and compound interest.
- Participate in voluntary retirement savings schemes like i-Saraan for self-employed, PRS (Private Retirement Scheme) and EPF Voluntary Contribution.
- Seek debt restructuring or management assistance to consolidate or reduce debt burden through AKPK.
- Develop budgeting and saving discipline starting with micro-savings habits (RM5-RM10/day).
- Access welfare and social protection by tapping into existing social safety nets while building long-term self-reliance through Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat's (JKM) Welfare Assistance Scheme.

### SOMEWHAT READY

**Characteristics:** Some retirement savings but below the sustainable benchmark (below RM390,000 by age 60 as per EPF's minimum standard), some investment knowledge but inconsistent implementation, still financially supporting dependents such as children and elderly parents, may own property but not fully paid off, partial reliance on EPF without diversification into other income sources.

**Key Strategies:**

- Review and realign financial goals by conducting retirement needs analysis and projected expenses versus assets.
- Diversify income sources by supplementing EPF with PRS, ASB, unit trusts, rental income or part-time work.
- Accelerate savings in peak earning years by increasing voluntary contributions and reducing lifestyle inflation.
- Implement protection planning through medical and life insurance/takaful to avoid wealth depletion.
- Consider downsizing or monetising assets such as property downsizing, renting out rooms or reverse mortgages.

### COMPLETELY READY

**Characteristics:** Having enough diversified investments which exceed retirement needs, including EPF, PRS, real estate, fixed income and equities; debt-free or low-debt status; having a clear retirement plan, including estate planning, healthcare and passive income. May already be semi-retired or working by choice.

**Key Strategies:**

- Focus on preservation and risk management by shifting from wealth accumulation to preservation and rebalancing to less risky, income-generating assets.
- Implement tax and estate planning by setting up wills, trusts or nominations and managing tax exposure on withdrawals and investments.
- Focus more on maintaining health and lifestyle by reviewing the budget for healthcare inflation and long-term care, which is crucial if health conditions deteriorate.
- Consider legacy planning for charitable giving and inheritance planning for children and grandchildren.
- Stay engaged with activities such as mentoring, volunteering or part-time work to maintain purpose and mental health.

### LOOKING AHEAD: THE 100-YEAR LIFE

Lee emphasises two critical misconceptions: underestimating health conditions and longevity. "The cost of health care will escalate, and this has to be factored in," she warns, while noting that "being healthy as you age won't guarantee a longer life, but it significantly increases your odds of living both longer and better."

With advancing technology potentially extending lifespans, she emphasises that financial planning and healthy ageing must go hand in hand. Emerging technologies like smart medication dispensers and carer robots are making independent living increasingly possible for seniors.

Lee advocates for a holistic approach, considering the financial, physical, emotional, intellectual and mental wellbeing of individuals as they age." As she concludes: "In summary, most people would prefer to live a productive life, age gracefully and die a good death."

# When Harmony Meets Money

**The third-place winner of FPAM's 2024 Financial Planning Competition, Vivian Chow, shares her philosophy on creating financial harmony across family, business and personal life while championing women's financial empowerment.**

After 28 years in media, events and corporate finance, Vivian Chow made a career pivot that would transform not just her own life but the financial futures of over 100 clients. As a Licensed Financial Planner with FA Advisory and the third-place winner of FPAM's 2024 Financial Planning Competition, Chow has developed a unique approach to retirement planning that goes far beyond spreadsheets and projections.

**THE FBI FRAMEWORK**

Chow's winning strategy in the competition centred on what she calls the FBI Framework—an interconnected approach examining Family, Business and Individual financial needs. "My winning strategy was built around a singular, powerful goal: creating harmonious family, business and self with financial certainty and peace," she explains, drawing on the Chinese philosophy of harmony (和) that guides her practice.

“True harmony in finances requires balancing three interconnected dimensions,” Chow elaborates. “This approach ensures we don’t just look at numbers in isolation but examine how every financial decision impacts these three critical areas of a client’s life.”

The framework addresses family protection through education funding and inheritance planning, business continuity through succession planning and key person risk management and individual goals through tax optimisation and retirement income strategies. “A business decision affects family security, which impacts personal retirement plans,” she notes. “My framework forces us to see—and solve—those connections.”

### FROM CORPORATE LIFE TO FINANCIAL PLANNING

Chow’s transition to financial planning wasn’t driven solely by professional ambition. “I changed careers for two big reasons: family and purpose,” she reflects. “After years in high-stress corporate roles, I realised no pay cheque was worth missing my child’s growing-up years.”

Her corporate background and Chartered Secretary qualification provided valuable perspectives: mastery of financial systems and deep empathy for money-related stress. An estate planning workshop proved to be the catalyst. “Everything aligned: I saw how my experience and knowledge could safeguard families’ futures,” she recalls.

