



AIT
Asian Institute of Technology

Graduation Address
AIT President Professor Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai
129th Graduation Ceremony
The Robert B Banks Auditorium
18th May 2018

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to AIT's 129th Graduation Ceremony.

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the graduands. It is a very proud moment for all of you on the recognition of your accomplishments, hard work and efforts. Today also presents to you, a good occasion to pay tribute and respect to all your professors who have mentored you throughout the course of your studies at AIT, and to your family and loved ones, for their strong support. Many of them are here with you, and many more are watching today's proceedings live at home. It is indeed a proud moment as well for them.

Dear Graduands. Six years ago, the AIT campus was 2 meters under water for about 2 months by the great 2011 floods of Thailand. Last month on the 27 of April, AIT was blessed with auspicious Royal Patronage when Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn formally inaugurated the modernized AIT library and other landmarks. As they say, every crisis comes with golden opportunity, and this calamity has provided AIT with an opportunity to reset itself for a new life. We are proud that as graduands, you have been witnesses and a part of AIT's renaissance.

During the past couple of years when AIT appeared to have recovered from its worst crisis, as AIT President, I have spared a great part of my free time reading and researching, for possible disruptions to our higher educational sector. It is a pleasure to share my conclusion with you. In order to remain useful and survive, all universities, AIT included, must start to prepare themselves for a new world, a world that we have never seen before in the past history of mankind, a world where the rapidity of technological changes is referred as "technological singularity". This is a popular term used by the world's famous futurist, Dr. Ray Kurzweil. These innovative disruptions will trigger intense periods of social, cultural, and economic changes, never encountered in the history of mankind, and potentially posing threat to our present educational system.

Because of the constant integration of disruptive technologies into everyday life, I believe all humans on earth need to engage "lifelong learning" beyond their traditional school days. Thus, I start to rethink if AIT should expand its student-population from the conventional younger-age segment, to population of all ages, allowing people on the jobs to learn continuously over their entire lifespans. Along with my thought, Singapore's oldest university - the National University of Singapore (NUS) has recently

announced that it is redesigning classes to serve its alumni to learn for life, by making its student enrolment valid for 20 years.

My advice for you, my dear graduands, is to recognize and brace yourself for the many more disruptive breakthroughs. Innovative disruption is not new. In the history of mankind, innovative disruptions from “agriculture revolution” to “industrial revolution” to “digital revolution” used to be a gradual process, so their impacts were not felt within a single generation of mankind. The only difference now from the past is that the disruption today is abrupt and exponential, both in time and magnitude, thus carrying much greater impacts to the human lifestyle. The impact of changes will be harder and harder for us human beings to adapt to. Under this situation, I would like to take the liberty to modify the famous phrase of Charles Darwin from "Survival of the Fittest" to “Survival of the Best Adaptable”.

Dear Graduands. Life is a journey, and all accomplishments you have achieved during your precious period at AIT should be taken as a starting point for further achievements. Graduation is not an end in itself; it is a part of the larger journey of your life. You have already spent an important junction of your journey at our campus, wherein students from a multitude of countries, study, live and bond together. By learning about each other’s culture on a day-to-day basis, you should now manage to appreciate cultural diversity and international perspectives, aside from holding to your own disciplinary expertise. You will soon join a prideful network of over 23,000 AIT alumni now working in over 100 countries, with many success stories in both the public and private sectors around the world. When you actually leave AIT, you will always treasure the fond memories of your quality time at AIT, especially of your hard work, and your associations with your professors and fellow students. One day, you will also find that giving back to AIT not only is great but makes you feel great. It helps this great institution continue to serve the future generations of world-class citizens.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish you an excellent career ahead.

Thank you and congratulations once again!