

GREAT Chinese space scientist Qian Xuesen passed away at 98

A great Chinese that we should not forget and hope we can get perpetual inspiration from the late Professor Qian to excel ourselves. It was so much more difficult for those early Chinese scientist to achieve their goals compare to the time we are living now. We should have done better given the better opportunity and the foundation set up by those those great Chinese pioneers working in the most difficult situation when China was literally besieged by famine and contained by the west.

Chinese should remember those hardy Chinese pioneers that pave the way under the most difficult time to rebuild modern China to become a force to be reckoned with. China and Chinese were ridiculed and treated with total disrespect, it is Chinese like Professor Qian who make us proud to be Chinese and inspire fellow Chinese to continue their aspiration to greatness.

We shall not forget and should continue building Chinese future following the path build by those great and most unselfish Chinese pioneers.

Joe Tan

BEIJING, Nov. 6 (Xinhua) -- About 1,000 people gathered at a hall of the Beijing Babaoshan Cemetery to say farewell to Chinese space scientist Qian Xuesen Friday morning.

Joining them were President Hu Jintao, former President Jiang Zemin and other top leaders Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, He Guoqiang and Zhou Yongkang.

Qian's body was cremated after the ceremony.

Black scrolls were hung in the hall, on which his school fellows, colleagues and students left words, in white characters, to remember Qian, a traditional Chinese way to show respect for the deceased.

Qian, widely acclaimed as the country's "father of space technology," died of illness in Beijing on Oct. 31 at the age of 98.

Also known as Tsien Hsue-shen, Qian was considered to have played a key role in China's missile and aviation programs after the establishment the People's Republic in 1949.

In 1956, based on Qian's position paper on the country's defense and aviation industry, the government set up an aviation industry committee, which later became the leading organization for China's missile and aviation programs.

Under his guidance, China finished the blueprint on developing jet and rocket technologies. He also played a significant role in developing the country's first artificial satellite.

"I had been an assistant to Mr. Qian. He was a very serious and devoted scientist but, in everyday life, he was so easygoing," said Liu Juntao, a senior research fellow with the China Academy of Space Technology, at the ceremony. "The way he worked and thought is still inspiring me."

Since Sunday, thousands of people have paid homage at his former apartment.

"I was deeply moved. I did not expect so many people to come to mourn him," said Qian Yonggang, his son.

Flowers and mourning wreaths, brought by visitors, filled the doorway of the apartment building and workers had to repeatedly move them away.

Qian is widely remembered for abandoning a decent life in the United States and returning to then poor China in the 1950s.

"There was a huge gap between life here and in the United States in the 1950s when China had just gone through a devastating civil war," said Zheng Nanning, president of the Xi'an Jiaotong University and academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

"We should remember all intellectuals of older generations like Qian for their deep love and devotion to the motherland."

After graduating from Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 1934, Qian studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later at the California Institute of Technology. In 1939, he received a doctorate in aviation and mathematics.

In 1947, at the age of 36, Qian was a professor at the Massachusetts Institute.

He decided to go back to the mainland after New China was founded but, amid the McCarthyism of the 1950s, allegations were made that he was a communist who stole confidential information about the U.S. government.

Qian was put in prison for 15 days, followed by house arrest under surveillance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for five years.

In June 1955, a letter from Qian managed to reach then Premier Zhou Enlai, resulting in Sino-U.S. talks which led to his release.

Together with his wife and two children, Qian sailed for more than a month before arriving in the mainland.

Editor: Deng Shasha