The transition wasn’t without challenges. During the Movement Control Order period when her income was affected, Chow learnt firsthand about the risks of career changes without proper planning. “That experience now directly informs how I guide clients through transitions,” she says, citing a recent case where she helped an employed optometrist carefully plan her transition to private practice rather than making an impulsive leap.

### EMPOWERING WOMEN INVESTORS

One of Chow’s key focuses is empowering women in financial planning. “Why women? Because I’ve been there, juggling boardrooms and school runs, knowing money matters but never feeling fully confident,” she explains. Her observation is striking: “Women are naturally gifted long-term investors, yet so many doubt their ability to start.”

She shares a particularly inspiring transformation: “When a female first came to me, she was afraid to touch her savings. Today she’s not just investing with confidence; she has brought her husband along on the journey. They now plan their finances together as my clients. This is why I do what I do. When women gain financial confidence, it transforms not just their lives but their families’ futures too.”

> “True financial planning is about creating stability and freedom across every part of a person’s world. That’s what turns good plans into life-changing ones.”

Vivian Chow, CFP®, Licensed Financial Planner at FA Advisory

### BEYOND TRADITIONAL RETIREMENT

Chow’s approach to retirement planning extends beyond traditional number-crunching. Working with a corporate trainer retiring in 10 years, she demonstrated her three-part philosophy: financial security, personal fulfilment and purpose. “First, I ensured her safety by calculating the retirement needs like housing and healthcare, plus creating funds for both her mother’s care and her own future needs,” she explains.

But the planning went deeper. “When she shared her teaching dream, we together worked out a step-by-step plan: starting with guest lectures, then moving to part-time teaching. I helped her set up a special savings plan for her required certifications.”

For younger clients, particularly those in their 30s, Chow’s message is clear: “Retirement planning isn’t about predicting your future lifestyle; it’s about consistently building options during your most productive earning years. You don’t need a perfect vision to start; you just need to start.”

### MALAYSIA’S CHANGING RETIREMENT LANDSCAPE

Looking ahead, Chow identifies critical trends shaping Malaysia’s retirement landscape as the nation approaches ageing status by 2040. Beyond traditional longevity planning, she highlights an emerging concept: micro-retirements. “Younger Malaysians are increasingly blending work and extended breaks, whether for travel, caregiving or skill-building,” she observes.

This trend demands sophisticated planning: “The most prepared clients I work with now adopt this three-pronged approach: longevity-proof savings, dedicated disability buffers and flexible ‘break capital’; allowing them to navigate life’s chapters without compromising their golden years.”

### LIFE-CHANGING TRANSFORMATIONS

Perhaps most rewarding for Chow are the profound transformations she witnesses. One particularly memorable case involved a client buried under high-interest debt yet determined to secure her future. Through disciplined budgeting and strategic debt restructuring, the client became debt-free within three years and began confidently building her retirement fund.

“That’s what makes this job so special to me,” Chow reflects. “It’s not just about spreadsheets and numbers. It’s about watching someone go from feeling stuck to feeling in control.”

Vivian Chow’s harmonious approach offers something different: a reminder that true financial planning is ultimately about creating stability and freedom across every dimension of a person’s world.

Estate Planning

# The Extent and Use of Power of Attorney in Malaysia

**Understanding how powers of attorney work in Malaysia, their legal framework and the critical gaps that leave families vulnerable when proper documentation is missing.**

Imagine your elderly parent suddenly falls ill and can no longer manage their bank accounts or property transactions. Without proper legal documentation, your family faces months of court applications just to access funds needed for medical care. This scenario plays out daily across Malaysia, highlighting why understanding powers of attorney has become essential for every family's financial security.

## UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF ATTORNEY FRAMEWORK

A power of attorney (POA) creates a legally binding agency relationship under the Contracts Act 1950. The person granting the authority becomes the "Donor" or "Principal," while the appointed representative is the "Donee" or "Attorney". This arrangement allows the Attorney to act on behalf of the Principal in dealings with third parties, providing essential flexibility when circumstances prevent direct involvement.

## THE THREE CRITICAL PLANNING AREAS

Malaysian families typically utilise POAs across three key scenarios:

**Financial Planning:** Managing bank accounts, executing property transactions and handling financial affairs become seamless when the Donor travels abroad or faces health challenges. The POA ensures bills are paid and household expenses are covered without interruption.

**Estate Planning:** A well-structured POA guarantees that assets are managed and distributed precisely according to the Donor's intentions, preventing confusion and family disputes during vulnerable periods.

**Business Planning:** Companies rely on POAs to maintain operational continuity, allowing trusted employees to execute contracts and make critical decisions when key decision-makers are unavailable.

## CONSEQUENCES OF NOT HAVING A POWER OF ATTORNEY

Without a POA, the following critical issues may arise:

**1. Court Appointment Requirements:** In the event of mental incapacity, your family may need to apply to the Court to appoint a Committee of Person or Estate to manage your financial affairs. This process is both time-consuming and costly.

