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Start Up Nation

36 foreign students visit Israeli academic center.



By BENJAMIN WEINTHAL

(SXC)

The Ramat Gan based Academic Center of Law and Business **hosted** six Chinese and 36 German students over the past two weeks, as part of a new overseas **program** to jump-start business and cultural ties.

Dr. David Menashri, the **former** head of the Center for Iranian studies at Tel Aviv University, became president of the Center of Law and Business last year.

"I look at the overseas program as an important **initiative** and as such, I have pushed to **promote** it since I became president in October," he told *The Jerusalem Post*.

Given the **traditional** academic partnerships with the United States, Menashri wishes to form new programs that **attract** students from Europe and the Far East.

"The first program brought in students from Germany and China," he said.

The students traveled the country, **including** visits to Jerusalem, Masada and the North. One of the main drives of the intensive two-week program was to **immerse** the students and faculty in the Israeli start-up hi-tech sector.

Zhang Zhao, a 26-year-old who studies technology **management** at the Harbin **Institute** of Technology in China, said that Israel is "an **impressive** country with friendly people." He also said that **contrary** to the **impression** many Chinese have "that Israel is a **dangerous** country, the biggest surprise I found, in truth, is Israel is a beautiful country and good to visit and travel around."

All of the visiting Chinese students go to the Harbin Institute of Technology.

Menashri said, "It is **necessary** to have young people to make connections with each other and learn more about the 'other.' When I saw the German, Israeli and Chinese students together, I knew our first program was a great **success**. For us, in Israel, it is even more important. It is **essential** that young (and not only young) people know what Israel really **presents**. They usually think about Israel as a place of conflict and violence; it was so good to see them focusing on **science**, culture and art. Such programs also give us a human face. They see Israelis as human beings. Some of the students told me how their parents were worried about them coming to the Middle East. They can now tell them what they saw."

Rotem Ben-Maman, 23, an Israeli student from the Academic Center of Law and Business, said, "We had an amazing weekend together. We found out that we have a lot in **common**."

Alfred Wittstock, a leading German professor of Israeli studies at the University of Mainz, said 20 students from Mainz are taking part in the program.

Wittstock, who studied in Israel, teaches Hebrew for beginners at his university, which is an academic partner of the Center of Law and Business.

Management and economics professor Gerd Michael Hellstern, from the University of Kassel, said it was his first visit to Israel and he had "learned a lot." He came with 15 students from Kassel and said that the "idea is to bring economies together." He named a company in Kassel, SMA Solar Technology AG, that has **invested** in Israel.

The 15 Kassel students study business.

According to Hellstern, "The future will be set by the **creative economy**. Israeli **society** is a promoter of creativity."