

INNOVATION

A DREAM COMES TRUE: GTIIT IS BORN

A promise is kept as the Li Ka Shing Foundation brings Chinese and Israeli students together to build a bright future through innovation and research.



A promise was made in 2013 and, four years later, the dream came true.

Over 200 students from China were admitted to the Guangdong Technion Israel Institute of Technology (GTIIT) in 2017 and will form the vanguard for what will become, “a major research institute that will help not only China and Israel, but also mankind in general,” according to Technion President Peretz Lavie.

President Lavie spoke those words at the school’s groundbreaking ceremony in December 2015 as building was beginning on the new campus adjacent to Shantou University, in Guangdong, in the People’s Republic of China. The promise was made two years before that, in 2013,

with a major project bringing together academia, government and the Li Ka Shing Foundation (LKSF).

A DREAM IS BORN

The Guangdong provincial government and Shantou municipal government committed RMB780 million and 383,700 square metres of land for the new campus to rise. The LKSF pledged over USD130 million in 2013, the largest ever single donation to Technion and one of the largest in Israeli education.

In the beginning, Mr Li saw the investment as not just something nice to do, but as a solemn duty, stating, “Our responsibility is to invest in reforms in education that unlock that genius and enable the continuing realisation of human potential, building

a knowledge-rich society and securing a sustainable quality of life for all. Failing to do so amounts to a crime against the future.”

This was in the early days of a fast-developing relationship between the Chinese and Israeli institutions, with the LKSF acting as a catalyst to bring them together. A range of Israeli luminaries have supported the connection and looked forward to this opening. At the 2015 groundbreaking ceremony, luminaries included the late Israeli President, Shimon Peres, Nobel Laureate Aaron Ciechanover (Chemistry, 2004), and the Mayor of Haifa, Yona Yahav.

Professor Ciechanover was born in Haifa and now has a sister; a sister city, that is. That same ceremony saw Shantou and

13 buildings

29 classrooms

14 teaching laboratories

55 research laboratories



An impressive new campus beckons the innovators of tomorrow.

Shantou University, Technion Israel Institute of Technology and the Li Ka Shing Foundation pull together for a brighter future.

LKSF will commit another RMB10 million to develop new programmes and ensure GTIIT becomes a hub of innovation in Guangdong.

Haifa, the Israeli city home to Technion, joined as sister cities. "This week, Shantou became Haifa's fourth twin city," says Mayor Yahav. Professor Ciechanover's interest did not flag and he is now the Vice-Chancellor of the new GTIIT.

That campus is impressive, boasting, at its launch, 13 buildings, 29 classrooms, 14 teaching laboratories and 55 research laboratories. Later, an adjacent industrial park will connect research to development and commercial applications.

BEHOLD!

From promise to groundbreaking to completion, the new GTIIT may look to the future, but celebrates the past. The launch ceremony in December 2017 celebrated the ancient Chinese and Jewish cultures,



with Chaozhou drums and lion dances combined with the Jewish hymn, "Hine Ma Tov" whose title means "Behold how good!"

The whole opening verse is from Psalm 133 of the Jewish scriptures and translates as "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity was certainly on the minds of the backers of this important project.

Unity means that this will not just be a bilateral effort, but a truly global enterprise. The on-campus language of instruction will be English, and professors, researchers and students will come from all over the world. Technion President Professor Lavie plants his flag for global unity, stating, "We believe in globalisation. We believe that



Mr Li Ka-shing tries out a shofar (an ancient musical instrument made from a ram's horn) presented by Professor Peretz Lavie, President of Technion, as a souvenir.



“There is no limit to the quest for knowledge.”

Richard Li
Director, Li Ka Shing Foundation



Mr Li Ka-shing and Mr Richard Li, Director of LKSF (left), walk the new campus with supporter Mr Zhu Xiaodan, former Governor of Guangdong (centre left) and Mr Li Jiange, the first GTIIT Chancellor (right).

cross-cultural dialogues are essential. Opening up Technion and Shantou to these cultural dialogues is very important.”

At its core, however, will be the two nations and campuses. “When you combine the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of Israel with the unbelievable scale of China, you have a great partnership,” he explains.

A BEGINNING WITH “NO LIMIT”

Indeed, expansion plans are already in place and there is more to come from this partnership. At the recent on-campus inauguration ceremony, it was announced that the LKSF will commit another RMB10 million to develop new programmes and ensure that GTIIT becomes a hub of innovation in Guangdong.

Students will study across a range of engineering, life science and basic science disciplines. The GTIIT Chancellor, Professor Li Jiange, knows that while serving humanity, they must serve the students as well, ensuring that they can succeed and contribute to society.

He explains, “The global environment

is changing rapidly and every nation is competing for talents who can meet these challenges. The mission of GTIIT is to nurture creative explorers and innovators with the capacity to tackle future challenges with theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills.”

One beneficiary of that view of preparing the next generation for the future is Richard Li, son of Mr Li Ka-shing. He is a director of LKSF and appreciates that vision. “My own father has always reminded me that there is no limit to the quest for knowledge, and his unwavering support of higher education and research to better mankind is a testament to this belief.”

LKSF Chairman Mr Li Ka-shing acknowledges achieving progress does not come without sustained effort in an ever-changing world, but when the fruits of that effort arrive as new technology, they can seem miraculous. “In this new world of fluid boundaries, the fast changing, fascinating, and transforming power of technology sometimes does seem to wave like a magic wand, bringing new models and opportunities to many frontiers and

generating new solutions to entrenched problems at a pace that is often hard to keep up with.”

Vice-Chancellor Ciechanover echoed the dedication needed to move forward, saying, “It is important to remember that we [Israelis] also have something to learn from the Chinese – planning and carrying out large-scale projects, adhering to timetables and boundless industriousness.”

The school will equip students to tackle those entrenched problems. In the beginning, it will have a College of Engineering, a College of Science, and a College of Life Science. Areas of study will eventually include chemical engineering, materials engineering, environmental engineering, mechanical engineering, chemistry, mathematics, physics, biotechnology and food engineering, biology, and biochemical engineering. The first students, who started their studies in 2017, will graduate in 2021 with a degree from Technion.

They will need to work hard – and be creative. Mr Li Ka-shing is clear that creativity is key to the future of students and humanity.

“In this day and age, no one has an iota of doubt that technological innovation underpins a country’s ability to create collective wealth, and that it is the key impetus to individual success. Creativity is the defining centrepiece of our time – powering us into the future. Establishing a creative paradigm is not easy to set right, only through education and the rule of law can we build a free and fair, fun and fruitful future for all,” says Mr Li.

Behold – the future! □

