

A Heart Warming Visit to NCKU from Yitzhak Apeloig, President of Technion, Israel Institute of Technology

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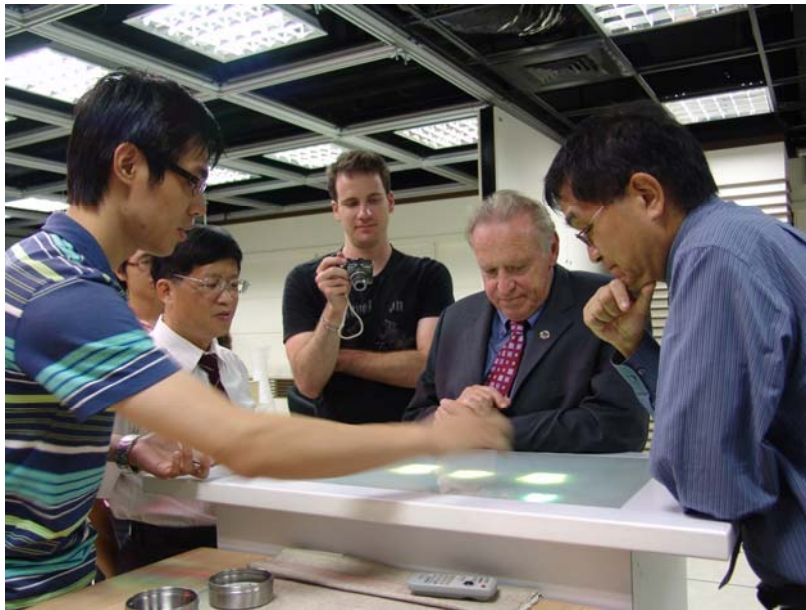
On September 12 and 13, 2008, the President and his wife, Dr. Yitzhak Apeloig and Mrs. Apeloig (Tzippi,) of one of Israel's most renowned universities, visited NCKU. The host of the Apeloigs was Academician Michael Lai, President of NCKU. It is interesting that both presidents are outstanding scientists, Apeloig being a world renowned organic chemist and Lai a world renowned virologist.

This visit by undoubtedly the highest ranking official from any Israeli university is of historical importance and came at the perfect time because in the past several years, there is rapidly growing and strong interactions between NCKU and its Israeli counterparts at the faculty level. The personal relations and visibility created by this visit will unquestionably quicken and deepen these interactions.

The entire logistics, which was enormously complicated by the oncoming Typhoon Sinlaku (辛樂克,) of the visit was meticulously handled by NCKU's Office of International Affairs. It was extremely well organized from the moment the Apeloigs left their Taipei hotel (where they visited Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University,) until they were safely on a plane to Hong Kong. Also, all the relevant Deans, Engineering, Medicine and Science lend their strong support. So did the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Office of the Vice President for Research and Development.

Immediately after their arrival, the Apeloigs had a very brief tour of the historical sites of Tainan. This gave our guests a sense of the importance of the region.

While on campus, President Apeloig had a tour of TOUCH (Technologies of Ubiquitous Computing and Humanity <http://touch.ncku.edu.tw/touch/?q=node/19>) Laboratory.



This laboratory, directed by Professor Kevin Yang of the Department of Electrical Engineering (the gentleman in the white shirt in the picture,) aims to create future living systems with computing, networking, voice activation of household equipments and home health monitoring. What was especially nice were that all the demonstrations and explanations were done by students.

President Apeloig also had an extensive discussion with the Dean of the School of Medicine, Associate Deans of the College of Engineering and Science, respectively. In the Technion, these are clearly the strongest areas. In fact, two of Israel's only science Nobel laureates are associated with its School of Medicine. I learned from this discussion that our Biomedical Engineering and Technion's are already establishing strong collaborations. President Apeloig was most pleased to learn about that.

Following the round table discussion, a tour was arranged by the Dean of

the College of Medicine to tour his College. This was followed by a visit to the recently established Ministry of Health's Oncological Clinical Research Center which was transplanted from Taipei. During the visit to the Center, President Lai, who had to spend most of the day in Taipei on Ministry of Education business, came to greet President Apeloig.

