

Budget cuts will not affect varsities' ranking

PUTRAJAYA: Budget cuts will not prevent local public universities from carving a name for themselves in the international arena.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh said even though funding was needed, it should not be a factor in sustaining Malaysia's continuing improvement in international higher education rankings.

"However, I will discuss with the Prime Minister, who is also the

Finance Minister, to determine how to ensure that this budget cut does not become a hurdle to continued improvement of our universities' reputations," he told reporters at the ministry's Hari Raya open house yesterday.

There was a 19.2% reduction in public universities' operating expenditure from RM7.5bil in 2016 to RM6.12bil this year.

Despite the lower allocation, Idris said 2017 was the best year for the ministry with the rec-

ognition given to Malaysia's education sector.

He said the rankings of the institutions had improved as shown in the 2017 U21 Ranking of National Higher Education Systems.

"Universiti Malaya (UM) is also on the way to the Top 100 in the world (the QS World University Rankings)," he said, adding that five of the eight top universities in Asean were in Malaysia.

UM now ranks 114 compared to 133 in 2016, according to

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2018.

"I promise to give the *rakyat* one of the best higher education systems," said Idris.

He said he hoped for all five of Malaysia's research universities – UM, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia – to be in the Top 200 globally within three years, and for UM to be among the top 20 by 2050.