

MND NEWS ALERT

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SPEECH BY 2M INDRANEE RAJAH AT THE PACIFIC ASSOCIATION QUANTITY SURVEYORS (PAQS) CONGRESS

SINGAPORE 2022

Good morning. It is a great pleasure to join all of you today at the 24th Pacific Association of Quantity Surveyors Congress.

Let me also extend a very warm welcome to the participants from abroad!

Quantity surveyors are an important segment of the Built Environment (BE) value chain and integral members of project teams. At the design stage you prepare the cost estimates and relevant documents; at the construction stage you manage the costs of construction projects with a view to ensuring they are completed within budget; and in the event of disputes, you are often the ones parties turn to as experts to quantify, assess and testify on the valuation of claims.

In other words, clients need you to keep projects on time, on target and get them out of trouble. So, you are very important people.

This year's congress theme "Disruption and Transformation in the Built Environment" is particularly apposite, as the sector emerges from a pandemic into a new global situation of heightened geopolitical tensions, inflation, supply chain disruptions and labour constraints, all of which inevitably affect construction costs.

These are challenging times. However, they are also exciting times, because we also have the opportunity to learn from the pandemic and do better for the future.

In Singapore, we have embarked on "Forward Singapore", a national exercise to review and refresh our social compact. It has several pillars of which the Build Pillar has the most relevance to your profession, as we endeavour to transform our living environment and

achieve and even more liveable and endearing home for all who stake their futures in Singapore.

Accelerating Industry Transformation

As we work to transform our city, the Built Environment sector must also transform in tandem in order to be more productive, resilient, and sustainable. To this end, we have launched the refreshed Built Environment Industry Transformation Map (ITM) last week. This integrates and builds on the progress made under the Construction ITM and our Facilities Management transformation plans across the building lifecycle. The refreshed Built Environment ITM sets out our focus areas for the medium-term. These are: Integrated Planning and Design, Advanced Manufacturing and Assembly, and Sustainable Urban Systems. Mr Kelvin Wong, Chief Executive Officer of the Building and Construction Authority, will share more details during the panel discussion later.

The Built Environment ITM is a collective effort driven by industry stakeholders, including our quantity surveyors. I would like to thank the Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers (SISV) for your active participation in co-creating this ITM with us. Your views and experience were invaluable in refining and updating the ITM. For example, SISV is a member of the Integrated Digital Delivery (IDD) Steering Committee and has helped to develop use cases and related standards to promote IDD implementation. These are key to integrating processes throughout a building project.

Quantity surveyors also play a key role from the sustainability viewpoint. Sustainability has long been associated with additional cost, but this is not always the case. While upfront costs may appear larger, quantity surveyors' work in cost estimation and modelling often reveal longer-term maintenance cost savings over a project's life cycle. SISV has also worked with BCA in developing the Built Environment skills framework, which articulates the job functions, skills, competencies, and progression pathways for Built Environment professionals. We look forward to continuing working with you to update these as part of our transformation efforts.

Overcoming Challenges Together

Even as the BE sector seeks to transform, we know it is not without challenges for local quantity surveyors. These include the issues of attracting and retaining young talent, and fair remuneration for quantity surveyors.

The Government has implemented measures to address these challenges. We have enhanced public sector tender evaluation processes to encourage competition on quality, not just price. In turn, this ought to help firms offer more competitive salaries. In January this year, SISV launched the Accredited Professional Quantity Surveyor scheme to better recognise professionals for their skills and expertise. Our public sector procurement process for construction and facilities management services will progressively recognise accredited individuals as qualified personnel in tender bids. I would therefore encourage members of the audience who work in Singapore to consider getting accredited.

At the same time, firms will also need to respond to the changed landscape. Talent is mobile. Having progressive HR practices makes a big difference in talent recruitment and retention. The pandemic has shown how we can work differently, and this is important to young professionals – thoughtful well-designed flexible work arrangements can be win-win for both firms and employees. The profession must also have a growth mindset and consider how it re-positions itself to add value and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Working Together to Reinvent the QS Profession

Today's event allows us to come together, brainstorm and explore such opportunities. Let me outline two areas for consideration.

Advisory Services – From Cost to Value

First, beyond offering cost management services, quantity surveyors can consider expanding their service offerings and redefining their roles to create value for their clients. Cost estimates that used to take experts months to do, can now be carried out in a matter of minutes with the aid of Building Information Modelling (BIM)-based digital tools. This means that a significant portion of routine tasks may soon be automated and there will be opportunities for quantity surveyors to broaden their roles to higher-value services. For instance, quantity surveyors' understanding of the boom-bust cycles of the Built Environment sector allows you to make valuable contributions to your clients' business planning and supply chain management. You can also play a larger role in clients' project management and procurement approaches.

Collaborative Contracting – From Dispute Management / Resolution to Dispute Prevention

Next, quantity surveyors can also play a key role in encouraging collaborative contracting. Collaborative contracting involves a redesign of the traditional contracting approach. It sets common goals across the entire project team with the aim of incentivising greater collaboration and building trust between contracting parties.

In Singapore, we are just starting on our journey towards more collaborative contracting practices. BCA is working closely with other government agencies and industry practitioners to study and pilot this in selected government projects for a start. We are also learning from international experiences and best practices, including the NEC, which is a series of contracts developed by the UK's Institution of Civil Engineers that have been implemented successfully in public sector projects across the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

As a bridge between developer and contractor, quantity surveyors are well-placed to advocate, champion and facilitate the mindset shift that underpins collaborative contracting. We are glad to have the support of a vibrant, international quantity surveyor community to champion these efforts. Some of our quantity surveyor consultants – like Turner & Townsend, WT Partnership, and Arcadis – are leveraging their overseas experience to provide advisory services on collaborative contracting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is much to be done, but also much to be gained for those who are willing to adapt and seize the day. I am confident that your profession will prevail and grow from strength to strength.

The organiser of today's event – SISV – has done a wonderful job in gathering a stellar group of



international experts here today. I hope we all take this opportunity to tap on each other's experiences and knowledge.

Thank you very much and I wish you a fulfilling Congress ahead.