

PAM PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FORUM 6.0

INTRODUCTION & OPENING REMARKS BY FORUM CONVENOR AR DAVID TEH

Welcome and thank you all for coming to this Professional Practice Forum.

This forum has been put together within a very short time frame. I therefore thank all speakers moderators and panelists who responded at such notice. I see people from Sarawak, Sabah, Johore and Penang and I thank them for making the special effort. In particular I wish to thank Ms Rita Soh President of Board of Architects Singapore who especially flew in to be with us today.

This Forum comes about through the coincidental timing of 2 events

The first was the passing of the Amendments to the Architects Act 1967 on 18 December 2014

The second was the Penang PAM Symposium called 'Future of the Profession' on 3 January 2015. The Penang event was organized by 2 Architect luminaries namely Datuk Seri Ar Lim Chong Keat and Ar Hijjas Kasturi.. And we have both of them here today so that we can continue the conversation we started in Penang.

It was at the Penang Symposium that the Amendments were discussed. I was there and I remember the shock, disbelief and anguish expressed. There was even talk that we Architects must protest in the streets!

This shock is surprising as we already have known about the proposed Amendments for some time now. The chronology of events regarding the Amendments is printed in the Forum handout. In PAM we already have the Liberalisation and Prof Development Committee under the chairmanship of IPP Ar Saifuddin working on this challenge. And yet Members were unbelieving about this opening of our profession. In fact many of our members only appeared to know of this when they received the notice of this Forum. I believe that most of us just refuse to face reality but the reality is with us now, whether we like it or not.

Already we have a big influx of foreign architects working here. The best jobs, the tallest towers and the biggest jobs are already taken by them. These are the star brand names. But we also have the non-entities operating here. We all know of one with a staff of about 200 persons, first posing as interior designers but now openly undertaking master planning and architecture. With the passing of the Amendments we can only expect more of them here legally and illegally and the challenge confronting Malaysian Architects will be even greater. I do not believe we are xenophobic. Our concern is the impacts the opening up of the professional practice of architecture will have on the national economy, the local building industry, the safety and health of the public and last but not least, Architects legally registered here.

However I believe this passing of the Amendments has given us the impetus to face this challenge with greater urgency. This Forum is therefore a response to a situation confronting the profession

With liberalisation and the opening up of our profession, what is our future? Hence the title of this forum, *Liberalisation and the Future of the Profession*

We are at a critical cross road. What do we do? How do we move forward?

The organizing committee has structured this forum to attempt to address this.

In Session 1 we have 2 speakers from LAM and MITI who will lay the framework of liberalization. What is it? And What does it means? What are Malaysia's commitments to the World Trade Organisation. The Singapore profession has been liberalised much earlier. We will hear about the Singapore experience from the President of the Board of Architects Singapore.

In Session 2 and 3 we have 3 viewpoints from 3 PAM Past Presidents, the first giving a global perspective and the second a local perspective, the Malaysian Architect's Delimma and the third, a dark and grim picture of what we can expect.

But this Forum is not about listening to speakers it is about other members giving their views and experiences . Hence we have two panel discussions. Our panelists are not the usual suspects although there are a couple of expected names. The majority of the panelists are drawn to represent the membership across all age groups, 30s to the 70s and of various practice backgrounds from small firms to large firms.

This forum is about you and your views and experiences. Thus we have opportunities for contributions from the floor. Moderators have been reminded to solicit contributions from the floor. They have also been reminded to be mindful of timing so we allow equal time and don't overspill.

Finally the forum is not about just talking, it is about collective action. Hence Session 4 at the end of the day is a session which is action oriented. A group has been following our deliberations and it will try to present a summary of the key issues. This group, the Committee on Resolutions will from the key issues try to formulate resolutions. The Chairman of the Committee on Resolutions will present the resolutions to you for consideration, discussion and agreement. We intend to have an action plan with a time frame.

This forum is about taking action. Please therefore do not leave after lunch or after the last tea break because the decisions of what we do and how we go forward will be made then. You need to stay back to decide on your own future. Do not leave your future to others.

Globalisation and liberalisation are often presented by the Western elite to be the road to economic prosperity for the world. However the same 2 terms are seen by others to be the road to richness for a few and to poverty for the many.....for Asia, is it a new form of colonialism?

I wish to end with 2 quotes or thoughts.

The first is from Charles Darwin:

“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.”

The second quote is from the late Dato' Kington Loo. I don't have his exact words but the the essence is that if the architectural profession is united and strong, then the individual architect will be able practise his architecture and earn a decent living.