

# Hospitality going green

UCSI, better known for education, setting up eco hotel to enhance presence

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**KUCHING:** The UCSI Group is expanding its operations in Sarawak with the launch of its new eco hotel on the banks of the Isthmus confluence.

As the second hotel under the UCSI brand, the establishment will enhance the group's presence in the state apart from its involvement in the higher education industry in the last 16 years.

Sitting on over 2.5 acres (about 1ha) of land, the 15-storey three-star hotel will be a Green Building Index (GBI) certified structure and scheduled for completion in two years at the cost of between RM120mil and RM150mil.

Tourism Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg represented Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud at the earth-breaking ceremony at Borneo Convention Centre Kuching here, Thursday night.

In Taib's speech, he commended UCSI Group for bringing the right development and skills to Sarawak,

particularly in the tourism and hospitality sector.

"It also displays the confidence that the brand has in Sarawak.

"Since 2009, Sarawak experienced almost 50% growth in hotel rooms and this has become a significant revenue to the state," he said.

He said the new hotel was timely with the rapid development in Sarawak and it would have a major impact on the state's economy.

As such, he added that more and more hotels would be needed as the state continued to develop and be promoted as a preferred destination to travellers worldwide by Sarawak Tourism Board and Tourism Malaysia.

Between January and September this year, Sarawak received 3.18 million visitors, which was an increase of 6% from the same period last year.

Taib said 61% of the arrivals comprised international visitors while the rest were domestic.

Meanwhile, UCSI University chancellor Tan Sri Dr Abdul Rahman Arshad said the hotel would also provide a training place for its hospitality and tourism management students, and other relevant courses.

"We hope to upgrade the hotel to become a five-star establishment in the years to come," he added.

The UCSI Hotel Kuching is designed by Wilson Chang Jih Ren, a highly-acclaimed architect in the city.

The hotel will be constructed using 90% Malaysian-made building materials and it is expected to contribute immensely to UCSI Group's hotel operations upon completion.

Among others, it will have 168 state-of-the-art rooms. The hotel's artistic external fins will minimise solar gain while its cavernous lobby will utilise river water to lower temperature by 2°C on any given day.

This would decrease the dependency on air-conditioning at the hotel, while an efficient rain water harvesting system would reduce the usage of treated water.



**Cool launch:** Johari at the earth-breaking ceremony at BCKK on Thursday night. Third from left is UCSI University chancellor Tan Sri Dr Abdul Rahman Arshad. — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE / The Star