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Hunting for the right job



Still searching: Aqilah says that many companies are retrenching and are not hiring now.

EAGER beaver Aqilah Safar finished her course in petroleum geology at Curtin University, Sarawak Malaysia (Curtin Sarawak) in December last year and thought of getting a head start in finding a job, ahead of her graduation ceremony in April.

But so far, her search has led to a dead end.

“I’ve applied to 10 different local and international oil and gas companies since December but I have yet to get a reply from any of them. It is pretty tough right now, especially for what I want to do which is upstream exploration. Many oil companies are going through retrenchments and have frozen hiring,” said the 23-year-old.

Aqilah would like to secure a full-time job in her field, but says she is open to accepting work in other sectors. She’s even considering doing an internship, although there may not be any remuneration.

“Right now, I can’t be picky. I am not looking at the money but for something that can give me experience and take me forward,” she said.

To upskill, Aqilah joined an employment workshop and even volunteered for a youth exchange programme at AIESEC, a global youth organisation, which saw her travelling to Egypt in January.

Surrinter Kasinathan also believes in upskilling, and credits landing a job to a course he took at Penang Skill Development Centre.



Soft skills necessary: Kasinathan has realised that companies are not looking for young graduates with theoretical knowledge but with other skills.

The 24-year-old had been searching for a job in chemical engineering since August last year, but said he was only called for interviews after he took an **Industrial Skills Enhancement Programme (INSEP)** in December.

“After being rejected many times, I realised that fresh graduates have a lot of theoretical knowledge but companies are looking for technical and soft skills. So I applied to INSEP and realised that companies started to take me seriously after that,” he said.

Kasinathan has since been hired and will start working in mid-March.

And then, there are the lucky few who have had the opportunity to pick and choose when it comes to job-hunting.

Alyssa Ann Ooi began searching for a job after the Chinese New Year holidays and has already declined two job offers “because the companies (which are in Kuala Lumpur and Johor) are too far”.

Ooi, who lives in Sabah applied to over 10 companies in Kota Kinabalu, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, while her university dean helped send her resume to other companies in other states, such as Johor.

“I really liked the job in KL but they told me I wouldn’t be working in their headquarters in Damansara but at a branch office. So I felt that it wasn’t worth it.”

The 24-year-old says that she is looking for a job that has a conducive work environment with friendly colleagues and an attractive salary. Ooi is still looking for a job.

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