**2. Financial Vulnerability:** In the event of illness or old age, finances may be vulnerable to abuse by the people around you who may take advantage of your compromised state.

**3. Estate Disputes:** In the event of death, your estate may become subject to messy family disputes, creating long-lasting rifts between loved ones and depleting assets through legal battles.

**4. Transaction Complications:** During a sale or purchase, the transaction may fail in the event of your death, marriage, mental disorder, unsoundness of mind or bankruptcy (collectively known as "trigger events").

## UNDERSTANDING MALAYSIA'S POA SYSTEM

Malaysia's Powers of Attorney Act 1949 establishes the fundamental framework, but several provisions require careful navigation.

**Revocation Rules:** Section 5 specifies that POAs terminate through written revocation by the Donor, written renunciation by the Donee, death or unsoundness of mind of either party or the Donor's bankruptcy.

**Irrevocable POAs:** Section 6 introduces a crucial protection mechanism. POAs can become irrevocable "in favour of a purchaser" when expressly stated and given for valuable consideration. The courts define valuable consideration as "some right, interest, profit or benefit accruing to one party, or some forbearance, detriment, loss or responsibility given, suffered or undertaken by the other."

**Time-Limited Irrevocability:** Section 7 provides an alternative route to irrevocability through fixed time periods, even without valuable consideration, provided the arrangement favours a purchaser.

**Critical Ambiguity:** The phrase "in favour of the Purchaser" creates interpretive challenges. Many POAs serve purposes beyond sale transactions—such as bank account management—where no purchaser exists. As such, a POA has to be well-drafted by a legal professional who understands the complexities and is mindful of this ambiguity.

## MALAYSIA'S POA LIMITATIONS AND SYSTEM GAPS

Despite their utility, Malaysian POAs face several structural limitations that other jurisdictions have addressed more comprehensively.

**Medical Decision-Making Exclusion:** Current POA frameworks restrict authority to financial and property matters, providing no mechanism for medical decision-making during mental incapacity periods.

**Absence of Lasting Power of Attorney:** Unlike the United Kingdom and Singapore, Malaysia has not implemented Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) systems. LPAs specifically activate upon mental incapacity, addressing the growing needs of an ageing population facing increased rates of dementia and cognitive decline.

**Technical Drafting Complexity:** Improperly drafted POAs intended for irrevocability may fail to survive trigger events. Financial institutions and land authorities then subject these documents to intensive scrutiny and demanding procedural requirements, potentially blocking essential transactions.

**Financial Burden Transfer:** Without proper POA protection, younger family members often shoulder significant financial strain, advancing funds for elderly care while awaiting court resolution of authority issues.

**Protracted Court Processes:** Families endure lengthy and expensive legal proceedings to secure committee appointments, draining resources that should support the incapacitated person's care.

## THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL POA PLANNING

The appointment of a trusted individual through a properly structured POA ensures smooth financial management during periods of personal inability. However, the legal complexities surrounding POA creation and implementation demand professional expertise.

Anyone seeking to exercise POA powers must possess a thorough understanding of relevant legislation and its practical applications. The intersection of the Powers of Attorney Act 1949, the Contracts Act 1950 and various procedural requirements creates a sophisticated legal landscape requiring skilled navigation.

Engaging qualified legal professionals becomes essential for POA alignment with personal intentions while addressing inherent legal complexities. Proper drafting minimises challenge risks and prevents costly litigation that could consume the very assets the POA was designed to protect.


**About the Writers:**

**Farah Deba** brings over 30 years of legal experience, providing comprehensive trust, estate, inheritance and business succession advisory services for both Muslim and non-Muslim clients with multi-jurisdictional assets. She has served as Chair of the STEP Malaysia Branch since 2016.

**Patricia Sasidaran**, called to the High Court of Malaya in December 2021, works as an Associate in inheritance and succession matters. Her practice encompasses contentious probate and administration proceedings as well as mental incapacity work.

# Building Tomorrow's Financial Advisory Platform

**Fintech startup KoiZai is building the next-generation platform to revolutionise financial advisory services across Asia.**

After three decades in financial services across Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong, Donald Soo, founder and CEO of KoiZai, is betting everything on a vision: that the future of financial advice lies in seamlessly blending cutting-edge technology with deeply personal client relationships. His fintech startup KoiZai aims to become the operating system that powers Asia's next generation of financial advisors.

The financial advisory industry in Asia is at a crossroads. While traditional relationship-driven practices remain the cornerstone of wealth management, technology is rapidly reshaping client expectations and regulatory requirements. This shift represents both a challenge and an opportunity for firms looking to stay competitive while maintaining the personal touch that defines quality financial advice.

