

Israel celebrates 70th anniversary of its foundation

The year 2018 is significant both for Israel, celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Jewish state and for the Czech Republic, commemorating the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918.

Czechoslovakia and its leaders were those who bravely supported our dream to establish a Jewish national home, in various ways, including by supplying crucial military aid at a time of peril, and for this we are forever indebted. The relations today between Israel and the Czech Republic are excellent on all levels, and the Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce (ČISOK) is playing a crucial role in fostering these relations. **IB**

By H. E. Daniel Meron, Ambassador of the state of Israel



Israel remains our biggest business partner outside the European Union besides much larger countries such as the United States, Russia, China and Turkey

Israel came into being seventy years ago on desert and swampland. From the very outset it has been in war with its neighbours and suffered from terrorist attacks. It is not particularly rich in natural mineral resources, although it is correct to say that recent discoveries of natural gas have already contributed to the growth of GDP. Yet it is a rich country. The GDP grew by 3% in 2017 and reached USD 41,350 per capita in 2017. The average wage in Israel reached the equivalent of 60 thousand Czech korunas and the unemployment rate was 4.3 %.



The export of Czech products into Israel in 2017 grew by 2.5 % and exceeded CZK 24 billion for the first time, or in other words, one billion USD. In 2017, Israel remained the third largest export market for Czech businesses outside Europe after the United States and China. Moreover, export exceeded import by more than CZK 18 billion. As far as positive trade balance is concerned, Israel ended up thirteenth overall, which was at the same time the first place outside the European Free Trade Zone.

After all, figures from our biggest exporter, Skoda Auto, serve as a good illustration. Skoda are the best-selling European cars in Israel whereover 23 thousand cars found their owners. The Israeli market is twentieth most important globally for Skoda Auto and the fourth biggest market outside the European Union after China, Russia and Turkey.

Israeli investments have traditionally flourished in the Czech market, especially those into food, pharmaceuticals, the textile industry and ICT & cyber security companies.

Slowly but surely, exchange among universities deepens and there are already hundreds of Israeli students studying in the Czech Republic; they are mostly fee-paying students or Erasmus exchange students. The Czech Academy of Sciences reports a significant connection between Czech and Israeli scientists through international scientific teams and primary research projects are in the bloom. There is however always room for improvement of cooperation in science and research. **IB**

By Tomáš Pojar, Vice President, ČISOK

Away day for the meeting of the Board of the Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce in the Pilsen Region

The February meeting was organised in Pilsen this time. On that occasion, the Board members met with the governor of the Pilsen region Mr. Josef Bernard. The subjects of their meeting included innovation opportunities in the Pilsen Region, Israeli education and health care system. The gentlemen then moved into the beautiful premises of the Brummel House originating from the period between World Wars by architect Adolf Loos, where the board meeting took place. It was preceded by a short tour of the house commented by Mr. Michal Brummel. An informal dinner took place in the traditional Restaurant U Salzmannů, where the Board members met with other political and academic representatives of the Pilsen Region. **IB**



Metamorphosis of CEMACH

Seven years ago, the idea came up to establish a competition that would show Israel in all its natural beauty for the awareness of young people. Then Ambassador of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic, H.E. Jacob Levy, was the founding father of the project named CEMACH. The responsibility for realisation was vested with former spokesman of the Czech Defence Ministry Mr. Andrej Čírtek and his PP Partners agency. Essentially, it involved lectures on Israel and subsequent applications by students into one of the competition categories. The competition winners were rewarded with a trip into places they wrote about or portrayed in their competition writings – into Israel.

The competition quickly became popular with many dozens or indeed hundreds of secondary schools. The interest in CEMACH grew considerably, several thousand students attended the lectures on an annual basis and hundreds of them joined the contest itself.



With the blooming project, it was necessary to manage an increased administrative burden associated with the growth of students and lecturers and activities closely associated with the competition. Last but not least, the interconnection with our Chamber intensified. The engagement of the Israeli Embassy in the project grew even more with the arrival of the new Ambassador Daniel Meron.

Following intensive consultations and evaluation of pros and cons, the conclusion was made that the President of the Chamber would make a motion at the board meeting for the Chamber to become the founder of the CEMACH Institute. That would open up new opportunities for CEMACH to expand its activities. That proposal was adopted by the ČISOK board and the CEMACH Institute came into being on 14 December 2017.

Mr. Andrej Čírtek was elected the executive manager and has so remained the leading personality of CEMACH. The board of directors will continue to comprise Mr. Pavel Smutný (Chairman), Mr. Jiří Maceška (Vice Chairman) and Mr. Karel Kortánek (member).

We trust this marks the beginning of a new stage in the history of the CEMACH competition in the Czech Republic and we wish CEMACH many achievements. This project could become the basis for further activities of ČISOK for the Czech youth in the future. **IB**

Text: Karel Kortánek

DOX was the venue to the ceremony marking the finalisation of the project of the Ester Tower in Jerusalem



On 31 January 2018, the DOX contemporary art center in Prague was the venue to a celebration marking the finalisation of the Ester Tower in Jerusalem project by architect Martin Rajniš.



The project was also supported by our Chamber represented by Vice President Tomáš Pojar and board member Jiří Schlanger. The guests also included His Excellency Daniel Meron,

Ambassador of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic. After an initial tour of the DOX gallery and the impressive Gulliver airship, an address followed by Architect Martin Rajniš mapping the project from the first sketches through realisation.. **IB**

Photos by Huť architektury, Martin Rajniš

Annual meeting of the members and friends of the Chamber

In the evening hours of 13 December 2017, the Kings Court Hotel was the venue of the annual meeting of the members and friends of the Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce. The evening was opened by the President of the Chamber Mr. Pavel Smutný, whose address

reflected the achievements by ČISOK in the last year, but he also entertained the plans for the next year. His Excellency Daniel Meron, the Ambassador of the State of Israel, also addressed the full hall with brief remarks and Mr. Tomáš Kraus representing the Federation of

Jewish Communities lit the candles on the Menorah on the occasion of the Hanukkah celebration. Then there was room for conversation and an outstanding banquet awaited the guests in the foyer. **IB**



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