

Fellowship Report: APRICOT 2025, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia

Introduction:

Receiving the APRICOT 2025 Fellowship was an incredible opportunity that allowed me to attend the APRICOT Masterclass and the APRICOT Fellows Soft Skills Workshop in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. The experience was nothing short of transformative—both technically and personally. I was able to enhance my understanding of Border Gateway Protocol (BGP), as well as develop critical leadership and communication skills. This report summarizes my key learnings, technical insights, and personal takeaways from the fellowship, highlighting how this experience has enhanced my expertise and broadened my professional network.

APRICOT Masterclass Experience:

The Advanced BGP Workshop was a deep dive into real-world network design and operations, guided by some of the most experienced trainers in the field. I had the privilege of learning from Aftab Siddiqui, Tashi Phuntsho, Mark Duffell, and Phil Mawson, whose insights made complex networking topics more accessible and practical.

Key takeaways from the workshop:

Industry Best Practices: I learned new BGP design methodologies, traffic engineering techniques, and security measures that can be directly implemented in my service provider network.

Real-Life Case Studies: One of the most rewarding aspects of the workshop was learning directly from industry experts and experienced network professionals. The trainers shared their in-depth knowledge on BGP implementations, route optimization, security strategies, and incident response. What made the experience even more valuable was the opportunity to engage with other participants who shared real-world challenges and incidents from their own networks. These discussions shed light on common operational pitfalls and best practices for mitigation, which will undoubtedly help me when facing similar situations in my own work.

Hands-on Experience: The hands-on labs were a highlight, allowing me to dive deep into advanced BGP configurations, troubleshooting techniques, and real-world scenarios. Getting to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical setting not only reinforced best practices but also gave me the confidence to handle BGP-related challenges more effectively in my professional role.

Working in a service provider environment, I found the knowledge gained from this fellowship highly relevant and applicable. The best practices and technical insights I acquired will enable me to enhance network performance, security, and efficiency. Additionally, I see great potential in sharing these learnings with my peers in the NREN (National Research and Education Network) community in Bangladesh, helping to improve interconnectivity, security measures, and overall network resilience for academic and research institutions.

APRICOT Fellows Skills Workshop:

The Fellows Soft Skills Workshop was another important aspect of the fellowship that left a lasting impact. Once again, Aftab Siddiqui played a crucial role in emphasizing the importance of effective communication, public speaking, thinking about policy development and

knowledge sharing within the technical community. Terry's leadership skills presentation was particularly insightful and provided a structured approach to developing leadership qualities. These skills will help me better articulate technical challenges, lead projects more effectively, and engage in productive discussions with peers and stakeholders.

Key Learnings:

Public Speaking & Idea Sharing: The Fellows Soft Skills Workshop emphasized an often-overlooked aspect of technical professions—public speaking and idea sharing. The sessions challenged the stereotype that technical professionals are introverted or hesitant to express their thoughts. We were encouraged to confidently share our ideas, express technical concepts clearly, and engage in meaningful discussions.

A key takeaway was understanding the significance of body language in public speaking. Techniques such as maintaining eye contact, using hand gestures naturally, and adopting an open posture play a crucial role in connecting with an audience. These skills are not just beneficial for formal presentations but are also essential for day-to-day technical discussions, collaborative meetings, and knowledge-sharing sessions. The workshop provided practical exercises to help us refine our presentation delivery, voice modulation, and audience engagement techniques, all of which will be incredibly useful in future professional settings.

Leadership Development: The leadership session provided guidance on how to inspire and lead teams effectively in a highly technical environment.

To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and participate in each session, it would be preferable if the soft skills workshops were divided into two groups or extended to two days rather than one. Fellows should also be tasked with preparing presentation slides on assigned topics and delivering them either alone or in small groups of two to three people. In order to promote involvement and increase self-assurance, smaller groups should be established where each member has a chance to speak. As Aftab Siddiqui rightly mentioned, these arrangements are designed specifically for fellows to develop confidence and learn to speak up, which is crucial for career growth and effective collaboration.

Human Networking: The Most Valuable Experience:

Beyond the technical training, the fellowship provided a fantastic platform for networking with professionals, industry leaders, and policymakers. I had the privilege of meeting people from Mongolia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, Fiji, Bhutan, Uganda, Malaysia, and many more. Without this fellowship, I might never have had the chance to meet such a diverse group of professionals, exchange ideas, and learn about different networking landscapes and cultural perspectives.

This experience has strengthened my professional network, allowing for future collaboration and knowledge exchange. Upon returning, I have already begun sharing my knowledge with colleagues and am planning community outreach sessions to spread what I have learned to a broader audience.

Conclusion:

The APRICOT 2025 Fellowship was a life-changing experience equipping me with both technical expertise and essential soft skills. The hands-on training, expert mentorship, and

collaborative discussions significantly enhanced my understanding of BGP, troubleshooting strategies, and leadership skills. This experience has strengthened my ability to contribute to the networking community in Bangladesh, and I look forward to applying these insights to drive improvements in network performance, security, and collaboration.

I sincerely thank the APRICOT Fellowship Committee for this incredible opportunity, and I look forward to contributing to the community with the knowledge I have gained.

Submitted By,
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