

Graduation Ceremony of the Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
City University of Hong Kong
Keynote Speech by Ir Alfred Sit JP, Director of Electrical & Mechanical Services

“Make a Difference”

Professor Cheung, Professor Yuen, faculty members, graduates, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour and pleasure to speak here today on such a happy and dignified occasion. Thank you very much for your very kind invitation.

First of all, congratulations to all the graduates! As you turn a new page of life, the good news is that you are in the right industry – civil and construction engineering and building services are very much in demand. As some of you may know, the Government is planning to invest some 250 billion to 300 billion Hong Kong dollars in public infrastructure works alone annually in the next ten years, offering good opportunities for the right people. Graduation marks a new beginning in your life. I believe all of you will play a very important role in the future to build a better Hong Kong.

The architecture, engineering and construction industry has long been a pillar sector in Hong Kong; our infrastructure has been ranked first for eight consecutive years in the Global Competitiveness Report by the World Economic Forum. The latest examples are the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. It is not just the sheer size of the high-speed rail and the mega bridge that have drawn the world’s attention, but also their significance in further connecting Hong Kong with the Mainland, in particular the other ten cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, for deeper economic integration.

A small city with big mind, Hong Kong has always reached out far and wide to all corners of the world for over 100 years to build successful international trade and businesses, and in the process we have all become world citizens. Open your eyes and aim high. Whether you plan to become a professional, an academic, a civil servant, a businessman or a social worker, do not just focus on Hong Kong, instead take Hong

Kong as the base to capture all the opportunities on the horizon in any places around the world. If you keep your eye only on Hong Kong, you will lose sight of many precious opportunities coming your way.

Technology has made the impossible possible. Things that are impossible now can become possible in the future. If you remain in your own world, do not think out of the box, innovate or make progress, it is likely that your work will soon be eliminated. Just like typists, telephone operators and bank tellers, most of whom have been replaced by the wave of office automation and computerisation since 1980s, cashiers of supermarkets or fast food shops and bus/taxi drivers, too, will soon face the same challenges. To survive, we must acquire new skills and add values to ourselves. Never say impossible, just make it possible.

Technology may have eliminated certain types of work, but it has also given rise to a whole new range of jobs in IT, ICT and related services. The new wave of technology that threatens traditional jobs is artificial intelligence (AI) and big data development. It is not surprising that big companies are already using AI to directly handle online customer service enquiries without human agents. As millennials, you are all grown up with smart phones, tablets, the Internet and social media, so I have no doubt you are more than ready to embrace technology at work. You may probably be very familiar with the new technologies like Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) or Building Information Modelling (BIM), the adoption of which by the local construction industry is being actively facilitated by the Government. In fact, my department, EMSD, has also developed a BIM-Asset Management (BIM-AM) system, an enriched version of BIM, which applies BIM technology to enable more efficient repair and maintenance of E&M assets in buildings. Moreover, we are also exploring new collaboration opportunities in the Greater Bay Area to help our E&M sector capture I&T and other development opportunities there. None of these would have been possible had we confined ourselves to an overly narrow scope of work as a general government department or placed undue limits on our people's full potential. Apart from building an organisation culture that cares for people, the community and the environment, we have also built a team not afraid to change with the times, not afraid to take on challenges, not afraid to break through obstacles, not afraid to embrace fast-growing technology. This year marks the 70th anniversary of EMSD. Though we experienced difficulties with ups and downs in the past 70 years, we managed to weather most storms with commitment, faith, a strong team and also a bit of luck. I can foresee that

there are more challenges and opportunities to come in the future. What I want to say here is: “Young men and ladies, our door is open, come and see. I am sure you will find an exciting career here in EMSD!”

Technology is only a means to achieve a better society. We must not forget that regardless of the productivity and efficiency gains, it is always necessary to make sure the application of technology brings real benefits to people. This is a “test” that both MiC and BIM have passed, and I hope you will always bear this in mind in future. Demonstrating good leadership skills to help and engage with colleagues who are not well-versed in technology is important too. In this way, everyone in the organisation can move forward together as a cohesive team.

Finally, thanks again for having me here today to share this important moment with you. I hope you will find some of my experiences useful as you embark on a long and exciting life journey ahead. While a university degree helps open doors and improve the chances of employment, it does not guarantee success. You must work hard with passion and commitment and make the best of your life to be truly happy and successful. To all graduates, never underestimate your potential or consider something impossible; think big, and you can create a better world. Work hard, enjoy life and make a difference. Thank you and best wishes to you all!

3 December 2018