

CREAM OF THE CROP

With Hutchison sponsorship, exceptional scholars are fulfilling their academic potential in the UK.

By Mark Caldwell



When British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited Hong Kong in July it was no surprise that he made time in his busy schedule to meet with Hutchison chairman Li Ka-shing.

Not only is Hutchison Whampoa the biggest Asian investor in the UK with interests in projects worth more than £10 billion, but Mr Li and Mr Blair share a common passion for strengthening cultural bonds through educational exchange.

In 1999, as part of a package of initiatives to encourage more international students to study in the UK, Mr Blair introduced measures to beef up the long-running global Chevening Scholarships scheme, which is funded by the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office and corporate sponsors.

In line with his life-long commitment to supporting education initiatives, Mr Li has contributed £2.02 million through Hutchison towards scholarships for Hong Kong and Mainland students, which the British government named the Hutchison Chevening Scholarships.

The scholarships support outstanding postgraduate students and executives to pursue specialist studies. The scheme commenced in October 2002 and will run for four years, with up to 15 students from Hong Kong and 48 from the Mainland participating each year.

A group of these Chevening Scholars visited Mr Li at the Cheung Kong Centre on the same day as Mr Blair. They too had been scheduled to meet the British Prime Minister but, due to a typhoon, he was obliged to leave before the meeting took place. Nevertheless, the students exchanged views with Mr Li, who urged them to make good use of their professional knowledge and expertise and to seize every opportunity brought about

by the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Hong Kong and the Mainland so as to help Hong Kong through the present economic doldrums.



Hutchison Chairman Li Ka-shing welcomes British Prime Minister Tony Blair outside the Cheung Kong Centre.

Among the scholars, Dr Dennis Ip Kai Ming, 37, will be enrolling at Cambridge University to commence a one-year MPhil – Epidemiology degree. Dr Ip is already an accomplished scholar. Besides the medical qualification he earned from the University of Hong Kong, he has completed no fewer than four masters degrees part time – in statistics (HKU), applied mathematics (CityU), travel medicine (Glasgow U) and infectious diseases (University of London).

Dr Ip, who has been employed as a medical infection control officer at Tung Wah Eastern Hospital in Hong Kong, said he would like to work for an international organisation such as WHO or perhaps go into teaching on completion of his degree at Cambridge.

“I am shifting my focus from clinical to public health,” Dr Ip said. “I have wanted to study epidemiology for a long time and I am very grateful to the Hutchison Chevening Scholarships

scheme for making this possible.”

Another outstanding Hong Kong student, Lorraine Wong, will be studying for an MA in Sociology at Warwick University in the UK.

She currently holds an MPhil degree from HKU where she specialised in English Literature and Literary Criticism. The scholarship, worth several hundred thousand dollars in tuition and other expenses, is “a fantastic opportunity,” said the 25-year-old.

“It’s not only an academic opening but one of cultural exchange. I am really looking forward to living in the UK for a year.”

The third recipient, Jimmy Kwong, will commence his Master of Laws degree at Cambridge when the academic year begins. The 23-year-old has a first-class honours LLB degree as well as a Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL). Since graduating, Mr Kwong has focused on corporate and intellectual property law in Hong Kong.

“With globalisation, legal practitioners now require an international perspective,” he said. “The Master of Laws course at Cambridge will help give me that perspective.”

Jimmy intends to return to Hong Kong and hopes to make a positive contribution to society. He will continue to pursue his career in the corporate and banking world as well as carrying on with pro bono work in the community.

“I was honoured to meet Li Ka-Shing,” said Jimmy. “He spoke about law and order being essential for the future of Hong Kong and I was inspired by his life story. Although he never received a formal education, Mr Li has spent his whole life improving himself through reading. He made me want to try even harder to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and to play my part in Hong Kong’s future.”