

40 years of reform and opening up

China salutes 10 foreign friends

- China recognises statesmen, engineers, entrepreneurs and diplomats whose skills played a vital part in reforming economy and elevating country to powerhouse status

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/2178499/lee-kuan-yew-among-foreigners-honoured-helping-china-open>

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China honoured 10 foreigners on Tuesday, including Singapore's late founding father Lee Kuan Yew, for their part in realising the policy of reform and opening up that propelled China's economic miracle.

The recipients of the China Reform Friendship Medals are foreigners Beijing regards as having played a key role in helping China open up to the world economically and diplomatically.

Lee, once praised by Chinese President Xi Jinping as “an old friend of the Chinese people”, was awarded for leading Singapore to “deeply engage” in China’s reform and opening. The city state has been an inspiration for China on how to achieve economic prosperity under one-party rule.

Two Japanese – former prime minister Masayoshi Ohira and industrialist Konosuke Matsushita – made the list, lauded respectively for their contribution to normalising Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations and bringing electronics giant Panasonic to China’s newly opened market.

Maurice Greenberg, the former chief executive of American International Group, is also an award recipient. Greenberg was among the first American people to do business in China following Richard Nixon’s efforts to re-establish ties in the 1970s.

The other American on the list is Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a long-time adviser to Chinese leaders and the host of *Closer to China with RL Kuhn* on the state-run China Global Television Network, lauded for his devotion to “telling [the story of] contemporary China to the world”.

Hu Xingdou, a Beijing-based commentator, said that by hailing the contribution of foreigners, Beijing was seeking to ease concerns over its commitment to economic reform.

“The environment China is facing has been deteriorating amid the Sino-US trade war, and many worry China may not continue to open up,” Hu said.

“By praising these foreigners’ contributions, China is trying to stabilise the inflow of foreign investment, and to reaffirm that it would keep expanding external exchanges, including technology, human and education.”

THE MEDALLISTS



Robert Lawrence Kuhn

Kuhn was described by Chinese state news agency Xinhua as “a friend who is committed to telling the world about contemporary China”.

The 74-year-old is known as an investment banker and corporate strategist for international companies, but he has also been an adviser to Chinese officials.

Kuhn met Xi Jinping in 2006 when Xi was Zhejiang party secretary.

The New Yorker is also an author whose work about China has been published extensively.

Of the 25 books he has written, the biography *The Man Who Changed China: The Life and Legacy of Jiang Zemin* (2004) earned him a great reputation in China. He hosts *Closer to China with RL Kuhn* on state broadcaster CCTV.

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