

# Students speak out on political reform



The runners from Chan Shu Kui Memorial School, who finished as first runners-up in the senior division, present their ideas. Left, senior division champions Heung To Middle School display their trophy. Below, the team of second runners-up from Diocesan Girls' School



University courses for aspiring Chief Executives and military service were among ideas floated at a problem-solving contest, says **Joyce Ng**

**W**HO says Hong Kong students are indifferent to politics? A recent inter-school project contest yielded a variety of strong opinions including:

"There should be a university programme for candidates running the position of Chief Executive."

"The voting age should be lowered to 16 to let secondary school students take part."

"Universal suffrage for electing the Chief Executive in 2008 is too radical."

"The government should be run by a coalition of business and pro-Beijing people."

These were just some of the views expressed by secondary school students who took part in the "Problem-Based Learning"

competition, organised by Baptist University, which challenged students to investigate the two issues of national identity and the development of political systems and come up with innovative ideas for political reform. The invitation prompted entries from 40 schools.

Finalists from 11 schools presented their work in front of a panel of nine judges, including Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, president of the Legislative Council, and legislator Cheng King-hon.

The finals revealed various political schools of thought. Each group gave an analysis of why Hong Kong people found it hard to establish a clear national identity, and put forward ideas for reinforcing national identity and reforming the political system.

Form Six students from Heung To Middle School won the senior division title. The group met Stephen Lam Sui-lung, Secretary for Constitutional Affairs to discuss constitutional development.

Coming from a traditionally patriotic school, the students suggested ideas for strengthening people's national identity, such as requiring the young to perform military service, as well as raising the national flag in schools, teaching more modern Chinese history and even setting up a joint flying service between Hong Kong and the mainland to promote international peace.

Students from Diocesan Girls' School, the second runners-up, proposed a university programme for future Chief Executives.

They suggested that the central and Hong Kong governments each nominate three candidates from different fields of expertise who should take courses to learn more about fields other than their own.

They would then take up a "mock administration" in a local district and be accountable to the public. The programme would end with a leader elected by universal suffrage.

Mrs Fan said she was amazed by students' creative ideas for political reform. She said that Hong Kong needed young political tal-

ent, and that she would like to see students voicing their opinions inside the Legislative Council.

"There is no right or wrong in politics. The most important thing is to have your own views," she said.

Chan Shu Kui Memorial School were senior division first runners-up.

Elegantia College, who were sponsored by Education Convergence, won the junior division title. Pui Ching Middle School and King's College were first and second runners-up.



The team from Elegantia College, who were sponsored by Education Convergence, were the winners in the junior division. Right, students present their findings to the panel of judges and to their audience

