



Actionable change inspired by an unchanging promise propels Mr Li forward.

## UNCHANGING PROMISE

## ONWARDS AND UPWARDS!

# SHANTOU FOREVER

Education is as much a matter of character and commitment as facts and figures. For Li Ka-shing, that commitment has meant almost four decades of building an institution that will nurture youth for years to come.

### NEVER FORGET WHERE YOU ARE FROM.

Mr Li Ka-shing clearly remembers. As a boy, he left his native Chao'an County (now part of the Chaoshan region, including Chaozhou and Shantou) at a time of war. Made a young man too early, he suffered from tuberculosis and saw the same disease take his father. When others were burning

old textbooks for fuel, he saved them from the fire to feed his hunger for knowledge, educating himself at a time when formal education was an impossibility.

From the earliest days of his success, he started giving back. The breadth and depth of his philanthropy are wide and deep, but education and medicine have always claimed a special place in his heart – as has his native Chaoshan.

As soon as he had risen beyond the one-room plastics factory at the founding of Cheung Kong Plastics, he started to give back. As early as 1981, Mr Li pledged a donation of HK\$300 million to establish Shantou University on a piece of deserted land. Total donations have exceeded HK\$10 billion to date. In addition, the Foundation is a long-time supporter of advanced medical education and research at a number of top institutions such as the University of Oxford, Stanford University and the University of Michigan, while strengthening their collaboration with the Shantou University Medical College. More recently, Mr Li also supported the creation of the Guangdong Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, a joint venture between Technion and Shantou University.

Mr Li delivered this year's graduation speech on 29 June, his last as the Honorary Chairman of Shantou University. He has not missed this event since 2001.

While the funding is of vital importance, Mr Li's vision and commitment, made real by labour, are crucial. The vital element of active engagement presents an example that has not been lost on the next generation. Mr Richard Li, a university Council member and Mr Li's son, stressed that what he was "most impressed by is how he [his father] devoted so much time and effort into helping society - even more than just donating the money".

Both father and son are firm in their commitment to supporting education at Shantou University across China and around the world. Mr Li senior called it a blessing and an honour to support education in his home country.

The Foundation's work will continue, with its current practice providing guidance for the future. An annual disbursement of 35% of cash income has been standard operating procedure, rising to 50% in tough years where either a natural disaster strikes or needs spike for other reasons. The Foundation has made grants of over HK\$20 billion to date.

**CHARACTER, CULTIVATED, TRANSCENDS ADVERSITY**

Mr Li's speech to the graduating class of Shantou University stressed character over achievement. He urged students to "fight through the labyrinth of destiny" by displaying humility and by listening to their conscience to "build hope and shape a new world".



Like father, like son: Richard Li and LKSF colleagues keep the flame alive.

**"Vision and commitment, made real by labour, are crucial."**

While not made explicit, his own story lends strength to his words and this fact is not lost on the students. Many attend on full and partial scholarships and bursaries, making education a means to elevate the fortunes of themselves and their families from humble beginnings.

This appreciation is made palpable when he arrives on campus. While he has brought Nobel Prize winners and national sports champions to campus for previous graduation ceremonies, he is still the star of their hearts. A rock star in fact.

A leading Hong Kong newspaper said Mr Li was received "to a deafening welcome and a sea of phones ..." with many students taking photographs.

During his commencement speech, Mr Li stressed some of the ideas that he has consistently adhered to in his life, and shared his wisdom with the students, specifically that the cultivation of character is needed to rise above the challenges of adversity, modern and timeless, to play a beneficial and transformative role in the world. Humility and conscience play a special role.

He stressed that humility "safeguards you from the faults of a culture of entitlement steeped in pretentiousness, arrogance and hubris. People with intellectual humility, who are humble by nature, tend to be more open-minded and potent problem-solvers, since they recognise that their own opinions might not be the only valid option."

The glibly gifted have a special danger to avoid, lest their easily obtained skills lend to a lack of care for others. He cautions that, "... moral conscience matters as much as having talents. At its core, the idea of purpose is the idea that what we do matters to people other than ourselves. It will differentiate you between being a problem-solver or the problem, an inspiring human or a one-dimensional whiplashing bully."

**ONWARDS AND UPWARDS!**

LKSF has contributed mightily to the building of a new world. For Shantou University, according to Mr Li, "my son Richard and my [Foundation] colleagues will continue my mission and work" ... with, of course, dedication and support from the university staff, students, and the thousands of graduates. As long as they all heed Mr Li's words to "stay logical, stay ethical, stay honest," they will work "together to build a dream".

And never forget where they came from. □

