

Speech by FS at Vocational Training Council graduation ceremony

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Vocational Training Council (VTC) graduation ceremony this afternoon (December 4):

Dr Chung (VTC Council Chairman, Dr Roy Chung), Dr Yau (Executive Director of the VTC, Dr Carrie Yau), honorary fellows, graduates, proud parents, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It gives me great honour to be here today for the annual graduation ceremony of the Vocational Training Council.

I must say the VTC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, led by Dr Henry Shek, gave us all great pleasure in their stirring performance to begin today's ceremony.

Let me now congratulate today's graduates. You have just completed a critical stage in your life. A milestone we are delighted to recognise, and honour, on this happy day.

Your graduation, as hard-won as it surely was, is however a beginning rather than an end. Certainly this marks the beginning of a career for many of you, but it is also a marker in what will be a life-long pursuit of learning, of broadening your knowledge, and of expanding your life experience.

I look out at you this afternoon and I see, among the 3,000 or so students gathered here, parents and family members. I also see many teachers and others who have, in any number of ways, helped make this day possible for our graduates. In short, graduation is surely a collective honour, and I applaud you all.

I applaud, as well, for the six outstanding and distinguished leaders of industries who will be receiving the 2018 VTC Honorary Fellowship today. We are grateful for your significant contributions to the community and the development of vocational training in Hong Kong. You are truly role models to our graduates.

The VTC has since 1982 provided education and training for more than 200,000 students each year, giving Hong Kong youth the professional skills and knowledge for meeting the changing needs of our economy and the industries and businesses that drive it.

Thanks to VTC's efforts, 21,000 young men and women are graduating on this good day. Some 18,000 of them were full-time students. And they come from seven of VTC's 13 member institutions.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate that, just a month ago, VTC officially opened its brand-new, state-of-the-art International Culinary Institute. Designed for some 2,000 students, the new Culinary Institute includes training kitchens and a training café, a wine forum, a hall of gastronomy, a sensory lab for food science education and much more.

As VTC marches on to nurture more of our youth, it has the Government's firm support. The current-term Government is fully committed to investing in education and manpower development. We believe this is essential to economic growth, social mobility and overall prosperity – for Hong Kong and for each and every one of you.

This Government has already introduced a variety of measures to boost education at every level. For the Vocational and Professional Education and Training sector, we are increasing recurrent funding to the VTC by HK\$100 million a year.

An additional sum of HK\$234 million will be provided to the VTC to expand its Pilot Subsidy Scheme for Students of Professional Part-time Programmes.

More than financial resources, of course, the VTC's success is predicated on its professionalism and its tireless commitment to education, to our youth and to Hong Kong. For that, and so much more, I am truly grateful.

My congratulations, once again, to our graduates. I wish you all every success in your career aspirations, in realising your goals, whatever they may be.

Now allow me to add a few words in Chinese.