



Datuk Wira (Dr.) Aria Putera Ismail



Datuk Wira (Dr.) Aria Putera Ismail is a Malaysian financial services leader with more than 25 years of experience spanning development finance, investment banking, Islamic finance, and institutional transformation. Known for his strategic leadership and focus on entrepreneurship development, he has played a significant role in shaping financial ecosystems that support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and Islamic financial markets across Malaysia and the wider ASEAN region.

He previously served as Group President and Chief Executive Officer of SME Bank Malaysia from 2018 to 2024, where he led a comprehensive transformation of the institution. Under his leadership, SME Bank implemented major business, digital, and cultural reforms aimed at strengthening its role as a leading Development Financial Institution (DFI). His initiatives supported national economic priorities such as the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030, while also improving financing accessibility and capacity-building programs for micro, small, and medium enterprises. His leadership contributions were recognized when he received the CEO Champion Award by Talent Corporation Malaysia in 2023.

Before leading SME Bank, Aria built a distinguished career across several major financial institutions. He served as President Director and CEO of Maybank Syariah Indonesia, where he oversaw the transformation and expansion of the bank's Islamic financial operations, improving profitability and developing cross-border Shariah-compliant financial products. Earlier in his career, he held senior leadership roles including Executive Vice President and Director of Global Markets Islamic at Maybank Islamic

Berhad and General Manager of Global Markets at Hong Leong Islamic Bank. His international banking exposure also includes experience at JPMorgan Chase Bank and AmanahRaya-JMF Asset Management.

Aria's early career began in Malaysia's public sector at Bank Negara Malaysia, where he contributed to policy implementation, financial market operations, and government securities management. During this period, he played a role in supporting the development of Malaysia's Islamic financial markets and strengthening regulatory frameworks for investment operations.

Beyond executive leadership, Aria remains active in corporate governance and advisory roles. He currently serves as a Board Member of UBB Investment Bank Limited and MARUSS Sdn Bhd, where he contributes to strategic oversight, governance, risk management, and long-term business direction. In addition, he acts as Advisor for Stakeholder Relations at Sumisaujana Group Berhad, providing counsel on stakeholder engagement, corporate strategy, and communication management.

Aria is also committed to academic and professional development in finance and entrepreneurship. He has served as an Adjunct Professor at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), sharing industry insights with the next generation of business leaders. His academic background includes completing the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School, an MBA in Islamic Banking and Finance from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and a Bachelor's degree in Finance from Universiti Teknologi MARA. He was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate (PhD) in Management by Lincoln University College.

Throughout his career, Aria has received numerous recognitions related to SME development, sustainable finance, and institutional leadership. These awards highlight his contributions to strengthening SME ecosystems, advancing sustainability initiatives, and driving innovation within financial institutions.

Overall, Datuk Wira (Dr.) Aria Putera Ismail is widely regarded as a transformation-focused financial executive whose work bridges policy, banking innovation, and entrepreneurship development. His career reflects a consistent commitment to strengthening financial institutions, promoting sustainable finance, and enabling the growth of SMEs as a core driver of economic progress.

