LKY School building named after Li Ka Shing

HK tycoon's $100m donation will help fund scholarships and establish chair professorships

BY PEH SHING HEEH

MS MAGDALENA Mendoza had been eyeing a place in the Lee Kuan Yew (LKY) School of Public Policy for years. But the $40,000 it would cost the Philippines to study and live here for a year was prohibitive.

This year, she got her chance - thanks to the new Li Ka Shing scholarship, named after the Hong Kong tycoon.

In honour of Mr Li's support, the school named one of its three buildings at the Bukit Timah campus after him.

The Li Ka Shing Building, which overlooks the Botanic Gardens valley, houses the school's executive education programmes, as well as its faculty and researchers.

Said Ms Mendoza, a senior vice-president of a Philippine government think-tank: "Mr Li is an inspiration. He rose from scratch with not just prudence and hard work, but also a fighting heart. That's the spirit I hope to have when I go back to serve my country."

MM Lee also thanked Mr Li on behalf of the Singapore Government for his gift.

In 2002, Mr Li presented $19.5 million to the National University of Singapore's medical faculty in 2005 by the Yong Leo Lin Trust - a sum Mr Li has matched with his donation to the LKY School.

The donation - matched dollar for dollar by the Singapore Government - will create an endowment fund to offer scholarships and establish chair professorships.

MM Lee said: "These scholarships will benefit students from China, Hong Kong, India and Asean countries, to train future leaders. They can raise the standards of governance of their countries and improve the lives of the people and transform Asia."

The school, set up as part of NUS in 2004, aims to educate and train the next generation of Asia's leaders.

It offers mainly master's programmes in fields such as public administration and policy - and currently has 256 students from 37 countries.

As MM Lee noted at the ceremony: "Countries in Asia have their own development challenges. All would have learnt the importance of strong institutions and sound long-term policies."

"Societies need leadership to grow and prosper. Young officials need to be trained in the fundamentals of public policy and good governance. Hence the growing interest in the LKY School of Public Policy."

Mr Li, speaking in Mandarin, urged students to dedicte their lives to the service of others:

"Achieving it is the objective of this school - a school which takes the name of a man who is internationally respected and has dedicated his own life to serving others, to building a nation of peace, opportunity and prosperity."

Ms Mendoza agrees, saying: "Singapore is the benchmark. I come here to learn, bring it back and fast-track my country's development."