## FROM EXCEL SHEETS TO AI-POWERED PLATFORMS

Soo's journey to founding KoiZai began with frustration. In 2002, after moving from Australia to Singapore to join Professional Investment Advisory Services, one of Singapore's leading financial advisory firms, he discovered a technology gap that would define his career trajectory.

"In Australia, I'd been using a very dated DOS-based system called FPI. Singapore had no comparable technology, so like many firms, we relied on Excel and Word templates to run the planning process," Soo recalls. This stark contrast highlighted the urgent need for technological

Donald Soo,
CEO of Koizai

advancement in the region's financial advisory sector.

The turning point came during a three-month secondment to Aviva Navigator, where Soo was tasked with replacing the problematic FPI system. "I designed a new concept for the Australian market during my three-month secondment. They ran with it, built N-Link and replaced FPI completely—that was my first real proof of how the right tech could transform advice delivery."

This early success planted the seeds for what would eventually become KoiZai. For over a decade, Soo continued refining his vision for a comprehensive platform that could work across Asian markets and international borders.

## SURPRISING MARKET APPETITE FOR INNOVATION

When KoiZai entered the Malaysian market, Soo discovered something that pleasantly surprised him about traditional advisors. "The biggest surprise was how eager financial advisors in Asia, especially Malaysia, were looking for a technology solution. They weren't just open to new tools; they had clear, sophisticated ideas about what they wanted and expected," he explains.

"We're not just adapting to change; we are creating the operating system the next generation of advisors will run on."

However, existing solutions presented significant challenges. "Bringing them in at a lower price point, while making the massive modifications needed for the local market, proved difficult. Many offshore providers were reluctant to adapt their systems for Malaysian users; the high development costs, lower projected returns and a preference to charge in foreign currencies made collaboration tough."

This market gap reinforced Soo's conviction that a locally-built, Asia-focused solution was essential.

## THE COMPLETE ADVISORY ECOSYSTEM

Unlike many competitors who focus on individual pain points, KoiZai takes a holistic approach. "Most advisor software in Asia only tackles one piece of the puzzle, like sales, basic calculations or customer relationship management. KoiZai was built from day one to be different," Soo emphasises.

The platform covers the entire advisory lifecycle: client engagement, business management, compliance, governance and client outcomes. "What sets us apart is our flexibility. The platform grows with an advisor's business, adapting to new regulations, evolving technology and changing client expectations."

## WINNING OVER THE VETERANS

Converting experienced advisors to new technology requires a delicate approach. For 30-year veterans managing clients' financial futures, trust is paramount.

"Convincing a 30-year veteran advisor isn't about pitching technology but establishing credibility," Soo explains. "Our starting point is to respect their deep experience navigating market ups and downs and regulatory changes. We are positioning KoiZai as a tool that enhances their expertise, not replaces it."

The strategy focuses on client outcomes rather than technological features. "Every feature we discuss concerns improving client outcomes: more transparent communication, stronger compliance and freeing up time to build relationships."

## RESILIENCE THROUGH CRISIS

KoiZai's journey hasn't been without setbacks. A defining moment came when their first Chief Technology Officer left abruptly after two years of developing the initial prototype, Malabar AI. Despite positive reception in Singapore, Soo made a difficult decision.

"After a thorough system audit, I realised that while the prototype worked, it wasn't scalable enough for commercial launch. Instead of pushing forward with this proof of concept, I made the tough decision to pause, take the lessons learnt and rebuild the platform from the ground up with a new, more robust architecture."

This restart, combined with navigating Covid-19 disruptions, ultimately strengthened the company's foundation and resolve.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

For Soo, success extends beyond business metrics. After three decades in financial services, his motivation runs deeper. "I believe that the next chapter in my journey is to put all this energy into the KoiZai solution, which can help many other visionary financial advisers and firms have access to a cutting-edge tech solution to help them succeed and bring better financial advisory outcomes to their clients and the public."

His definition of winning is clear: "Success is seeing that the 'Powered by KoiZai' solution is helping successful financial planning firms and that KoiZai is also part of their success journey."

Looking ahead, Soo sees three forces reshaping financial advice over the next five years: artificial intelligence (AI) integration, market consolidation and tighter regulations. "AI will move from a back-office helper to a client-facing co-pilot, personalising service and anticipating needs. Consolidation will push firms to deliver the sophistication of big players with the personal touch of boutiques. Regulations will demand not just compliance but transparent, tech-enabled accountability."

KoiZai is positioning itself at the centre of these changes. "We're not just adapting to change; we are creating the operating system the next generation of advisors will run on."

# India's Financial Planning Renaissance

**As regulatory winds shift and demand surges, FPSB India charts the course for transforming the nation into a global financial planning powerhouse—one CFP professional at a time.**

India's financial services sector stands at an inflection point. With an 18% surge in CFP professionals and groundbreaking regulatory recognition, the country is rapidly emerging as a global hub for financial planning excellence. The evolution from transactional financial services to comprehensive life planning represents a fundamental reimagining of the advisor-client relationship across the subcontinent.

