

Speech by CE at 2023 Yidan Prize Awards Ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at 2023 Yidan Prize Awards Ceremony today (December 3):

Dr Charles Chen (Founder of Yidan Prize), Yidan Prize laureates, Consuls-General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is a great honour to be here this evening, among this esteemed audience of educators, researchers, and institutional and governmental leaders – from Hong Kong, the Mainland of China, throughout Asia and around the world.

We gather here to celebrate the remarkable achievements of this year's Yidan Prize laureates. We're also here to make the powerful case that education can transform our communities and economies. That education can help realise a more equitable and inclusive world. That education is "the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world", to quote Nelson Mandela.

Or, as Dr Charles Chen, Founder of the Yidan Prize, said, just a few minutes ago, we have come together tonight because we believe in the power of education to improve lives.

Now in its seventh year, the Yidan Prize, as well as its laureates, have played a pivotal role in improving the quality of education worldwide, expanding access to learning, and enabling inclusivity through trailblazing contributions.

Hong Kong is honoured to be the home of the Yidan Prize. In just a handful of years, it has become a world-renowned, internationally coveted award in the vast and varied field of education.

The Hong Kong SAR Government is committed to education at every level, and every distinguishing aspect, of our community. Each year, education accounts for one out of every five dollars the Government spends. We are proud to be home to five of the world's top 100 universities, and provide an international learning environment for students from around the world to excel.

In my second Policy Address, I announced our commitment to developing Hong Kong as an international hub for post-secondary education. We will double the quota of non-Hong Kong students studying in Government-funded post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong. We will offer more scholarships for outstanding students from Belt and Road countries. We will also expand the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme. We are determined to attract more outstanding talents to pursue studies and conduct research in Hong Kong.

At the same time, we promote vocational and professional education, a

parallel pathway catering to youth with interests, abilities and goals, distinct from traditional post-secondary education.

We have also stepped up support for students with diverse backgrounds and educational needs. And we look to distinguished educators to enhance the ability to teach, learn and make education more widely accessible.

In that regard, the innovative work, and passionate engagement, of this year's two Yidan Prize laureates, Professor Michelene Chi and Mr Shai Reshef, is inspiring.

Professor Chi, this year's laureate of the Yidan Prize for Education Research, has built a luminous career on the scientific pursuit of how students learn. In the process, she has created a widely applicable, and accessible, framework for active learning.

Her Interactive, Constructive, Active and Passive framework, or the ICAP framework, provides a robust structure for promoting critical and creative thinking at all levels of education, empowering educators to create more effective educational experiences for students.

Mr Reshef, this year's laureate of the Yidan Prize for Education Development, is Founder and President of the University of the People. Through his pioneering university, Mr Reshef is making higher education accessible to all, regardless of the students' personal, financial, geographical or political beliefs and realities.

To date, his tuition-free, accredited online university has opened the doors of opportunity to some 137,000 students from more than 200 countries, including 16,500 refugees. A round of applause!

To Professor Michelene Chi and Mr Shai Reshef, this year's worthy laureates, I extend my congratulations and my hope that, with the help of the Yidan Prize, you will continue to build on your groundbreaking contributions to global education.

My gratitude goes out, too, to the Yidan Prize Foundation and all those who have steadfastly supported the Yidan Prize in its dedicated mission.

Enjoy this very special and memorable evening, and the outstanding company all around you.

Thank you.