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Abdullah concerned about varsity rankings

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PUTRAJAYA: Cheap should not mean low quality. The prime minister is concerned that this will become the state of Malaysia's public universities if nothing is done to arrest their decline.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the universities' poor rankings in the 2007 Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)-Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings was contradictory to the government's efforts to make Malaysia an education hub.

For the first time since the rankings were introduced in

2004, not a single local university has made it to the top 200.

"I am very concerned about the rankings. We once had universities in the top 100 and top 200 but now we are receding.

"Now there is no Malaysian university in the top 200.

"We promote Malaysia as an education hub but if this keeps happening, people will doubt the quality of our education.

"They will be less inclined to study here.

"You may say that education here is cheap, but cheaper cannot mean lower quality," Abdullah

said last night.

He was speaking during a question-and-answer session at the Cornell Club Dinner Talk Series, organised by The Oxford Cambridge Society, Malaysia.

Abdullah's speech dwelled on Malaysia's regional development corridors and he was asked how members of the club, which comprised alumni of Ivy-league universities in the United States and Britain, could help in the development of these projects and in building human capital.

Abdullah suggested that club members, many of whom were

corporate and industry leaders, consider becoming adjunct professors at local universities.

Doing so would give universities a reality check on the needs of the industry and the changing market situation, besides overcoming the shortage of teaching staff.

In the recent THES-QS rankings, Universiti Malaya dropped from 192 last year to 246 this year.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia dropped from 185 to 309; Universiti Sains Malaysia from 277 to 307 and Universiti Putra Malaysia from 292 to 364.