

# 'Acquire technical qualifications and soft skills'

**A COMBINATION** of technical qualifications and soft skills is necessary for graduates to become more employable, say academicians.

Taylor's University deputy vice-chancellor Prof Dr Pradeep Nair said findings on the unemployment of degree holders indicated a global trend, wherein employers were struggling to find quality talents with the right soft skills.

"It (unemployment of degree holders) may not be so much about the mismatch between supply (of graduates) and job vacancies. Soft skills are increasingly becoming the hard skills of today's workforce.

"It is not enough to be highly trained in technical skills without developing soft, interpersonal and relationship building skills that help people communicate and collaborate effectively," he told the *New Sunday Times*.



Prof Dr Pradeep Nair

The trend, Pradeep said, was not new as, two decades ago, top IT companies had begun recruiting business graduates to be their IT executives simply because they possessed the right soft skills to bridge communication gaps with end users.

"In addition to the knowledge required to carry out the tasks effectively, employers expect young graduates to have certain characteristics," he said.

Pradeep said, in view of this, Taylor's SHINE Award Programme had helped students develop future work skills required for different jobs and work settings through out-of-class activities.

"The programme provides students with a holistic and experiential



Prof Dr Ishak Yussof

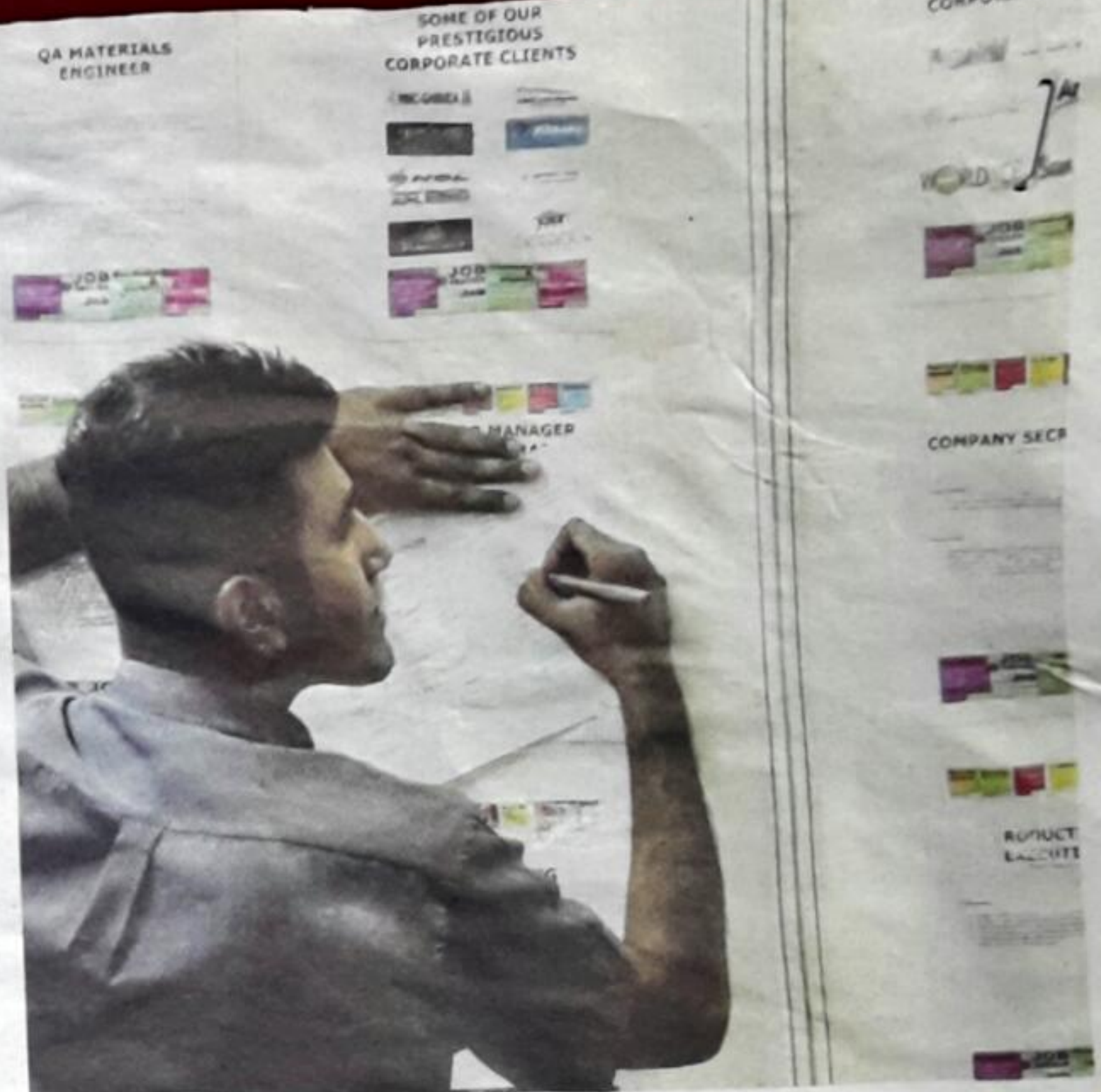
learning environment. It recognises their extra-curricular involvement, both on and off campus, in a second transcript that complements the academic transcript," he said.

Prof Dr Ishak Yussof of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's (UKM) career advancement centre (UKM Karier) said employers were more willing to employ graduates based on attitude and transferrable skills.

"Graduates are employed not due to their area of studies but more for their attitude and willingness to work hard, creativity and IT-related skills," he said.

Ishak said UKM planned to be involved in the Higher Education Ministry's 2u2i Programme – a work-based learning programme where students learn for two years at a university and work for two years to gain experience in an industry.

"All faculties at UKM are not reviewing or restructuring their pro-



A jobseeker filling an application form at a career fair. FILE PIC

grammes or curriculums as they are considering offering 2u2i programmes.

"In fact, our science and technol-

ogy faculty has started to offer a biotechnology management programme as well as oleochemistry programme."