



City Square Mall (above) has a playground with a merry-go-round that caters to children who use wheelchairs. The mall won the BCA-MSF Universal Design Mark for Family-Friendly Business. Kampung Admiralty, developed by the Housing Board, was one of four projects this year to clinch the top Platinum award at the Building and Construction Authority's Universal Design Mark Awards. PHOTOS: ST FILE, LIANHE ZAOBAO FILE.



# Small firms to get a shot at working on bigger projects

Collective bidding system among moves in the pipeline to transform construction sector

Derek Wong

Smaller consultancy firms in the construction sector may soon find it easier to bid for larger projects.

A collaborative bidding system is set to be introduced by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) in the fourth quarter of the year, a move that was among a slew of announcements made by Minister for Social and Family Development

(MSF) and Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee, yesterday.

Collaborative bidding allows firms to pool their resources and bid for larger projects that would not have been possible if they were bidding as a single firm.

Mr Chua Tong Seng, managing director of Kiso-Jiban Singapore, a geotechnical engineering consultancy, sees the move as "very positive news".

His firm, which deals with soil-related work such as land reclamation and tunnelling, will be able to jointly bid for "billion-dollar" projects with the change.

"It allows all players to be in the game now," said Mr Chua.

At the BCA Awards ceremony at Resorts World Sentosa yesterday, Mr Lee also said the Government would accept the recommendations of a taskforce on how to develop a more skilled workforce.

He also gave details of a transformation office called BuildSG.

These are all part of efforts to implement a transformation map for the construction industry, which

540

A record number of awards were given out by BCA this year, including for the first time, the Built Environment Leadership Platinum Star Award.

has a focus on using smarter technology to improve productivity.

"We are under no illusion that transformation will be easy," Mr Lee told about 2,000 people from

the industry. A one-stop office called BuildSG will help firms through the journey, he said.

Working closely with trade associations and chambers, BuildSG will focus on equipping the workforce and helping firms venture overseas.

"It will help bring firms together to hunt as a pack so that we can better compete overseas," said Mr Lee.

An example of internationalisation, said Mr Lee, is the Amaravati project in India, where a Singapore consortium consisting of Ascendas-Singbridge and Sembcorp was awarded a start-up area to develop.

He also announced the recommendations of the Built Environment SkillsFuture Tripartite (Best) Taskforce, set up last August to study how to train a skilled workforce for the industry. Among its suggestions was to have structured internships for students, with industry mentorship and engagement to inspire them to take up careers in built environment.

The internships, said Mr Lee, allow firms to judge the potential fit of students if they are employed.

Students from various backgrounds, such as architecture and

engineering, may also work together more on inter-disciplinary projects to reflect practices in the working world.

A record 540 awards were given out by BCA this year, including, for the first time, the Built Environment Leadership Platinum Star Award.

The award, won by City Developments (CDL) and the Housing Board (HDB), recognises an organisation's commitment in areas such as safety, quality, sustainability and productivity.

CDL's City Square Mall is the first mall to be given the Platinum Award for the inaugural BCA-MSF Universal Design Mark for Family-Friendly Business, which recognises projects that are family-friendly in their design and services.

"The built environment sector plays a vital role in improving the quality of life for Singaporeans and future generations to come," said BCA chairman Lee Fook Sun. "Ensuring a future-ready built environment requires a joint effort by both the Government and the industry."

wderek@sph.com.sg