

Business China Excellence Award 2016 Recipient

Professor Wang Gungwu 王廣武

Age: 86

Chairman, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy & East Asian Institute,
National University of Singapore

Contributions to Singapore-China Relations

- Prof Wang is the subject of academic Ooi Kee Beng's book: "The Eurasian Core And Its Edges: Dialogues With Wang Gungwu On The History Of The World", published in 2015 and based on chats they had on world history. Prof Wang's long years of learning, particularly on China, **gave readers the keys to unlock the seemingly inscrutable Chinese psyche** and showed how the country's history is relevant to everyone's lives today.
- His study on the topics of Chinese history, Overseas Chinese diaspora, Nationalism and Immigration studies increased the awareness of the need for understanding of China and Chinese. As the **pioneer in the field of Overseas Chinese Studies**, his academic research and studying methods has great impact on researchers who later venture into the field and **strengthened Singapore's position as an independent resource centre on China news and developments**.
- Notably, he has been **promoting the understanding of China to those who are better-versed in English** in both Singapore and internationally with his writings in English.
- In recent years, Prof Wang continues to share his many years of insights into China by speaking at Forums and penning commentaries in the opinion section of The Straits Times, allowing Singaporeans to understand China better.
- **Actively engaged in debates about the Chinese identity, stressing the importance of remaining connected to one's roots and history**; as well as how a rising China would impact globally.
 - On 22 October 2016, "China and Singapore: Looking back to understand the future", in The Straits Times
 - On 6 Nov 2015, "Time for rethink of Singapore's position", in the Straits Times
 - On 1 June 2015, "Singapore's 'Chinese' identity dilemma as China rises" in the Straits Times
 - On 27 May 2015, gave a public talk at Straits Times monthly book club regarding a book, "The Eurasian Core and Its Edges: Dialogues with Wang Gungwu on the History of the World" by Dr Ooi Kee Beng

- After being inspired by the Crawford Awards at the Australian National University, he **gave a gift of \$150,000 in 2005 for Medals and Prizes to be awarded annually for the best PhD thesis at the NUS.** This award is the first academic award in NUS that crosses disciplines for graduate students.
- In 2013, Prof Wang generously donated to the University of Hong Kong to establish **the "Wang Gungwu Prizes for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students in History"** to recognise students with excellent academic and research achievements.
- On 23 August 2011, the Wang Gungwu Permanent Collection at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) was officially opened by then-president Mr S. R. Nathan. In recognition to his entrustment, a gallery that featured his life, career and achievements was named "Wang Gungwu: Historian, Humanist and Public Intellectual".
- On 15 July 2011, he wrote an article "90 years, 80 million strong" in The Straits Times, providing valuable analysis with regards to the Community Party of China's (CPC) 90th anniversary celebration.
- With China's power transition taking place after China's 18th Party Congress in November 2012, Prof Wang shared his views about China's development path during a public forum organised by East Asian Institute in celebration of its 15th anniversary. He pointed out that China needs to go beyond its domestic focus, forming relationships with not only the big powers, but also other regions to play a more global role.
- On 13 September 2003, the Resource Centre at the NTU Chinese Heritage Centre was named "Wang Gungwu Library" in recognition of his scholarship and contribution to the field of Overseas Chinese Studies.
- While in office as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, Prof Wang **set up a loan fund in 1992 to provide interest-free loans to students with financial difficulties.** Since its inception, more than 200 students have benefitted from this fund.

Background

- Prof Wang was born on 9 October 1930 in Surabaya, Indonesia and grew up in Ipoh, Malaysia.
- Prof Wang began his early education in 1936 at Anderson School in Ipoh before leaving for the National Central University in Nanjing, China, in 1947 where he majored in foreign languages. He spent only 18 months there before continuing his studies at the University of Malaya in Singapore in 1949.
- **He received his Degree in History** (Honours) in 1953, Masters in History in 1955; and his **PhD in Medieval history in 1997** from the School of Oriental and African studies, University of London.
- Besides his academic-related positions, Wang was also appointed as a member of the National Library Board (NLB; 1997–2003), as well as chairman of NLB's advisory panel for the national collection on China and the Chinese diaspora (1997–2000) and the advisory panel for Chinese library services (2000–03). He was also a member of the National Heritage Board (NHB) (1997–99), adviser of the NHB (1999–2002) and member of the National Arts Council (1996–2000).
- Prof Wang is a Commander of the British Empire (CBE); Fellow, and former President, of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Science; Member of Academia Sinica; Honorary Member of the Chinese Academy of Social Science. He was conferred the International Academic Prize, Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prizes. In Singapore, he is Chairman of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; Chairman of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS. He was also Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Heritage Centre; Board Member of the Institute of Strategic and Defence Studies at NTU.

Achievements

- To date, Prof Wang has already written over 20 books in English and Chinese under his name and is currently working on a book on Chinese history.
- From 1992 to 2002, he received the Honorary doctorate from University of Hong Kong, University of Sydney, Monash University, University of Griffin, Australian National University, University of Melbourne, The University of Hull (UK), and Soka University.
- Held many appointments throughout the past 40 years, which earned him the **reputation as an eminent historian of China and Southeast Asia as well as an internationally-respected China expert.**

- Currently the Chairman of the East Asian Institute and University Professor, National University of Singapore. He is also Emeritus Professor of the Australian National University.
- University of Malaya, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur:
 - 1957: Assistant Lecturer at University of Malaya, Singapore
 - 1962: Dean of the Arts Faculty, UM Kuala Lumpur
 - 1963: Professor of History, UM Kuala Lumpur
- Australian National University
 - 1968: Professor of Far Eastern History
 - 1975: Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies
 - 1984: Chairman of Australian-China Council
- University of Hong Kong
 - 1986: Vice-Chancellor
- National University of Singapore
 - 1997: Director of the East Asia Institute
 - 2007: Chairman of East Asian Institute & the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
 - 2011: Rector of NUS University Town Cinnamon College

Awards

- 2015:
 - Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Award by National University of Singapore
- 2014:
 - Asia Cosmopolitan Award (Economic and Social Science Prize)
- 2013:
 - Meritorious Service Medal, National Day Awards
- 2011:
 - Conferred the title of Darjah Dato' Paduka Mahkota Perak by the Sultan of Perak
- 2009:
 - Honorary Doctorate of Letters by Cambridge University
- 2008:
 - Public Service Star, National Day Awards
- 2007:
 - University Professor by National University of Singapore (only the third person to receive the institution's highest academic appointment)

- 2006:
 - The Inaugural Tsai Lecture by Harvard University
 - The Foundation Lecture by University of Manchester
 - Honorary professorship, Xi-an Jiaotong University
- 2005:
 - Outstanding Service Award by National University of Singapore
- 2004:
 - Public Service Award, National Day Awards
 - Honorary professorship, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
- 2001:
 - Honorary professorship, by Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China
- 2000:
 - The Smuts Commonwealth Lectures by University of Cambridge
- 1998:
 - Honorary professorship, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China
- 1996:
 - Honorary Academic Member by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
 - Honorary Fellow, School of Oriental and African Studies, London
- 1995:
 - Honorary professorship, Fudan University, Shanghai; and Peking University, Beijing, China
- 1994:
 - International Academic Prize of the Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prize
 - Foreign Honorary Member by the American Academy of Arts and Social Sciences
- 1991:
 - Commander of the Order of the British Empire
 - Honorary professorship, University of Hong Kong