

**Dedication Ceremony
for Cheng Yu Tung Tower
at the University of Hong Kong
on 8 November 2012**

Speech by the Hon Andrew Li Kwok Nang, Honorary Professor of
the Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong and
Former Chief Justice

1. I am greatly honoured to be invited to participate in this most important Ceremony. It gives us the opportunity to express our deep gratitude to Dr Cheng Yu Tung and his family for their generosity. And it marks a milestone in the development of this great Law School, in having a new and its own dedicated building.

2. The rule of law with an independent Judiciary is a cornerstone of our society. It is of pivotal importance to our stability and prosperity. Indeed, it lies at the very heart of Hong Kong's separate system under "one country, two systems".

3. In a society governed by the rule of law, no one is above the law. Those who govern and those who are governed are equal before the law. Judges have the duty of adjudicating disputes between citizens and between citizen and Government fairly and impartially without fear or favour.

4. We live in a world of rapid change and Hong Kong is and will be undergoing challenging developments, including on the economic and political fronts. The phenomenal growth in the economy of Mainland China has provided and will continue to provide Hong Kong with many opportunities which must be seized. Further, we have to deal with challenges in the evolution of our political system in accordance with the Basic Law. But amid these changes, we must hold steadfast to the core value of the rule of law with an independent Judiciary. This core value must never be shaken and must always remain sacrosanct and immutable.

5. The continued vigour of the rule of law in our society depends on the vigilance of everyone. Above all, it depends on the dedication of successive generations of lawyers who are fully committed to safeguarding it.

6. Lawyers are what Law Schools make them. That is why the Law School at this University has played and will continue to play such a significant role in maintaining the rule of law in our community. It has built up a formidable reputation as our premier Law School. It is one of the best in Asia and ranks among the top law schools in the world. It is able to attract top students and excellent Faculty staff. Generation after generation, it has produced graduates who form the backbone of the Judiciary and all sectors in the legal profession and also graduates who are working in business, government and non-governmental organizations. Many occupy leadership positions. They are and have been dedicated to serving our community and in safeguarding the rule of law.

7. With its varied and rich programmes and its strong links with the Mainland and overseas, this Law School is committed to the pursuit of excellence on the basis of academic freedom. Students are taught the intellectual and professional skills required. They acquire the ability to think critically, to analyse for themselves and to communicate effectively. They have an understanding that the practice of law has ethical dimensions and that it is an honourable profession. Above all, they gain a deep appreciation of the values underlying our legal system, values based on the rule of law and respect for human dignity.

8. Professors here engage in research across a wide range of legal learning. They explore interesting and innovative ideas and make an enormous contribution to debate in the market place of ideas on legal issues. I must take this opportunity of congratulating all concerned for the Law School's fine achievements of which they should all be very proud.

9. The benefaction of the Cheng family in providing a new Building for the Law School represents a momentous contribution to this Law School and to legal education. With its wonderful accommodation and state of the art facilities, it provides an environment which is conducive to teaching, learning and research and to interaction and communication between all, both students and Professors, in this Law School. It is in this Building that future generations of lawyers will be nurtured to carry forward the torch of the rule of law in our community.

10. At this meaningful ceremony, I must pause to reflect that when the undergraduates of today reach my stage of life, we will be in the decade of 2050's, in the middle of the 21st century. In reality, the future of "one country two systems" will have to be discussed and settled within one country well before the end of the 50 years in 2047, probably around 2030.

11. Many graduates of this Law School, including today's undergraduates, will have risen to leadership positions at that time and will be playing a prominent role in that dialogue. As long as it is fully recognized that "one country" as well as "two systems" are essential and integral parts of the formula, I have every confidence and expectation that our beloved homeland, Hong Kong, as part of China, our Motherland, will continue to enjoy our own separate system with its core value of the rule of law with an independent Judiciary.

12. I wish to conclude by wishing all of you Good Health and Good Fortune.