Financial planning transformation across India has been nothing short of remarkable. "Earlier, financial advice was often product-centric, but today there is a growing recognition of holistic financial planning around one's financial goals," explains Krishan Mishra, CEO of FPSB India. This shift represents a fundamental change in mindset—from selling financial products to crafting comprehensive life strategies.

Regulatory developments, digital transformation and rising financial awareness have served as catalysts for this evolution. However, the journey is far from complete. "Awareness of professional financial planning is still in its early stages in urban India, let alone the rural landscapes," Mishra acknowledges, highlighting the vast untapped potential that exists beyond India's metropolitan centres.


Krishan Mishra, CEO of FPSB India

## BREAKING THE WEALTHY-ONLY MYTH

One of the most significant barriers to widespread adoption remains deeply entrenched misconceptions about financial planning. The *2023 FPSB India Global Value of Financial Planning Consumer Study* revealed a troubling reality: many Indians still believe financial planning is exclusively for the affluent.

"A major barrier is the widespread myth that financial planning is only for the wealthy," Mishra states. The report identifies three additional damaging myths—that planning is only for retirement, that it costs more than it's worth and that planners lack objectivity.

These misconceptions create a vicious cycle, deterring millions from seeking professional advice precisely when they need it most. Breaking these barriers requires sustained effort in building trust, strengthening investor education and expanding access to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India.

## A REGULATORY GAME-CHANGER

The industry received a significant boost when the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) recognised CFP professionals as eligible principal officers for distributors, investment advisors and research entities. For Mishra, this development represents far more than regulatory approval.

> “Our vision is to position India as a centre of excellence in financial planning by nurturing a large, skilled and ethical pool of professionals.”

and KJ Somaiya Business School represent a deliberate effort to embed financial planning principles early in professionals’ careers.

“These collaborations are part of our broader mission to build future-ready talent and embed financial planning principles early in professionals’ careers so that they can bridge the gap for the current and upcoming demand for skilled professionals,” Mishra explains.

The partnerships extend beyond academia into the corporate sector, with upskilling opportunities for employees at financial sector giants like SBI, Mirae Assets and Motilal Oswal. This dual approach—educating future professionals while upgrading current workforce capabilities—creates a comprehensive talent development ecosystem.

“IFSCA’s recognition of CFP professionals as eligible principal officers is a game-changer. It signals the regulator’s trust in global standards and sets a strong precedent for integrating qualified financial planners into core leadership roles in financial services,” he emphasises.

This recognition creates a ripple effect throughout the industry. By elevating the credibility of CFP certification, it incentivises more students and professionals to pursue the qualification while aligning India’s regulatory framework with international best practices. Most importantly, it positions India to compete seriously in the global financial services arena.

### CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

FPSB India’s approach to scaling professional standards goes beyond traditional certification programmes. Strategic collaborations with premier institutions like IIM Ahmedabad, IIM Bangalore, IIM Lucknow, IIFT

### THE NUMBERS GAME AND GLOBAL AMBITIONS

Currently, India hosts 3,215 CFP professionals out of 230,648 globally—a number that seems modest given the country’s enormous population and growing wealth. However, Mishra views this not as a limitation but as an opportunity of unprecedented scale.

“Over the next decade, India is poised to be among the top three markets globally for financial planning professionals. As the economy expands and investor needs become more complex, demand for structured, goal-based advice will only accelerate,” he predicts.

The opportunity becomes even more compelling when considering IFSCA’s ambitious plans to generate 1.5 million jobs in the finance sector, creating tremendous scope for qualified professionals.

### LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE 4E FRAMEWORK

Mishra’s leadership philosophy centres on what he calls the “4E framework”—Education, Empowerment, Employability and Entrepreneurship. “This approach enables us to nurture capable professionals, promote financial education and contribute meaningfully to India’s economic development,” he notes.

The framework reflects a holistic understanding of professional development that extends beyond technical competency to include ethical foundation, practical application and entrepreneurial thinking. It’s an approach that recognises financial planning as both a profession and a calling.

