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Kwok: "We expect the retail industry to grow by 5% this year."

Retailers group offers internships to students

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysian Retailer-Chains Association (MRCA) is offering 8,000 internships to students at its members' outlets.

The association currently has more than 200 members with 10,000 stores nationwide, which include Nelson's, Poh Kong, OSIM, Secret Recipe and 7-eleven.

MRCA has teamed up with SEGi University College and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) to launch Wholesale and Retail Industry Centre of Excellence (ICoE).

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the ICoE was initiated in support of the Economic Transformation Programme.

Last year, four ICoE's were launched in the electric and electronic, and automotive industries. The development of the ICoE is focused on building human capital from school leavers right up to degree holders.

MRCA president Datuk said: "The current workforce in the retail industry is at 80% capacity. It is not at 100% yet, therefore there is a potential for this area in the retail industry to grow."

He said it was important for students to have working experience so that they were exposed to the working world even before graduating from university.

"We need to make sure they are comfortable with the pay in the duration of the internship, which is usually three to four months. It also depends on location of the outlet. We want to tell the students that there is a career path available in retail."

"We are highlighting that there is career advancement in this industry. We will build them to become capable retail leaders," Kwok said.

With SEGi providing the platform for connecting with the students and with cooperation from UUM, MRCA's role is to provide the educators with feedback within the industry.

"We expect the retail industry to grow by 5% this year," Kwok said. Last year, it grew by 4.5%.

MRCA hopes to increase the number of internships offered to students in 2013 to 8,800 with 11,000 outlets, 9,600 students in 2014 with 12,000 outlets and 10,400 students in 2015 with 13,000 outlets.