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Admin charge fair, says Khaled

One per cent imposed on PTPTN recipients 'to balance out cost' accommodation and more."

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THE one per cent administration charge imposed by the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (NHEFC) on loan recipients is important to balance out the cost of the scheme to ensure everyone pays a fair amount, including the government.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the suggestion that the charge be removed, by Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, would come under the prime minister's purview.

"Anybody can send a proposal and it can only be decided by the government," he said after officiating at the Industry Centre of Excellence (ICoE) on wholesale and retail at the SEGi University College yesterday.

Mohamed Khaled said the idea had yet to be discussed in the Cabinet, and until then, he was reserving his opinion on it.

"However, I can state that if students still want their cost-of-living allowance as part of the loan, the administration fee will have to remain," he said.

"If this is not done, taxpayers as well as the government will end up paying more."

He said the one per cent administration charge was considered "the lowest".

"Although tuition for public universities is free in some countries like Finland, students there still have to borrow from financial institutions with interest rate charges or may work part-time to cover their cost of living," he said.

"In Malaysia, the government has subsidies for a public university student, including tuition fee of between 90 per cent and 95 per cent, comfortable

He said that if the government provided free education, taxpayers would be paying for it.

Last month, Youth Umno held a two-day meeting to discuss the suggestion to abolish the one per cent administration charge on PTPTN loans and came up with a 15-point resolution which will be handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

The Industry Centre of Excellence (ICoE) on wholesale and retail is a collaboration between Malaysian Retail Chain Association (MRCA) and Mydin Mohamed Holding and institutions of higher learning, such as Universiti Utara Malaysia, University Teknologi Mara and SEGi University College.

Last year's focus, involving Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Universiti Malaysia Perlis and University Malaysia Pahang, was on automotive and electrical engineering.

Mohamed Khaled said cooperation between universities and the wholesale and retail industries would help to realise achieve one of the Government Transformation Programmes to provide 595,000 jobs in the sector by 2020.

"Students could get the opportunity of being an apprentice, intern and part-time worker in the retail industry during semester breaks. It would also prepare them with knowledge, training and experience on industries relevant to their studies," he said.

He said the universities and the retail industry would also benefit through exchange of information and manpower pool.

Mohamed Khaled also encouraged students to work part-time during study breaks. "If any student prefers not to apply for PTPTN, he can get pocket money by working part-time,