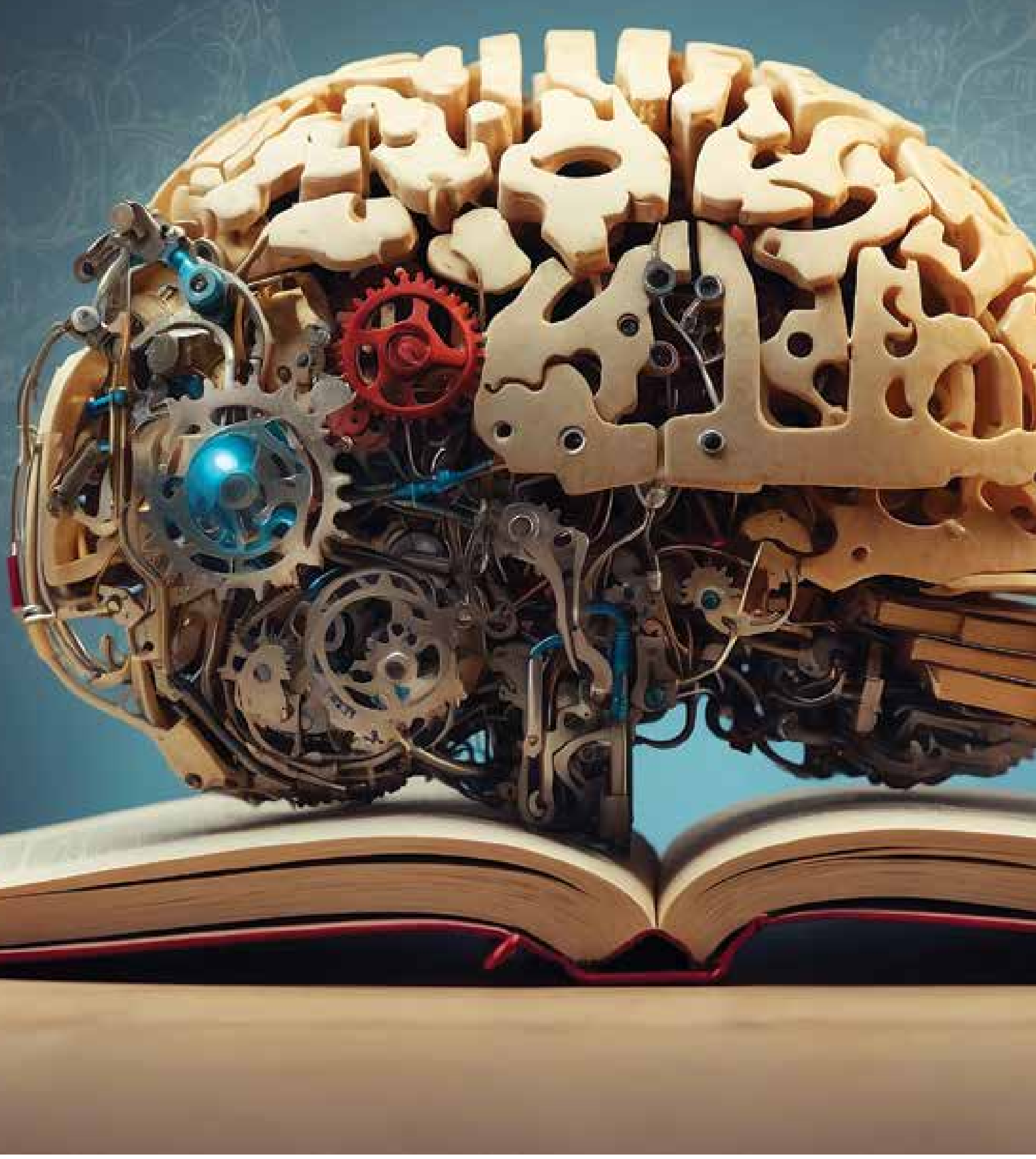
### VISION FOR GLOBAL EXCELLENCE

Looking ahead, Mishra’s vision extends beyond domestic market dominance to establishing India as a global centre of financial planning excellence. “Our vision is to position India as a centre of excellence in financial planning by nurturing a large, skilled and ethical pool of professionals,” he declares.

This ambitious goal involves balancing global standards with local relevance, creating robust career pathways and building unshakeable trust in CFP certification. The ultimate aim is transformational: “With the right ecosystem, regulatory support, industry collaboration and public awareness—India can emerge as a beacon of financial empowerment and advisory leadership on the global stage.”

As India’s economy continues its upward trajectory and financial complexity increases, the foundation being laid today by leaders like Mishra will determine whether the country can truly claim its place as a global financial planning powerhouse. The signs are promising, but the real work—building trust, breaking myths and scaling excellence—continues.

Industry



# The Future of Knowledge Creation

A visionary fintech firm is leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to revolutionise the US$11.7 trillion education sector, unlocking knowledge for billions worldwide.

Dr Serg Bell, the mastermind behind tech giants like Acronis, Parallels and Virtuozzo, is now tackling a bold mission: creating a unified, AI-powered platform to streamline how knowledge is created, shared and applied globally. Frustrated by antiquated, fragmented systems that stifle innovation, he is spearheading Constructor Tech to empower learners and researchers by 2033, making knowledge a universal force for progress.


Dr Serg Bell, Founder & CEO of Constructor Tech

### FROM TECH EMPIRES TO KNOWLEDGE REVOLUTION

The genesis of Constructor Tech lies in recognising education's vast potential. "After building companies like Acronis, Parallels and Virtuozzo, we saw science, education and research as one of the world's best opportunities—around US$11.7 trillion in value every year, 2.2 billion students, 120 million teachers and 20 million researchers globally, and yet most tools they use are 15–20 years old, disconnected and not ready for the GenAI era," Dr Bell explains. "We are building one unified platform that affords automated discovery and spread of knowledge."

