

# China uses tourism as strategy for development, says don

**KUCHING:** A single event in Guangzhou, the 2010 Asian Games, transformed the workings of the city and outsiders' perception of it.

Prof Dr Li Li, from the South China University of Technology, told a tourism forum at UCSI University here yesterday that in preparation for the Games, authorities had banked on how to make tourism work for locals in the long term.

For instance, Li said Guangzhou's local government built a brand new mass rapid transit system as part of the Games' infrastructure development.

He said the Chinese government used tourism as a strategy for development.

"Firstly, development means different things to different people. Development is also a choice.

"In tourism, one can either choose solely to meet tourists' standards or place more emphasis on tourism as a strategy for the development of local societies," said Li, who is a director with the university's Institute of Tourism Development Research.

Li said the Chinese government had for the most part successfully improved quality of life "through the encouragement of tourism", which involved "urban regeneration" when upgrading infrastructure. Guangzhou is the third-largest Chinese city, with a population of 12.78 million recorded in 2010.

"Urban regeneration through tourism is a highly political phenomenon," he added.

Like the other speakers at the UCSI University forum, Prof Li agreed that governments had to formulate the right policies.

"Things like tax incentives (to urge the private sector to innovate more) is improvement.

"It has to be strongly supported by the government. (Having good) Policies is like a chain effect, allowing everyone in the industry to work together with the government.

"Policy makers must first introduce a good idea, which can be easily adopted by the people," he said.

Li also said the Chinese government worked hard to sell Guangzhou as a liveable city, with the marketing of its public infrastructure spending in the international media, and as a business destination.

He said mega tourism events were less about direct revenue received but more about intangible benefits, including global media publicity generated.