

WFH expected to change employment landscape

KUALA LUMPUR: Substantial remote work, including work-from-home (WFH) practices introduced since Covid-19 transmission and the digitalisation advancement, is expected to change the employment landscape and future of work.

According to the Economic Outlook 2022 report released by Finance Ministry yesterday, employers should continue to retrain their workers while employees should continue to upskill themselves to meet the future skills demanded.

"On the supply side, tertiary institutions should give more emphasis on the digital-related

programmes and embed analytical thinking and other soft-skills in the existing non-IT related courses that may add value to the workforce upon entering the job market," said the report.

It stated that the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) also highlighted that the demand for digital experts such as software development tripled from 19,000 vacancies in June 2020 to 56,000 vacancies in April 2021. The report also suggested all ongoing initiatives towards digitalisation should be continued to facilitate businesses to adopt technological tools in the daily operation that will

eventually allow the labour market players to progressively move towards automation and digitalisation to meet the future of work.

Furthermore, smaller businesses are recommended to be digitally empowered in various sectors via the available assistance programmes provided such as SME Digital Accelerator Grant, 100GoDigital and Smart Automation Grant to support the industry to automate their business processes and move towards digitalisation.

The report also cited the World Economic Forum Report (2020) which highlighted several strategies that will be

taken by Malaysia's companies to cope with the wave of digitalisation and the future work requirements such as accelerating the digitalisation work processes by using digital tools, video conferencing for future work as well as providing more opportunities to work remotely.

"In response to the shifting in skills needs, among others, 86 per cent of the companies surveyed will automate the work; 86 per cent will hire new permanent staff with skills relevant to new technologies; and 86 per cent expect existing employees to pick up skills on the job," the report said. — Bernama

Bulan Park upgrading project on track for completion this December

MIRI: The upgrading works on Bulan Park in Plasau here, which involves the construction of a new jogging track, is expected to reach completion this December.

According to Assistant Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture Datuk Sebastian Ting, the RM1-million project is progressing smoothly and the works are running according to schedule.

"The contract period spans three months following kick-off on Sept 6, and the project is expected to be fully completed by Dec 6," he said when met after conducting the site visit yesterday.

Regarding the new jogging track costing RM400,000, Ting said the voting to select the contractor would take place next month adding that the 600-metre facility could become a new attraction at the park.

"Construction (of the jogging



Ting (front right) seen with representatives of Miri City Council and the contractors during the inspection on the children's playground area.

track) would commence at an empty space next to the park's gazebo.

"The new track, with a width of four metres, would go all the way up to Jee Foh Lane.

"It is based on garden concept

and would be installed with lighting, footpaths and also benches," said the assistant minister, adding that the present track at the park stretches to more than 800 metres.

The Bulan Park upgrading

project also includes enhancements of the children's playground costing RM300,000, and beautification works including those on the 'Clock Tower Island' in the middle of the park's lake, also costing RM300,000.

The ongoing works at the moment are widening, surface-repairing and painting of the present jogging track at 50 per cent towards completion, painting of the clock tower, bridge, gazebo and signboards (90 per cent towards completion), as well as tiling works (55 per cent towards completion).

The works on the lights around the park have reached completion.

According to Ting, the project is under the Rural Transformation Programme (RTP) and the objective is to give a facelift to this popular recreational park, which is almost 30 years old.

Everrise Baby & Kids Fair is back at all premium outlets.

Everrise holds Baby & Kids Fair until Nov 14

KUCHING: Everrise is holding Baby & Kids Fair at its premium outlets in 4th Mile, BDC, CityONE, Green Heights Mall, MetroCity, Padungan, Plaza Merdeka, and Vivacity until Nov 14.

Participating brands include Abbott, Pediasure, Similac, Mamy Poko, Drypers, MeadJohnson, Sustagen, EnfagrowA+, Wyeth, Diapex, Dumex Dugro, Aptagro and Huggies amongst others.