His background in machine intelligence shapes this mission. "Our mission is simple: to make scientists, teachers and students more effective and efficient. In Constructor we believe that knowledge is the solution against all evil, so our main goal is to help people gain knowledge. Scientists discover knowledge, teachers spread this knowledge and students apply the knowledge in their research to make new science."

Yet, systemic flaws persist: "Today this cycle of science, education and research is not working efficiently, and in their current form, they both face many challenges—not enough money, people, not enough transparency and education is not accessible everywhere." With 15% of children facing learning disabilities and another 15% lacking access to education, Constructor leverages GenAI, metapresence and neuroscience to deliver personalised, inclusive learning.

complex and prohibitively expensive to use." As a result, such solutions bring at least 10x less value than they actually could."

Constructor's solution is a unified AI-native platform spanning 21+ scenarios, from content creation to research acceleration. "Our approach is different: one unified, AI-native platform that covers 21+ scenarios with a single interface, shared data model and modern architecture," he elaborates.

These scenarios encompass content composing, scheduling, adaptive learning, assessment, grant management, research acceleration, student information systems and digital avatars serving as knowledge twins. Key AI-driven features ensure personalised experiences, including Adaptive Learning Paths—where instead of static courses, the system analyses each student's pace, strengths and gaps, then adjusts the content, difficulty and teaching style in real time.

"Our mission is simple: to make scientists, teachers and students more effective and efficient. In Constructor we believe that knowledge is the solution against all evil, so our main goal is to help people gain knowledge."

The platform also addresses implementation challenges through comprehensive support. "We treat migration and implementation as a fully managed process," Dr Bell explains. "Our team handles planning, data migration, configuration, training and ongoing support." This seamless transition eliminates traditional barriers to adoption, making the platform easily downloadable with fully integrated scenarios.

### BREAKING THE CHAINS OF TECH FRAGMENTATION

Dr Bell identifies tech complexities as the most urgent challenge among access inequality, tech clutter and low engagement. "All three challenges are important, but if I had to pick one as the most urgent right now, then it's tech complexities, caused by the use of different unintegrated products—because it's the root cause of the other two," he asserts. "Access inequality or engagement cannot be solved if the underlying systems are fragmented and outdated and non-integrated tools are in place."

Current systems burden users with complexity. "Teachers, students and researchers are forced to jump between half a dozen platforms, each with its own logins, UX and data silos," Dr Bell says. "It makes the system overly

### A BLUEPRINT FOR 2033 AND BEYOND

Dr Bell's goals are ambitious: "We do not know for sure what will be in 5–10 years, but we're serious about hitting our 2033 budget figures, reaching 30 million students, 300,000 teachers and 50,000 researchers." However, his true ambitions extend far beyond these initial targets, aiming for 1.5 billion students, 15 million teachers and 1.5 million researchers by 2033. AI will be ubiquitous: "Nobody knows how AI will be used in 5 or 10 years, but what is clear is that it will be used everywhere, and especially in science, education and research."

To entrepreneurs, he offers timeless advice: "Every time I speak to our employees, Constructor students or startup founders, I always repeat three things that everyone who wants to win must do: stay curious, stay creative and stay ambitious." He elaborates, "Curiosity means being attentive, motivated and willing to take the harder learning path... Creativity is about how you play the game... Ambition is the engine that moves everything forward."

Constructor's ecosystem—spanning Constructor Knowledge, Tech and Capital—operates cohesively, with education at its core. A network of Nobel laureates like Konstantin Novoselov shapes its research and platform design. Despite implementation challenges like behavioural shifts and infrastructure gaps, Dr Bell remains optimistic, leveraging GenAI for seamless adoption. With Constructor Tech, he is forging a future where knowledge empowers all.

# FPAM Elected Board of Governors at 25th AGM

FPAM marked a significant milestone with its 25th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, 21 June 2025, at M World Hotel, Petaling Jaya. The event brought together members to elect new leadership for the future.

During the AGM, members elected a distinguished Board of Governors for the 2025-2027 term, with Mr Alvin Tan re-elected as President and Ms Demi Chan appointed as Deputy President. The leadership team comprises 14 seasoned professionals who will guide FPAM's strategic direction and continue advancing the association's mission to promote excellence in financial planning across Malaysia.

The successful election marked a pivotal moment in FPAM's history, as the organisation transitions into its next chapter with fresh leadership committed to elevating professional standards and fostering growth within Malaysia's financial planning sector.

