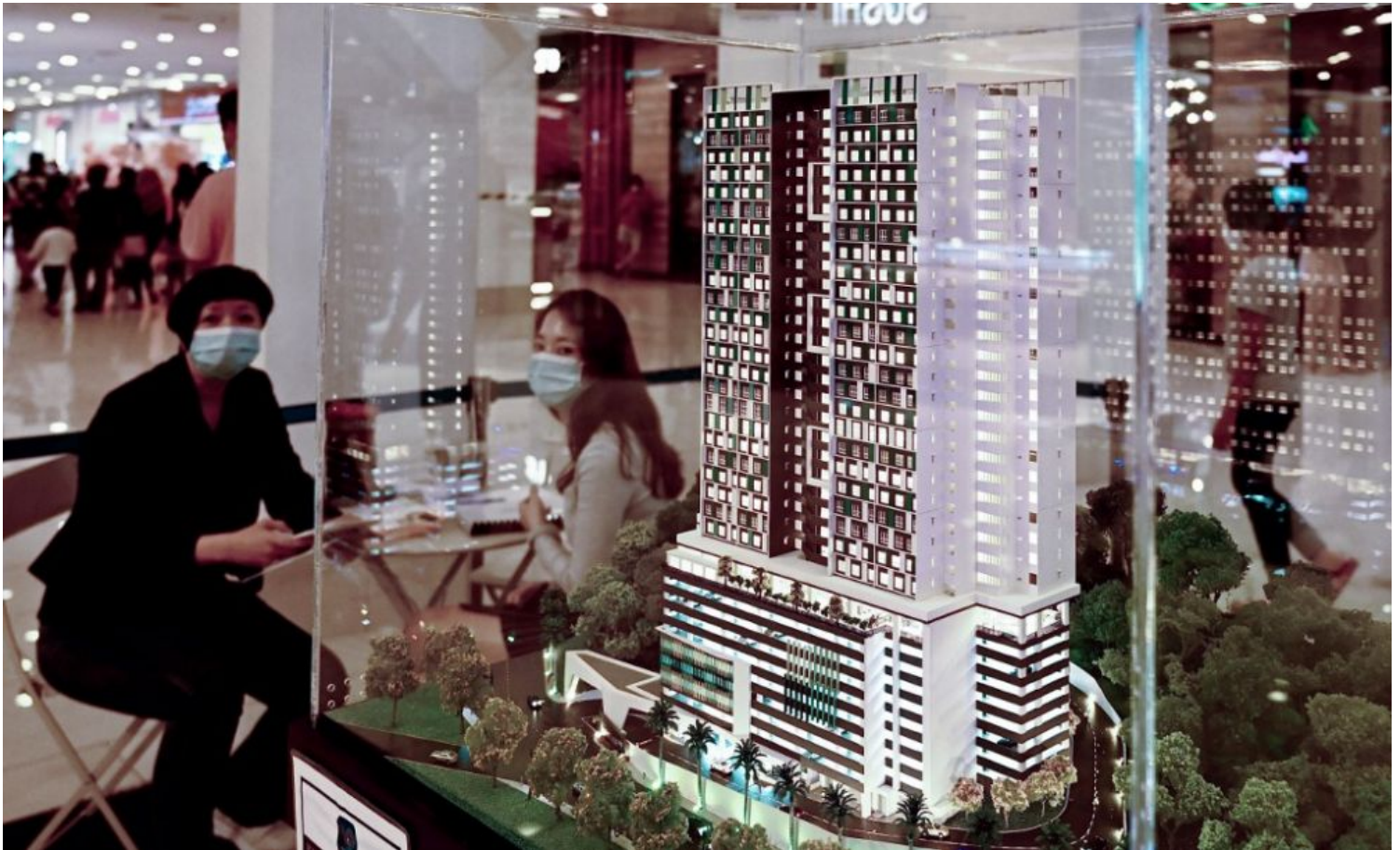


## 2021 not the year for bonuses, pay rise, say experts



**Hailey Chung Wee Kye**

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*Realtors promoting high-rise apartments at a shopping mall in Penang. Many firms, including SMEs and MNCs in the state are still hiring, says a human resources exec. – AFP pic, February 4, 2021.*

BONUSES, salary increments and recruitment will not be in the minds of employers this year as they go about salvaging their businesses amid the Covid-19-ravaged economy, said human resources and industry experts.

Almost all sectors have been hard hit by the sluggish economy, with the exception of the information and communications technology (ICT) and electrical and electronics (E&E) sector, they said.

Generally, employees who are competent and have good teamwork would fare better, they said.

SME Association of Malaysia president Michael Kang told The Malaysian Insight that employers will recognise those who have contributed to the company's growth during the pandemic.

"Essential services, such as exporters, ICT, E&E, will still pay bonuses and give pay raises," he said, while warning that many other employees would unlikely see any pay raise and bonus.

"They may even lose their jobs.

"Some staff are aware that everyone needs to contribute to overcoming this pandemic. It is not possible to rely on one-way traffic."

Teamwork is valuable and the change of attitude will be the success factor while the companies aim to upskill and reskill, said Kang.

Tyler Chin, founder of Transform Culture, a hiring consultancy company, agrees that the bulk of job vacancies lie in the IT sector.

"Recruitment has been heavy in the IT sector, especially in IT infrastructure roles like cloud engineers and IT support, as well as software development positions."

Nonetheless, Chin said some switched jobs despite the risks.

"Modern talents are still focused on purpose-driven work and are even willing to quit when jobs are scarce.

"It's been more frequent than pre-pandemic and I think that's been the result of people having more time to reflect on their careers."



*A glove factory's R+D lab in Shah Alam. Companies manufacturing PPE are still hiring, says an employers' group. – AFP pic, February 4, 2021.*

Seeing the trend, Chin suggests that the government invests less in handouts and provide grants for young businesses that can shift the economy.

“I think Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation is doing a brilliant job in upskilling Malaysia’s talent to be more competitive in the modern world of work.”

The 26-year-old career coach is the youngest member on the board of the Recruiters’ Association Malaysia and has also grabbed the title of “youngest career mentor” in Monash University’s career mentoring programme 2019.

According to his observation, bonuses would either be reduced or absent in companies this year.

“No one I spoke with has kept their rightful bonus,” Chin said.

### **Fresh grads flood market**

Human resources executive Jane Lee Wern Hui said that the recruitment market is not slow but targeted at the competent.

“From my perspective, many companies, including the SMEs, multinational corporations and private limited companies in Penang are still hiring.

“However, this is subject to experienced candidates, while junior or fresh graduates will have obstacles in job finding.”

Lee works in Mi Autobotics, an engineering company developing automation, robotics and artificial intelligence solutions. The engineering or IT sectors remain robust, she said.

Though she has a full-time job, she founded Ninety J Project last November, a voluntary service to help youth in career progression.

“I set it up after receiving many requests from different university students seeking help,” Lee said, sharing a desire to go beyond her role.

The Malaysian Employers’ Federation (MEF) said there would be higher unemployment until the third quarter of this year as the country waits on the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine.

“Many employers are in a hiring freeze now, except for some in plantations and PPEs manufacturing,” said MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan.

“The government had planned to create about 500,000 new jobs in Budget 2021 but close to a million new entrants will be joining the labour market this year.”

Shamsuddin is referring to 500,000 fresh graduates who will graduate in early 2021 and another 500,000 who are expected to enter the labour market in late 2021.

The gig economy offers some relief, helping more than 2.8 million people in 2020, he said.

However, food-delivery riders have recently complained of lower income (<http://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/295795>) due to stiff competition. – February 4, 2021.