

Graduates stare at bleak job market



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Some 50,000 students are expected to graduate from higher education institutions this year, and the economic standstill brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic is set to make securing a job even harder than it has been for the last few years. – The Malaysian Insight pic by Seth Akmal, April 24, 2020.

ABDUL Afiq Rahim quit working to pursue a college degree, but with his graduation due this year, he wonders if he had made the right choice.

The shutdown of the global economy due to the coronavirus pandemic has left millions without steady jobs, and Afiq is concerned that as a fresh graduate, his chances of landing employment are especially slim.

About 50,000 students are expected to graduate from higher education institutions this year, and going by past trends, many will find securing a job an uphill battle.

A 2018 Education Ministry study found that nearly 60% (<https://www.thesundaily.my/local/almost-60-of-graduates-still-unemployed-a-year-after-graduation-XD1489725>) of 51,365 first degree holders were still unemployed a year after graduation.

Small and medium enterprises, which employ two-thirds of the Malaysian workforce, have warned that the pandemic and ensuing economic standstill will lead to mass lay-offs (<https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/237052link>) this year.

“(The pandemic) is affecting the world economy, and as I’m ending my studies, I’m worried about whether I’ll be able to get a proper job once I graduate,” Afiq told The Malaysian Insight.

“I was working when I decided to further my studies, and now, I’m not sure if I made the right choice.

“I was thinking of not rushing to get a job before Covid-19 became an issue. But now I’m thinking, will I ever get a job in times like these? I’m a little worried about my future, to be honest,” said the creative arts major studying in the Klang Valley.

Fahmi, an architecture graduate from Universiti Teknologi Mara, shares Afiq’s concerns.

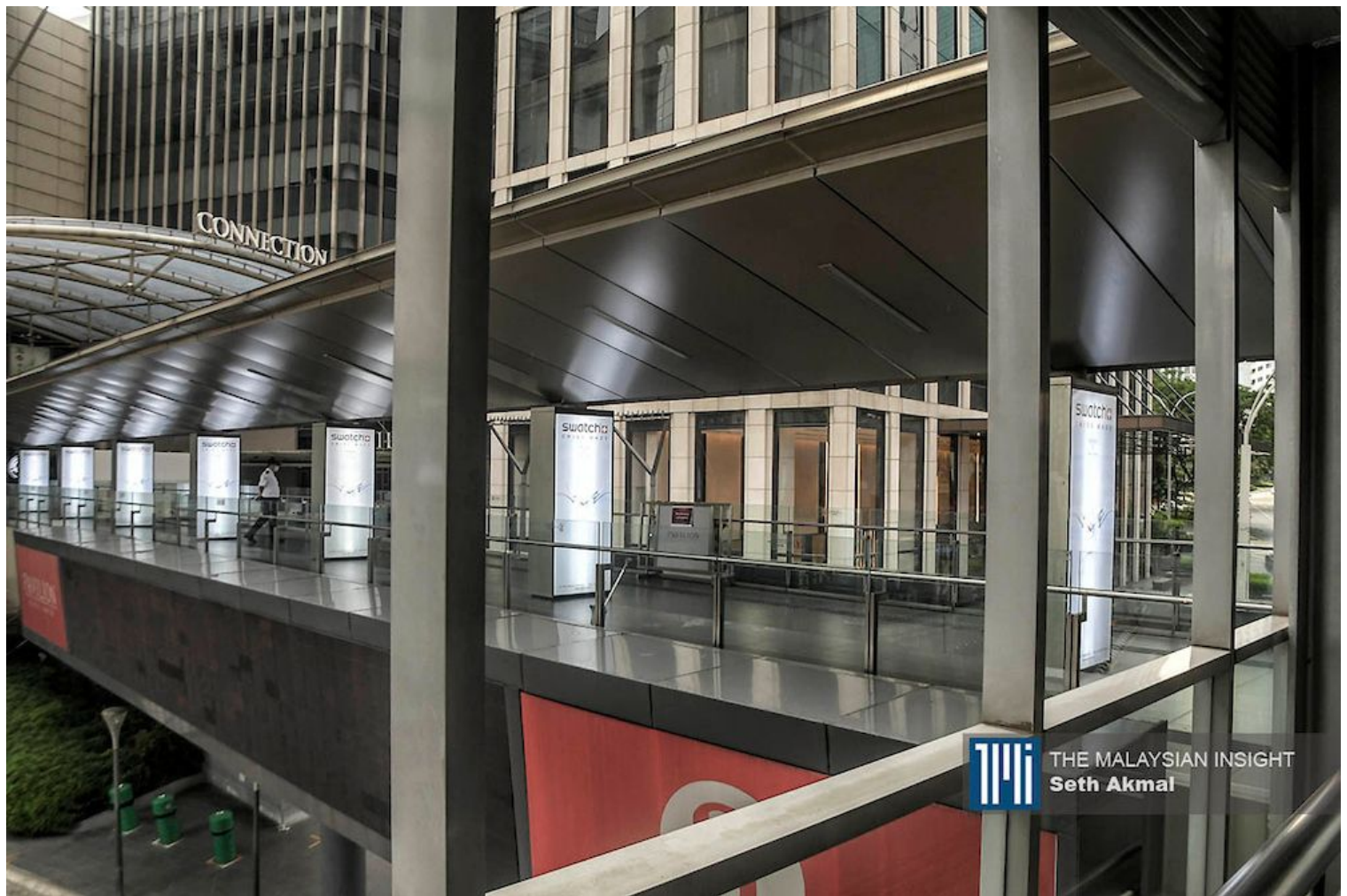
Despite graduating not too long ago, before the pandemic hit, he has found it difficult to get a permanent job in his field.