A selection of over 80 items for infants, toddlers and mothers are on display at the fair including healthy baby food, skin and body care, bath products and toiletries, powdered milk,

disposable diapers, postpartum care, formula milk, parents nutritious milk powder, adult UHT milk, rice cereal, porridge, baby puree, kids breakfast cereal, new-born and kids' diapers, baby wet wipes, baby shower, shampoo, talcum, baby oil and lotion.

Get gift with purchase for selected baby and kids' products and enjoy great bargains at the fair. So drop by the nearest Everrise premium outlet today. For more promotion updates, follow Everrise Official Facebook or subscribe to its Telegram channel.

Swinburne lecturer wins silver award for research paper presented at BLM-ICAM 2021

KUCHING: Swinburne Sarawak lecturer Dr Yii Kwang Jing claimed silver award for his research paper presented at Business, Law, and Management-International Conference on Advanced Marketing (BLM2-ICAM4): An International Joint E-Conference 2021.

The theme for this year's conference "Broadening the Horizons of Business: Going Beyond Normal" challenges leaders and economic agents to adapt approaches in legal, business, and economic activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

More than 1,000 papers were submitted with 379 offline and 80 live presentations during the virtual event.

Highlighting the growing

interdependence of the world in its current situation, the conference emphasised the need for institutional synergies and greater understanding of collaboration and conversation among academics, educators, marketers, and policymakers.

Yii, a lecturer with Swinburne's School of Business, investigated the effect of migration rate on housing prices in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries for his research paper.

His research on massive urban migration noted increase in demand for urban housing and upsurge in housing prices due to migration also led to a country's social and economic issues, including the collapse of the financial system and the

depletion of household wealth.

According to Yii, understanding the factors influencing housing price fluctuations in Asian countries not only benefit policymakers in implementing monetary policies and constructors in developing housing development plans, but also investors and buyers in determining the risk of investment in the housing market.

"Interestingly, the research findings indicate that migration is an important indicator affecting housing prices, and that changes in housing prices also results in net migration. A rise in the number of immigrants would cause housing developers to anticipate higher housing demand and expand housing

Dr Yii's research paper receives silver award at BLM-ICAM 2021.

supply, in turn reduce upward pressure on housing prices.

"This implies that policymakers should consider social security as

well as wages and employment conditions to regulate migration and stabilise housing prices," he said, on his research which

reveals unemployment rate and gross national income having positive impacts on housing prices.

BLM-ICAM is an annual conference jointly organised by Taylor's University and University of Kelantan, Sri Lanka as a platform for national and international scholarly community to share research findings, expertise, and collaborate with renowned scholars.

For more information about Swinburne, visit its website www.swinburne.edu.my, Facebook page (@swinburnesarawak), Instagram (@swinburnesarawak), Twitter page (@Swinburne_Swk) or YouTube channel (Swinburne Sarawak).

UTP undergrad publishes joint conference paper with MIT

KUCHING: An undergraduate from Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) has successfully published a conference paper at The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) 2021 International Design Engineering Technical Conferences and Computers and Information in Engineering Conference.

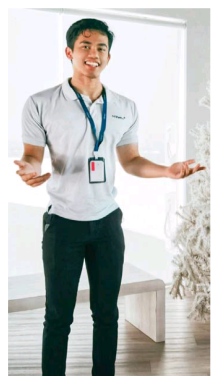
Muhammad Fathy Rashad's paper on 'CreativeGAN: Editing Generative Adversarial Networks for Creative Design Synthesis' was published together with assistant Professor Faez Ahmed and Amin Heyrani Nobari, both from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

A computer engineering student, Muhammad Fathy explained that the paper aimed to introduce a method to enhance the creative capability of generative machine learning models.

Currently, machine learning has been successfully used to generate new data such as images, music, product designs, or even arts and paintings, hence, showing a certain degree of computational creativity.

"However, generating a truly novel or unique design using machine learning still remains a challenge.

