KNOWLEDGE HUB

MM: Corporate support vital for education

Li Ka-shing hails MM Lee’s ideas at the opening of SMU library

By DANIEL BUENAS

A SOCIETY needs good corporate leaders who are driven by a strong passion for education, to give back to the community what they had gained, and by a sense of responsibility to future generations, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew has said.

Mr Lee was speaking yesterday at the official opening of the Li Ka Shing Library at the Singapore Management University (SMU), which was graced by the library’s namesake Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing, as well as other prominent members of Singapore’s business community.

Sawn in the crowd was Temasek executive director Ho Ching, UOB chairman and chief executive Wee Cho Yaw, as well as entrepreneur and 2G Capital co-founder Tommie Goh.

The Li Ka Shing Foundation, together with the Hutchison Whampoa Group, made a gift of $19.5 million to SMU in 2002—the largest contribution ever made to a Singapore university at the time. Of this amount, $15 million has been earmarked for the endowment of the library.

Mr Lee said that Mr Li’s donation “underscores the importance of philanthropy and corporate support” that our institutions of higher learning will need in order to become more independent like US universities, and to become “centres of excellence”.

Mr Li, in a speech given in Mandarin, in turn praised Mr Lee’s commitment to the principle that “progress gained through laying first constructive foundation is the best steadfast manifestation of all that we hope for and all that we hold dear, a true and ordered liberty, a humane and just society, fair and equal participation for all”.

In his speech — titled “Between Form and Substance” — Mr Li shared his thoughts on the importance of what he called “responsible citizenship”.

“Mr Li added that a flourishing democracy requires the parallel development of the “underlying civic habitat” that interweaves the human mind and spirit, responsibility and reason.

“While we need political institutions that are dependable, honest and built on the rule of law, a civil society must take place in the heart of the individual citizen.”

The five-storey library, situated at the heart of SMU’s new city campus, houses study and training areas, a 24-hour reading room, a lounge and cafe, as well as state-of-the-art facilities, such as wireless network connections, virtual interactive terminals and multimedia laboratories.

To a good cause: Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew (left) and guest of honour Li Ka-shing enjoy the celebration with the SMU Lion Dance Troupe at the official opening of the Li Ka Shing Library at the university.