



SMU founding chairman Ho Kwon Ping will be awarded the Distinguished Service Order. The journalist-turned-hotelier received the Meritorious Service Medal in 2009 for his contributions in founding SMU. ZAOBAO FILE PHOTO

## Another feather in the cap for SMU chairman

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Prominent businessman and Singapore Management University (SMU) founding chairman Ho Kwon Ping is adding another feather to his cap.

Mr Ho, the founder and executive chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, will be awarded the prestigious Distinguished Service Order (Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang).

The charismatic journalist-turned-hotelier is also known for his thought-provoking speeches and commentaries on issues ranging

from politics to business and education. "I am honoured and humbled to be awarded the Distinguished Service Order in this year's National Day Awards," said Mr Ho, 65.

"To have been able to contribute to Singapore not just in business but in the development of our educational sector and the growth of our civil society, is to me the true meaning of a purposeful life."

Mr Ho was educated in Taiwan's Tunghai University, Stanford University in California and the University of Singapore. He worked as a broadcast and financial journalist and was the economics editor of the Far Eastern Economic Review,

before joining the family business after his father suffered a stroke.

In 1994, after successfully redeveloping an abandoned tin mine into Laguna Phuket, Asia's first integrated resort, he launched Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts – co-founded with his wife Claire Chiang. The group now runs more than 30 hotels and resorts, over 60 spas and close to 80 retail galleries, as well as three golf courses.

Mr Ho accepted the Government's invitation to become chairman of SMU's board of trustees and the university began operations in 2000 modelled after US-style institutions offering a broad-based education. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 2009 for his contributions in founding SMU.

"In the last 17 years, Mr Ho has led SMU to grow from just having a School of Business into a vibrant university offering various disciplines, and research opportunities, with close to 10,000 students," said a Ministry of Education spokesman. Its "broad-based, interactive pedagogy has also produced highly sought-after graduates who are confident, articulate and globally oriented".

The spokesman added: "Mr Ho defined SMU's fundamental mission as creating a better world. Numerous SMU alumni have responded to this call by incorporating social responsibility into their own start-up businesses, and many continue to contribute to the social projects they participated in while at SMU or return to help fellow students. Mr Ho's vision and leadership of SMU have helped to redefine the university landscape in Singapore."

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