新大考察团赴以色列 感受炮火中的创业精神

“股神”巴菲特(Warren Buffett)入股80%、市值15亿美元的以色列，开发药丸摄影机的小型科技企业Given Imaging，以及作为伺服机设计和制造公司Silentium等。

以色列人口虽只有700多万，但其在科技和生物科技企业在表现超越许多先进国家。一些日常生活使用的科技，例如：避免电脑遭黑客攻击的防火墙(Firewall)、电脑的英特尔处理器和发光二极管都是在以色列开发的。

新加坡国立大学的研究基金会就在今年1月访问以色列，探讨如何促进创新及与企业活动，加强学校与企业的联系，让研究成果成功进入市场。

新大助教金益文总结商学考察团的心得时指出，以色列人认为，严峻的政策环境孕育了创新和企业精神，勇于接受失败的精神，促使企业家不断作出尝试。此外，以色列年轻人参加国民服役、掌握尖端的科技，并且培养领导能力。

新大老师认为，以色列人对在战争期间继续运作，展现以色列企业的随机应变和坚韧不拔的精神。新大旅游管理系助理教授黄光立博士说：“老实说，以色列企业在战争期间，仍能维持正常运作，颇为鼓舞人。”

以色列的犹太公民都必须参加国民服役，男性服役期三年，女性两年。新大旅游管理系助理教授黄光立博士指出，以色列的青年在服役期间，会接触尖端的科技，也会参与工作小组，研制提升效率的科技平台，而他们都从中获得创新思维，甚至军营之后，设立起步公司，将构思发展成产品。

指出，药丸摄影机是由以色列的国防工程师设计，原型是装在导弹顶端的相机，发明者将摄像机装入胶囊，转为医药用途，就成为进行内窥镜照射的工具。

新大老师受访时指出，以色列具备浓厚的创业文化，是因为当地人民愿意承担风险。李光前商学院本科生关思敏说：“起步公司的总裁都曾经在跨国公司担任要职，但他们毅然放弃高薪工作，利用他们掌握的科技知识出来创业。反观本地的大学生，很多同学毕业之后，就安分地守住自己的工作。”

金益文指出，创业资本家比较愿意资助有失败经验的企业家，因为他们相信，失败是重要的学习经验。

能够有效地募集资本，是促使以色列高科技企业蓬勃发展的因素之一。以色列创业资本研究机构的资料显示，在2007年的首九个月，以色列高科技公司一共筹集12亿5600万美元（相等于17亿5840万新元）的资本，数额仅次于英国，超越法国、德国、荷兰和瑞士。

以色列创业资本家今年1月在特拉维夫与国立研究基金会的代表团会面时指出，新加坡的起步公司缺乏独特的科技优势，以服务业为主。

对此金益文回应说，科技公司需要庞大的资金，而且将科技推出市场需要好几年的时间，创业者和提供融资的金融机构都必须承担较大的风险。他认为，新加坡的经商环境较为抗拒风险(risk adverse)，因此有意创业者就转而设立小本经营的商店和服务。

研究、创新及创业理事会(RIEC)将在本月内成立全国创新及创业框架，推动应用研究与学术企业。本地大专学府预计获得资金，让大学更成功地孵化科技，以及将研究推出市场。

谈到大学如何激发学生的创业精神时，黄光立认为，大专学府应该制造有利的环境，让学生了解创业的每一个环节。此外，学生需要得到全方位的教育，比如商学院的学生必须了解科技对社会造成的冲击，而工程的学生应该掌握基本的商业知识。
In the 2005 war between Lebanon and Israel, forces from the former fired 4,000 over rockets which hit the north of Israel. Even though their factory was only 13 km from the Israel-Lebanon border and at risk of being bombed in any instance, Iscar – the world’s leading innovator of metal cutting tools – continued operations.

27 SMU undergraduates who visited Israel as part of their Business Study Mission were impressed by how Iscar and other Israeli companies were unfettered by the political unrest and in fact, continued to thrive and create breakthroughs. This left the deepest impression in them.

The visit took place last year 6-17 December, and in addition to touring the historical venues, the students also paid visits to MNCs and small start-ups in Israel to engage in discussions with entrepreneurs.

The places they visited included Iscar where Warren Buffet had an 80% stake worth USD1.5 billion; Given Imaging which has produced the pill-size camera; and Silentium – a noise reduction start-up.

Though Israel only has about 7 million people, their innovation in information technology, life sciences and medicine has surpasses that of many developed nations. Many day to day innovations such as Firewalls are all invested there.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) of Singapore visited Israel in January this year to explore how to enhance research and innovation, how to get institutions and businesses to work more closely, and how to commercialise innovations.

SMU student and Teaching Assistant Mr Lawrence Kim said that the strict government of Israel helped grow the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, the willingness to accept failures and the willingness to keep trying. Besides, many Israel young men joined the army where they obtained skills in technology and leadership.

SMU students observed the nimbleness and perseverance of Israel corporations when Iscar continued operations in the midst of the conflict with Lebanon. SMU Assistant Professor Kenneth Huang Guang-Lih said: “Staff of Iscar were quick to observe the attack patterns of the enemy and able to quickly adjust working hours to help staff evade gunfire and therefore does not disrupt operations.”

All Jewish people in Israel have to serve national service – men serve three years and women two years. SMU Assistant Professor Terence Fan pointed out that the young people are exposed to cutting edge technology during the army stint and will form groups to raise standards of innovation. They will form ideas during this time and upon completion of national service, will create start-ups and develop products.

He said that the pill-size camera was designed by a defence engineer and was meant to be installed on bullets. This was then switched to uses in the medical field for internal X-rays.

SMU students said that the intense entrepreneurial spirit there was due to the risk-taking culture in Israel. A business management student from the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Ms Phoebe Kwan Sze Min said: “Bosses of start-ups in Israel are originally from MNCs but they are willing to forsake their high paying jobs to do business using their technological knowledge. In the reverse, local students in Singapore land high-paying jobs straight after graduation and stay there for a long time.”
Lawrence Kim added that it was interesting that investors were more willing to put money in companies which had failed before because they believed in valuable lessons after failure.

Another factor is the ability of companies there to raise funds which allow them to prosper and develop at a fast speed. According to research data, in the first nine months of 2007, Israel technology companies have raised USD1.2 billion – about that of England and surpassing that of France, Germany, Holland and Switzerland.

In January this year, Israel investors who met the NRF pointed out that Singapore start-ups lack outstanding technology advantage and are mainly focused on services.

Lawrence Kim said that technology companies require huge investments and need several years to introduce new products in the market. Therefore, entrepreneurs and investors need to take a lot of risk. He observed that the Singapore business environment is rather risk averse. Hence, most willing entrepreneurs are into small businesses and services.

The Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC) will launch a national platform for innovation in March this year to push for research and innovation. Local universities can obtain funding for commercializing their products.

Assistant Professor Kenneth Huang felt that local universities should create a conducive environment to let students understand every aspect of a business. Business students also need to understand the technology aspect of a business and its impact on society. Technology students need to grasp business know-how.