# MEET YOUR NEW FPAM BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2025-2027

## Executive Committee

**Mr Alvin Tan**
*President*

**Ms Demi Chan**
*Deputy President*

**Mr Ranjinath Muniandy**
*Vice President I*

**Dr Calvin Goon**
*Vice President II*

**Professor Dato' Dr Chua Hock Hoo**
*Honorary Treasurer*

**En Husaini Hussin**
*Honorary Secretary*

## Board Members

Mr Albert Wong Gin Sang

Mr David Lee

Mr David Dinesh Mathew

Dr Joyce Chuah

Mr Sameer Sharma
(pending ROS confirmation)

En Muhamad Arif Bin Hariffin

Dr Mavis Chow Poh Ling

Ms Violette Goh

# FPAM Celebrates New Chapter with Grand Office Opening Ceremony

FPAM marked a significant milestone on Wednesday, 20 August 2025, with the successful opening of its new office at Phileo Damansara 1, Petaling Jaya. The ceremony brought together industry leaders, esteemed members and strategic partners to commemorate this important transition.

The event commenced with a warm welcome as guests gathered at the modern office space located on the 11th floor of Block B. The atmosphere was filled with anticipation and excitement as members of Malaysia's financial planning community converged to witness this pivotal moment in FPAM's organisational journey.

FPAM President Alvin Tan delivered inspiring opening remarks that highlighted the association's growth trajectory and commitment to advancing financial planning excellence in Malaysia. His address was complemented by insightful comments from the FPAM General Manager Alice Wong who outlined the strategic vision behind the relocation and the enhanced capabilities the new facility would provide.

The ceremonial highlight came with the traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony, symbolically marking the official opening of FPAM's new office. This moment captured the collective enthusiasm of attendees and represented the association's forward momentum in serving Malaysia's financial planning profession. The proceedings seamlessly transitioned into an extended networking lunch that lasted until 2:00 PM.

The new office space at Phileo Damansara 1 represents more than just a physical relocation; it embodies FPAM's evolution and commitment to providing superior resources and services to its membership. The strategic location in Petaling Jaya's business district positions the association for continued growth and enhanced accessibility for members throughout the Klang Valley.

# New Facilities to Enhance Member Experience

The new FPAM office at Phileo Damansara 1 offers members access to professional workspace solutions designed to support their business needs. The modern facility features two distinct booking options that reflect the association's commitment to providing practical resources for its membership.

**CONSULTATION ROOM**
Members can now reserve the consultation room for intimate client meetings and focused discussions, with convenient four-hour booking sessions available free of charge. This space has been thoughtfully designed to create an appropriate environment for confidential consultations and professional interactions.

**TRAINING ROOM**
For larger gatherings, the training room accommodates workshops, seminars and comprehensive training programmes. Available for full-day bookings from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at RM150 per day, this facility provides an ideal setting for intensive professional development activities.

## HOW TO BOOK

Members can reserve these facilities by scanning the QR code below.

# Summary of Events: October to December 2025

| NO | DATE | EVENT | LOCATION | EVENT FROM | PROGRAMME TITLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **OCTOBER 2025** | | | | |
| 1 | Saturday, 4 Oct 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Successful Investment Strategies in Unit Trust Investments |
| 2 | Tuesday, 9 Oct 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Holistic Children Education Planning For The Modern Parent |
| 3 | Wednesday, 11 Oct 2025 | CE Workshop | Perak | Perak Chapter | Mistakes and Solutions in Estate Planning |
| 4 | Wednesday, 15 Oct 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Beyond Inheritance: Decoding Generational Prosperity with Family Office Strategy |

| NO | DATE | EVENT | LOCATION | EVENT FROM | PROGRAMME TITLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **NOVEMBER 2025** | | | | |
| 1 | Saturday, 1 Nov 2025 | CE Workshop | Perak | Perak Chapter | Mistakes and Solutions in Estate Planning |
| 2 | Thursday, 13 Nov 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Case Studies - The Practical Approach to Deliver Financial Planning Service to Mass Affluent Clients |
| 3 | Thursday, 20 Nov 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Tax Planning for Small Business and Individual Owners |
| 4 | Tuesday, 25 Nov 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Business Continuity for Family and Non-Family Business |

| NO | DATE | EVENT | LOCATION | EVENT FROM | PROGRAMME TITLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **DECEMBER 2025** | | | | |
| 1 | Tuesday, 9 Dec 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Legacy Planning - Mastering the Art of Legacy Creation and Protection |
| 2 | Saturday, 13 Dec 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | Lifetime Clients with Strategic Asset Allocation with Unit Trust |
| 3 | Tuesday, 16 Dec 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | 2025 CE Points Fulfilment Workshop: Performing Comprehensive Retirement Planning with Microsoft Excel |
| 4 | Tuesday, 20 Dec 2025 | CE Workshop | KL/Sel | FPAM | 2025 CE Points Fulfilment Workshop: Understanding Guaranteed Income in Income Insurance Plans & How To Calculate My Actual Return In Property Investments |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