

**Speech by Mr Francis Bong, Chairman,
Working Group on Construction Cost and Performance Indicators
Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board
at the Seminar on Construction Research & Development
to be held at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on 20 March 2004**

Sir David, Professor Ko, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all this morning to take part in the Seminar on Construction Research and Development jointly organized by the Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board and the Inter-university Task Force with assistance rendered by the Construction Industry Institute – Hong Kong.

2. The construction industry is widely recognized as a main pillar of our local economy, employing some 280,000 people and contributing around 4.4% of GDP in 2002. Unlike other business activities, construction plays a major part not just in improving our living environment with glamorous buildings, but also in shaping our urban landscape with breathtaking architectures and in enhancing our long-term growth potential with efficient infrastructure facilities.

3. Almost every citizen in Hong Kong has gone through a difficult period of adjustment over the past few years when structural adjustments swept ruthlessly across many traditional trades to prepare for the dawn of a global marketplace and a knowledge-based era. Creativity and productivity have turned from buzzwords for success into necessities for survival.

4. In its deliberations on how best to contribute in elevating the overall competitiveness of Hong Kong as Asia's world city, the Construction Industry Review Committee has mapped out a reform agenda calling for increased investment on research, greater use of funding sources dedicated for such purpose, improved information sharing and communication, as well as a stronger spirit of partnering between industry stakeholders and the academia.

5. The Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board, established subsequently to spearhead implementation of these reform proposals, has set up a task force comprising clients, trade associations, professional bodies and research institutions under the working group chaired by me to take things forward along the recommended strategic direction. The focus will be placed upon both institutional support and specific initiatives.

6. This seminar marks a first attempt by the industry to seek collaboration with the academia. I would like to thank the panel of experts coming from five local universities who will elucidate on research outcomes capable of resolving some typical problems that we face. I am equally grateful to the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau for presenting their thoughts on possible means to unleash the knowledge and expertise possessed by tertiary institutions to assist us in achieving better quality and cost-effectiveness. This process is inherently interactive so your feedback as users is essential to transform any conceptual ideas into practical reality.

7. In order to capture the synergy and momentum generated by this event, we will organize demonstrations on selected research projects and follow-up visits to different tertiary institutions. Furthermore, separate attention is being given to the blueprint of a mechanism to co-ordinate research and development activities under the proposed Construction Industry Council. This is an important subject on which extensive consultation with key stakeholders is imperative before we arrive at any conclusive views.

8. I hope you would find this seminar a productive and rewarding experience. We look forward to your continued support and participation in future.

9. Thank you.