“I’m working part-time as a food deliveryman, and I graduated not too long ago. Even before the crisis, I could not get the job I wanted. So to survive, I work part-time.

“With Covid-19 and the sluggish economy, I’m not sure whether I’ll be able get a job in architecture at all,” said the 22-year-old, who graduated with a first-class degree.

“Ironically, my delivery job is paying me more now because there are a lot of orders as people are stuck at home. But once the pandemic is over, will the economy become stronger?”

Following a spike in new infections, the country was placed under the movement-control order (MCO) on March 18, resulting in most businesses halting operations and workers losing their jobs or forced to take unpaid leave.



The MCO has resulted in most businesses suffering financial losses, and SMEs warn of mass lay-offs ahead. – The Malaysian Insight pic by Seth Akmal, April 24, 2020.

Govt will help us

Even graduates who are about to enter in-demand industries like early childhood education are concerned about their future.

Vinesha Kunalan, 23, is thinking of becoming a private tutor or giving music lessons while waiting to secure a permanent teaching position.

“In my field, I think there will still be job opportunities as there are many new preschools out there that constantly need new teachers,” said the final-year early childhood education student, who is pursuing her degree at a private college.

“If there are no job opportunities, I can start teaching tuition or give music lessons to children.

“I’m planning to do part-time work while waiting to get a permanent job. I’m also considering a diploma in baking as I feel that has a good future, too.”

Although educators are listed as a critical occupation by human resource agency Talent Corp, Vinesha knows that the field has its difficulties.

“I’ve worked at some schools before, and I noticed that many have problems retaining teachers because they are paid low salaries.”

Despite the odds, Syarifah Nor Idayu Sheikh Fadzil is confident that the government will help unemployed graduates.

“I know people are not able to go to work now and the economy is slow, but I guess after the virus outbreak is over, things will get better and graduates will have no trouble getting jobs,” said the Universiti Selangor medical technology student.

“But if things are bad after the pandemic, I believe the government will look at alternatives to help people like me get a job. Maybe the government will create jobs for us.”

Chai Jia Hui is thinking of pursuing a master’s degree after he gets his bachelor’s due to the situation in the job market.

“I think some jobs will gradually be replaced by high-tech machines, and the pandemic will be the start of this phase.

“Final-year students should start rethinking their future. I plan to continue my studies after I graduate with a (bachelor’s) degree.

“I believe that the higher your education level, the better your chances of getting a job. Almost everyone has a bachelor’s degree, so it would be unique if you have more than that.” – April 24, 2020.

The Malaysian Insight

Alfian Z.M. Tahir
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