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June 3, 2008



## S'porean wins China franchise award

By Alvin Foo

CALL him Mr Franchise.

Singaporean Albert Kong has become one of only two foreigners among 50 recipients honoured by the China Chain Store & Franchise Association (CCFA) for contributions to the franchising industry in the past decade.

Mr Kong, 52, clinched a China franchise award yesterday - the most prestigious in the mainland. He is believed to be the first Singaporean to receive the accolade.



Mr Kong

The 16-year veteran of the franchise industry told The Straits Times: 'When I first got the news, I thought the association was teasing me. I realised it was true when I read the e-mail.'

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Mr Kong, who speaks several Chinese dialects, is the managing director of Asiawide Franchise Consultants, a firm with more than 400 companies on its client list, including restaurant chain Tung Lok Group.

The latest award recognises his efforts in helping to elevate the industry to what it is today.

#### CHOOSE RIGHT PARTNER

'My long-term goal is to do other types of business in China. The key is getting the right local business partner, someone whom you're very comfortable with.'

**MR KONG, on his plans for the future. He was recognised for his efforts in helping to elevate the franchising industry in China**

His contributions include the publication of an English-Chinese franchise magazine. The quarterly publication provides the Chinese business community with the latest trends and updates on franchises in China and Asia, offers advice and helps companies network.

His joy was shared by Mr Douglas Foo, chairman of the Franchising and Licensing Association of Singapore.

Mr Foo said: 'By winning this award, Albert has done Singapore proud by helping to place us on the franchise map of the world's most dynamic business centre.'

CCFA chairman Guo Geping said: 'We're grateful to Mr Kong, who has generously and passionately shared his expertise and experience with us in the last 10 years.'

Yet, entering the Chinese market was no simple matter and language was just one barrier to overcome.

Mr Kong recalled how he started honing his Mandarin skills over three years by reading Christian literature before moving on to newspapers.

He said: 'I was thrown into the deep end and I resolved to speak proper Mandarin instead of rojak Mandarin.'

Now, he can even peruse legal documents in Mandarin.

So what's next?

'My long-term goal is to do other types of business in China. The key is getting the right local business partner, someone whom you are very comfortable with.'

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