"Our paper attempts to enhance the creative capability of machine learning models by identifying components



Muhammad Fathy Rashad

that make a design unique and modifying the generative model such that it becomes more likely to generate designs with the unique components. The paper demonstrates this method by generating new bicycle designs with unique frames and handle," he said.

Muhammad Fathy recalled how he got connected with MIT. "It all started when I was doing my internship at Vitrox Corporation Bhd, an automated electronics inspection company,

and just started learning about machine learning. I started to blog on what I learned and published several articles about machine learning. Coincidentally, one of my articles overlapped with one of MIT DeCoDE Lab's research interests which is computational creativity.

"Faez read my article and sent me an email for a talk and gave me some preliminary tasks. As he saw the potential for a conference paper, he paired me up with one of his PhD students, Amin, and we started working together on the research," he said.

Being affiliated with MIT was rather unexpected but reinforced Muhammad Fathy's belief that everything is possible.

"This experience has taught me many lessons such as how to write a conference paper, conduct research and present research better.

"I am really grateful to Faez and my co-author Amin as they were very accommodating despite my remote location and time difference," he said.

Apart from publishing the conference paper with MIT, Muhammad Fathy also had the opportunity to be the only non-MIT student at the DeCoDE Lab.

"In addition to doing research, I participated in the weekly lab meeting and had the opportunity to present several topics to other PhD students in the lab," he said.

Muhammad Fathy also pointed out that he would never have thought that an undergraduate could actually publish a paper and join labs at other universities.

"In the United States or other countries, many students join a lab in their first or second year to help with research and potentially publish a paper. Hence, by the time they graduate, some students have published several papers.

"UTP provides similar opportunity, but it's not widely known among undergraduates. In addition, it's quite uncommon for the university to hire undergraduates for research works," he said.

Muhammad Fathy credited his education and extracurricular activities in UTP for this achievement.

"UTP has helped me to nurture my public speaking and academic writing skills which was extremely helpful when writing the conference paper and presenting my results to the professor and other lab members.

"Moreover, UTP various events and club activities provided many opportunities to conduct workshops and become a speaker. I also had the opportunity to practice my academic writing skills as many subjects in UTP required technical reports with strict requirements," he said.

Moreover, UTP's seven-month-long student industrial internship programme had greatly helped him to learn machine learning in depth and gave him the initial experience on research.

"Without these skills and research experience, I may have not been able to get the same opportunity to do research with MIT," he added.

Muhammad Fathy also thanked his supervisor Dr Ho Tatt Wei, and lecturers for being supportive and understanding by allowing him to focus on completing his conference paper, as it was difficult balancing research work and studies due to the time difference.

"Being able to publish and present a paper at the age of 20 is indeed my proudest achievement. This is a testimony that even an undergraduate student is able to collaborate and conduct research at the international level.

"I hope my achievement will inspire other undergraduates in UTP to publish conference papers. I also hope that this achievement influences UTP to expose more research opportunities to undergraduates. For example, MIT has Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme or UROP, where even first year students may join a lab and participate in research," he said.

He also emphasised the importance of having online presence and publishing work in the internet.

"It would have been nearly impossible if I didn't have my portfolio or didn't write my blog as Faez would not be able to find me. With my portfolio and blog, I was also able to get various other opportunities such as clients, speaking invitations, and job offers.

"Hence, I'd really encourage other students to build their online presence either with a portfolio, a blog, or even a social media account," he added.

UTP is extremely proud of Muhammad Fathy's achievement. Its deputy vice chancellor academic Professor Dr Hilmi Mukhtar said this is a testimonial of the quality of their students who are top notch, creative and innovative, setting them apart.

"At UTP, we strengthen the student-centred environment in line with our objective to provide more holistic student experience and opportunities for their professional and personal growth.

"This is part of our commitment to ensure a distinctive and transformative learning experience that will equip our students with the knowledge and skills to make a positive national and global impact," he said.