Finally, to ensure President Apeloig has an overview of the university, both geographically, historically and intellectually, a brief tour of NCKU's newly established University Museum was conducted, where he was able to gain some detailed understanding of the history of the university and where it could be going in the 21st century. Quite by accident, at the Museum, President Apeloig met Professor Shmuel Gurvitz of the Weizmann Institute Particle Physics Department, who is visiting NCKU for a month.

It was also exciting for President and Mrs. Apeloig that for most of the day, NCKU's "sole" Israeli student (the tall fellow holding a camera in the photo,) an International MBA student, accompanied them. We hope this "soleness" can change in the future as NCKU interacts more and more with Israeli universities.

The grand finale of the visit was of course a sumptuous dinner of more than 10 courses at one of Tainan's best restaurants, where many of the university leadership participated. I think it is not difficult for the readers of this report to "hear" the wine glasses clinking and a great deal of "Mazel Tov" and "Gan Bei!"

Discussions during dinner range from Chinese culture to Jewish history to ascertaining what specific areas the two universities can establish sustainable collaborates.

Another important discussion we had at dinner was on "University Governance." This was sparked by the interest in Taiwan about the possibility of university "autonomy" (法人化.) From our discussion, it was obvious that institutions such as Technion have been practicing "autonomy" well before the establishment of the State of Israel. The lessons learned from Technion can be very helpful for Taiwan's

academicians in understanding and perhaps crafting this issue of fundamental importance. President Apeloig promised us to send us the “Constitution” of Technion as an example of autonomy.

Developing strong interactions with Israeli universities is high priority for NCKU’s globalization roadmap. Currently, there are six outstanding research universities in Israel. Besides the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, there is also Hebrew University of Jerusalem, University of Tel Aviv, University of Haifa, Bar-Ilan University and Ben Gurion University. In addition, there is a high powered research institute (without undergraduates,) the Weizmann Institute and an Open University. It is probably not an accident that Israel, Singapore and Hong Kong all have approximately 1 full scale research university per 1 million population! This may be the optimum “university density per capita.”

In the last several years, National Cheng Kung University has developed a strong and sustainable interactions with some of Israeli’s best institutions: Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, Bar-Ilan University, Ben Gurion University, Weizmann Institute and University of Tel Aviv. Short and long term visitors from these institutions included:

1. Aaron Ciechanover, 2004 Nobel laureate of chemistry, Distinguished Research Professor of Biochemistry in the Rappaport Faculty of Medicine and Research Institute of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, who is current Visiting Distinguished Chair Professor in the Institute of Innovations and Advanced Studies as well as 2008 Honorary Doctorate recipient of NCKU;
2. Shmuel Gurvitz, Professor of the Department of Particle Physics, Weizmann Institute (visiting the Southern National Theoretical Science Center located on campus in NCKU);
3. Yosef Steinberger, Professor of Terrestrial Ecology – Soil Ecology, The Mina & Everard Goodman Faculty of Life Sciences, Bar-Ilan University. Steinberger is the guest of the College of Bioscience and Biotechnology.
4. There are also visitors from the Department of Biomedical

Engineering of the Technion (as well as NCKU faculty visiting the Technion.)

In the Spring Semester of 2009, there will be three long term visitors. They will be associated with the (Southern) National Theoretical Science Center which is on campus in NCKU. They are

1. Amnon Aharony, Professor of Physics, Ben Gurion University (Formerly of University of Tel Aviv.)
2. Ora Entin-Wohlman, Professor of Physics, Ben Gurion University (Formerly of University of Tel Aviv.)
3. Ady Mann, Professor of Physics, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology

Again, there could easily be others in a university as large as NCKU.

It was agreed by both Presidents at dinner that during the period of middle to late March of 2009, President Lai will lead an appropriate delegation to visit the Technion. Between now and when the trip actually takes place, the two universities intend to deepen and broaden its already strong interactions so that the visit will be a culmination of already results with potential additional collaborations.

Mazel tov indeed!.