

Speech by Mr. Li Ka-shing

Signing of MOU to Establish the
Technion-Guangdong Institute of Technology at Shantou University
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If I Had a Magic Wand

Minister Peri, Governor Zhu, President Lavie, Provost Gu, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently my seven-year-old grandson asked what spell I would cast if I had a real magic wand. He knew exactly what his spell would be: he would turn himself into the commander of dragons — like a true Dragon Lord!

My own ambitions are definitely more modest, a reflection of Tagore's wise observation that:

“Age considers. Youth ventures.”

Yet, for all the consideration that comes with experience, a great blessing in my life has been to witness first-hand and on many occasions the transformation of what once was thought impossible into everyday reality. Imagining the impossible is the necessary and game-changing condition precedent to shaping and making “solution revolutions” into reality.

In this new world of fluid boundaries, the fast changing, fascinating, and transforming power of technology sometime 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.

But we all know the magic wand is only as powerful as the wizard who uses it. The magic comes from the genius within, not from some "Deus Ex Machina". 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.

One of my mentors and a very dear Jewish friend once shared with me the meaning of the Hebrew words “Tzedakah” and “tikun olam”. These beautiful words encompass both the idea of commitment to charity and the idea of commitment to making the world a better place.

So if I could wave a magic wand, this would be my considered wish:

I would wave it to enable change-makers to maximise their effectiveness; I would bring them together in great institutes like Technion and new Technion Campus soon be built in Shantou with the support of the Guangdong government and in particular Governor Zhu. I would watch with satisfaction as the grace of education unlocked the confluence of their genius and potential... enabling the finest young minds from Israel and China to create a continuing series of “solutions revolutions” addressing the biggest challenges facing mankind in the 21st Century.

Ladies and gentlemen, science has yet to explain the seemingly magic twists of fate we call serendipity. But we are surely experiencing one here today. Who would have known on the same day that kickstarted the collaboration with Technion, our Foundation made an investment in Waze, which was our first participation in the Israel Venture scene.

Waze's mission of “out smarting traffic together” is itself a fine example of how united in effort and leveraging the combined power of disruptive technologies, we will be able to pursue breakthroughs and achieve developments that will create the most profound improvements in people’s lives everywhere. I am proud to play my part in bringing this vision to reality. Thank you.