



Governor Chris Patten, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Chief Secretary Anson Chan inaugurate Lantau Link, a major engineering coup for Hong Kong, in 1997.

FOR ENGINEERS, SERVICE IS REWARD ENOUGH

Many years ago, at the annual dinner of The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, our guest of honor joked that the name cards of many engineers, with long lists of post-nominal titles after the names, reminded him of the alphabet soup he had eaten as a child.

We hastened to explain to him that, unlike the legal profession, ours comprise a whole spectrum of engineering expertise, and as many of us work outside Hong Kong, our qualifications need to be recognized internationally.

Indeed, our engineering institution now spans 21 disciplines, growing from the traditional civil, electrical and mechanical to many modern variations, such as biomedical, control automation and instrumentation, energy, logistics and industrial, to offer specialist expertise to the ever-growing list of technologies.

When HKIE was recognized by the government in 1975, granting it the autonomous right to confer professional qualifications on engineers, it strove to obtain international recognition so that our engineers could work overseas.

We had to raise our bar to higher standards than that of British Commonwealth countries to obtain international recognition.

Our reputation grew continuously over the past four decades, helped by the opportunities to build new transport infrastructure such as highways, tunnels and railways and participation from expatriate engineers.

Our infrastructure is of a high standard that is comparable to most parts of the world, and our engineers were able to export our expertise to many places, such as the UK, Australia and the Middle East.

To preserve this hard-earned reputation, our engineers carry these initials behind their names as credentials to clients.

Probably unique among the many



Nuts and bolts

Edmund Leung

professionals in Hong Kong, we continue to accept appropriate foreign qualifications and enjoy technical support from overseas experts.

This inclusive attitude has helped us maintain our expertise to the best international standards.

During this festive time, allow me to share a story with you, with apologies to our friends from other professions.

A team of professionals was at a site meeting. During a tea break, they went strolling on the beach and kicked up the proverbial lantern. A genie rose and granted them three wishes.

The architect, being the leader of the team, was asked to state his wishes first.

He wondered why he was stuck with this crowd and asked to be sent to ski in the Alps. His wish was granted and he found himself enjoying Christmas in a Swiss chalet.

The surveyor had more practical ambitions and asked for a large apartment and a sports car. He found himself staying in a semi-detached house on the Peak with a red Ferrari in the garage.

The engineer, who was last in line, told the genie that all he wanted was to get back to the site meeting, finish his presentation and to be allowed to go home to rest.

He was granted that wish, and along with the others, quickly returned to the meeting to continue with their duties.

The moral of the story is that engineers are simple people, with little ambition but total dedication to completing their tasks.

What makes us happy is seeing projects completed and serving the community efficiently.

Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over Hong Kong's iconic infrastructure