

Honorary Fellow

Mr Chan Tai-ho

Citation written and delivered by Professor Matthew Lee Kwok-on

Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Chairman of the Council and President:

Mr Chan Tai-ho, Honorary Member of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce, was born to a businessman's family in Puning City of Guangdong Province, China. His father, a well-known wholesaler of building materials, attracted business across the eastern part of the province. Little Tai-ho started to help in his father's shop when he was a first-year secondary school student, and at 18 was able to manage the business for his father.

Mr Chan Tai-ho moved to Hong Kong in 1962. He co-founded a toy factory in 1964 and in 1966 started his own Playmates Company, making and dealing in toys. His strengths lay in his firm grasp of market trends plus credibility and strict quality control. His toys were of high quality and always delivered on time, establishing his reputation for reliability and ensuring a great many new orders. The 1970s saw Playmates Toy Group in a good position to expand its operations. Mr Chan made a crucial decision – to launch his own brands and explore new sales channels. So Playmates entered various international toy shows and set up distribution networks in Massachusetts, US, to deal with foreign customers directly. Then, in the 1980s, Playmates set up warehouses in California to handle its distribution into Canada. At that time, the Playmates dolls sold fast on international markets, positioning the group as a proud leader in Hong Kong's toy industry. That was Playmates in its first phase of development.

By 1984, Playmates Toy Group had grown into a large enterprise. On the 12th November, it became the first of its kind to achieve public listing on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. It began to promote its toy series via TV ads, targeting markets worldwide, especially in the US. "Ninja Turtles" were the most successful of all Playmates toys. In the 1990s, in mainland China alone, the group's production line workers totalled tens of thousands and its toys

captivated the world's market for four years. They posted the highest sales on the US toy market, holding a share of between five and six percent of the US toy market and exceeding that of the largest toymaker in the US. The October 1991 issue of Forbes Magazine in the US named Playmates as the world's highest-earning toy manufacturer in 1990. That was indeed a miracle for Hong Kong's toy industry. Capitalising on its increasing strength, Playmates had its real estate wing listed separately, thus becoming a group with two listed companies under its umbrella.

Mr Chan Tai-ho believes in a company fulfilling its civic responsibilities. In a spirit of "From the community, to the community", he has been donating generously to charitable causes, in such fields as education, medical care, help to the needy and public works such as road building and bridge construction. Over the years, Mr Chan Tai-ho's donations to schools in mainland China alone have totalled tens of millions of Hong Kong dollars. Modest and unassuming, Mr Chan has kept quiet about his charitable deeds. He started giving generously to CityU as early as 2002. Now the Multi-purpose Hall of the Sports Complex on CityU campus is named after him, to mark his support and contributions to the University.

Mr Chan Tai-ho has also been doing his best to help the community in Hong Kong and in mainland China. Earlier, he took up posts as an Economic Advisor to Shantou Special Economic Zone of Guangdong Province, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Chiu Chow Plastic Manufacturers Association and the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce. Since the 1990s, he had been a member of the CPPCC Standing Committee of Jieyang, Guangdong Province, Deputy President of Hong Kong Puning Clansmen's Association and he is Honorary President of the Federation of HK Guangdong Community Organisations. In these capacities, Mr Chan Tai-ho has contributed greatly to the growth of Hong Kong and mainland China. For his contributions, he has received the title of Honorary Citizen from Shantou and Jieyang in Guangdong Province. He has also received an award from Puning City Government, Guangdong.

In recognition of Mr Chan Tai-ho's achievements as an industrialist, and his contributions to the community and to CityU, Mr Pro-Chancellor, Mr Deputy

Chairman of the Council and Mr President, I have the great honour, on behalf of the University, to call upon you to confer on him the award of the title of Honorary Fellow.