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Varsities improve on rankings

UM, UKM, UPM and UTM go up in Times global survey, but still can't get into top 200

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LONDON: Four out of five Malaysian universities have improved on their overall rankings despite not making it to the top 200 global league table this year.

While Universiti Malaya (UM) remained the highest-ranked local institution when it rose from 246 last year to 230, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) surged ahead from 309 to 250.

Both Universiti Putra Malaysia

(UPM) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia also performed better this year, with rankings of 320 (from 364) and 356 (from 415) respectively.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), however, dropped to 313 from 307 last year in the Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings 2008 (www.topuniversities.com) which was released here.

Britain and the United States continued to dominate the top 200 list, with Harvard University remaining in the number-one spot and Yale moving ahead of Cambridge for the

second position.

According to QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd founder and managing director Nunzio Quacquarelli, Malaysia should be proud of the improved performances of the four institutions.

He said their overall positions reflected their determination to "internationalise" their programmes and faculties which could help take them to another dimension.

Quacquarelli said the Malaysian universities would need to put in greater effort and sustained investments to gain more recognition in

their research work and citations, noting that the universities that were regularly ranked in the top 200 were very strong in research.

QS research head Ben Sowter said the Malaysian institutions' biggest shortfalls were their lack of publications in research journals and citation profiles in international academia.

"They should focus on being more productive in their research and publishing them in appropriate journals with the maximum impact," he said.

Sowter noted peer review scores for the Malaysian institutions in five

subject groupings had dropped despite their overall improvements.

He said USM scored the highest rankings of 123 in life sciences and biomedicine while UM emerged tops with 137 for social sciences.

In addition, UM also came out strongly in the other three disciplines: engineering & IT (179), arts and humanities (190) and natural sciences (197).

He said the scores showed that the reputation of Malaysian institutions among academics was stronger than the profiles of their research publications.