

**Occasional Address by the Honourable Chief Justice of Hong Kong Andrew Li at the Hong Kong Graduation Ceremony of the Faculties of Commerce and Economics and Law, The University of New South Wales**

---

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Deans, graduates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to be invited to speak on this happy occasion. And I am delighted to be here.

The University of New South Wales is acknowledged to be a distinguished Australian university. The University provides quality tertiary education to many Australian and overseas students, including those from Hong Kong. The provision of quality education to overseas students makes a great contribution as this enhances the diversity and richness of the education opportunities for many students in various parts of the world. And I am glad to see that many young people in Hong Kong are making good use of such valuable opportunities. This is very important. For education is the key to the future. To meet the exciting challenges in this fast changing world, creativity and innovation will be the keys to human progress and the betterment of mankind. And education will assume an even greater importance than before.

To all students graduating today, I wish to offer my warmest and heartiest congratulations. With your dedication and hard work, you have deservedly earned your degrees. I am sure all graduates will agree with me when I say that you owe a great debt of gratitude to your families and the teaching staff of the Faculties. It is a great debt of honour which I am sure you will never forget. Throughout the past years, they must have given you their unstinting support and wise guidance. Without them, I doubt if you will be here today. They must be very happy today and have every reason to be very proud of your achievements. To them, I also wish to extend my congratulations and best wishes.

It is now some three decades ago since I started my working life after graduation from university and the completion of professional training. In the late 1960s, the world was very different from what it is today.

Some 30 years ago:

- Hong Kong was very much a colony with an expatriate dominated Executive and Judiciary and an appointed Legislature.

- The ICAC, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, had not yet been established.
- There was no cross harbour tunnel and no Mass Transit Railway (MTR).
- Hong Kong was an economy based on manufacturing. And our currency was pegged to the Pound.

As to China:

- It was still affected by the cultural revolution.
- And it was closed to the outside world.

Major events to shake the world around that time included:

- The Cold War.
- The 6 day war in the Middle East.
- The Vietnam War.
- The first human heart transplant.
- The completion of Concorde, the world's first supersonic aeroplane.
- Man set foot on the moon for the first time (I use 'Man' advisedly since to my recollection, no female was on that flight).
- Stars like Elizabeth Taylor and Maggie Smith were Oscar winners.
- And the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were the fashion of the day.

The last 30 years has seen the most momentous changes in Hong Kong, China and the World. There have been sea changes in the geopolitical landscape. The Cold War is gone. The Soviet and the Eastern Bloc has disintegrated. European Union is developing. Asia has been and will continue to be an area of growth. A strong and modern China has emerged. And Hong Kong has become an international financial and commercial center and was re-unified with China in 1997 under the imaginative concept of one country two systems, exercising a high degree of autonomy. At the same time, we have seen massive and the most amazing advances in science, technology and medicine and in every field of human endeavour. And we have entered the age of the internet. Many things which seemed impossible in the past are possible nowadays.

At this meaningful ceremony, I cannot help but reflect that by the time the students graduating today reach my stage of life, we will be approaching the year 2035. What will the world be like then? What does the future hold?

As we face the future, we can only be certain of one thing. With increasing globalisation and the revolution in information technology, not only will there continue to be rapid changes but the pace of change is likely to accelerate in all fields of human activity.

Amongst these rapid and accelerating changes, I would venture to suggest to the students graduating today that it is important that the values and the goals we live by should remain constant and should endure. It is important that we hold steadfast to them.

- Abide always by the enduring values of honesty and integrity.
- Strive always for excellence. Make no compromises with mediocrity.
- Seize every opportunity for it may well not knock again.
- There will be ups and downs in life. Sometimes, the sun will shine on you. At other times, life will be stormy. Sometimes, the sailing will be plain. At other times, you will be going through rugged territory. But there is no turning back and progress you must. Tackle what life throws at you with courage and have faith in your ability to overcome adversity. 'For sweet are the uses of adversity' as Shakespeare pointed out.
- Remember that the things taught at university are not an education but only a means to an education. There are no limits and boundaries to learning and all of us need to learn for life, exposing ourselves all the time to new knowledge and skills. And we must also continue to learn from experience in the university of life.

Ships are safe anchored in the harbour. But this is not what ships are made for. The students graduating today are fortunate to have received an excellent university education. Graduating from this great university, you have concluded a stage in your life's journey and will be embarking on the next stage. You will find working life challenging, exciting and rewarding. I wish you good fortune and every success and happiness. Thank you.

10 June 2001