

Dr Winnie Ko Pui-shuen, BBS, JP

Honorary Fellow

Citation

Dr Winnie Ko Pui-shuen was born in Shantou, Guangdong. At the age of 17, she left her hometown for Hong Kong and followed in the footsteps of her father and brothers by entering the textile and silk industry. Swiftly emerging as a young entrepreneur, Dr Ko responded to the call for China to reform and open up in the early 1980s, embracing the belief that “a prosperous nation is every citizen’s responsibility”. Guided by this principle, she returned to the Shantou Special Economic Zone to make capital investments in clothing manufacturing facilities, positioning herself as a trailblazer in her adoption of China’s “bringing in” and “going out” economic development strategy.

Leveraging her experience in both Hong Kong and Shantou, Dr Ko facilitated the integration of advanced production technologies within factories across Guangdong Province. Concurrently, she opened national textile trade channels and exported ready-to-wear made-in-China apparel to Europe and America with great success. In 1993, Dr Ko expanded her clothing business to Shenyang in northeastern China. During her time there, she came across a local clothing market in Wu’ai Street, where roadside stalls were operated by laid-off workers who had to endure the harsh northeastern cold, selling their goods from makeshift shelters and open streets. Moved by their circumstances, Dr Ko made an unwavering commitment to establish an indoor marketplace for these traders. In 1997, the Shenyang Wu’ai Garments Town was completed, the largest wholesale and retail clothing market in Northeast China. This substantial investment not only earned her recognition and recompense but also enhanced the lives of countless local small business proprietors. Dr Ko is warmly revered by many Shenyang residents, who affectionately refer to her as “Xiaojie” (the lady).

Dr Ko serves as the Chairman of Kingrich Asia Holdings Limited. While she is a titan in the industrial and real estate sectors, her reputation is even more pronounced in the realm of enthusiastic philanthropy and benevolence. She supports cultural initiatives such as academic research on the works of the late Jao Tsung-I, investigation into Chaoshan history and culture, as well as the preservation of Manchu cultural heritage. She also supports academic institutions, including Lingnan University, facilitating student exchanges, digital library enhancements, and in general liberal arts education. Dr Ko has also spearheaded the construction of 43 temples across Mainland China and Hong Kong, and has sponsored research and promotion of Tang Dynasty-style garden culture at Hong Kong's Nan Lian Garden.

Dr Ko embodies modesty and practicality. She wears a warm and radiant smile wherever she goes, even with her myriad responsibilities — expressing her zest for life and optimistic disposition. Her many years of dedication to her career and her contribution to public welfare have garnered her widespread recognition and acclaim. She is a recipient of the World Outstanding Chinese Award and stands among the distinguished 25 individuals honoured to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China. In 2007, she received an honorary doctorate from the Sinte Gleska University in California, US. Subsequently, she was granted honorary fellowships by The Open University of Hong Kong (now Hong Kong Metropolitan University) and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Recognising her impact on Hong Kong society, the Hong Kong SAR Government awarded her the Bronze Bauhinia Star and appointed her as a Justice of the Peace.

As a native of Chaoshan, Dr Ko has been recognised for her contributions to her hometown. She has held key positions such as the Chief President of the Federation of Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community Organizations. In 2014, she was elected Vice-President of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce, becoming the first female vice-president in the chamber's 93-year history. In 2023, she was appointed President of the Federation of Hong Kong Shantou Community Organizations, becoming the first Teochew woman to found and lead a Chaoshan community organisation in Hong Kong. Additionally, she is the Honorary President of the Federation of Hong Kong Guangdong Community Organizations. Furthermore, she is a member of the 11th and 12th Heilongjiang Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and a member of the 13th and 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Dr Ko's unwavering dedication to philanthropy and her selfless commitment to helping others have significantly enriched Hong Kong's prosperity and the welfare of her home country, establishing her as an outstanding figure among women in Hong Kong. Mr Deputy Chairman, I humbly present Dr Winnie Ko Pui-shuen for the conferment of Lingnan University's honorary fellowship.

Citation written and delivered by Professor Lau Chi-pang