

Don't have high hopes for job openings post-MCO, fresh grads told

By **Hakimie Amrie Hisamudin** - April 29, 2020 7:00 AM



Fresh graduates face a challenging environment as they seek to enter the job market when the current lockdown is lifted.

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has warned of a bleak job market for soon-to-be graduates and fresh graduates when businesses re-open after the current movement control order (MCO).

It said job opportunities "were close to zero" as most companies were "tightening their belts" and thus would not be hiring this year.

"Most employers have started to implement cost-cutting measures such as pay cuts, unpaid leave and asking employees to utilise annual leave during the movement control order period. Many management staff are taking pay cuts ranging from 10% to 50%," MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan told FMT.

Shamsuddin said most of the job opportunities available for the time being were in the gig sector, which was not regular employment and may not be attractive to graduates.

Another area, he said, was the health and safety equipment manufacturing sector, especially with firms making rubber gloves, face masks and health-related equipment.

"However, employers will be very cautious about hiring fresh graduates due to the challenging environment," he said.

Shamsuddin said the job market for fresh graduates was already weak before the Covid-19 pandemic.

He estimated the employability rate within the first six months after finishing studies as being less than 50%.

He said internship programmes were supposed to have enhanced employability but with the MCO in place, many internships programmes were cancelled.

Many graduates are already worried about their job prospects.

Harith Ikhwan, 25, who recently finished his studies, said he had trouble landing a job as companies required him to submit academic transcripts before hiring.

"I still haven't received my transcript as my graduation has been postponed due to the MCO. Without the necessary certification, a lot of companies refuse to process my job application," he said.

He said his scheduled job interviews were cancelled and he was left in limbo when the MCO was implemented.