

**2025 Global Outstanding Overseas Compatriot Alumni
【 Public Welfare Contribution Award 】
Mr. JMW Lee Chun Kong**

He's never feared being called "the ghost's repellent." He's never feared walking into a cemetery. To him, a cemetery isn't a place of dread - it's a foundation of culture, a testament to history, and a space for education. Over the course of 26 years, he transformed an overgrown burial ground into the nation's first fully landscaped and thoughtfully designed Chinese "Heritage Park." JMW Lee Chun Kong is the most steadfast guardian of Chinese cemeteries in the community's history.

Born in 1943 in Kampar, Perak, Malaysia, Lee came from humble beginnings but believed deeply from a young age that education could change his destiny. After graduating from high school, he worked in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore for two years before traveling to Taiwan in 1964 to study Food Science and Biotechnology at National Chung Hsing University (NCHU). He graduated in 1970, becoming the first university graduate in his family. "I wasn't the smartest," he often says, "but I was definitely the one least afraid of hardship."

During his time at NCHU, Lee took an active role in the Malaysian Student Association, eventually becoming Secretary-General. He not only excelled in his academic studies, but also developed his leadership through campus organizations - skills that later proved essential in driving alumni associations, civic reform, and public advocacy.

His career in public service began with alumni engagement and expanded into reforming local associations before eventually focusing fully on the preservation and modernization of Chinese cemeteries. His major contributions include:

- Founding of the Gabungan Persatuan Alumni Universiti Taiwan, Malaysia (1970s): As a founding member, Lee led a nationwide fundraising campaign, personally raising RM240,000 for the purchase and construction of the headquarters building. He even volunteered as a loan guarantor, laying the foundation for the federation's long-term sustainability.
- Reforming the Selangor & Federal Territory Kwong Siew Association (1990s): Lee revitalized the traditionally conservative association by launching academic forums, member insurance programs, and birthday celebrations for elders - infusing the organization with warmth and purpose. "An association should be both heartfelt and visionary," he emphasized.
- Preserving the Kwong Tong Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur from forced relocation (1997-2000): When the cemetery faced government expropriation, Lee mobilized over 200 political and civil organizations for public dialogues. His tireless advocacy led to a broad social consensus and ultimately stopped the relocation. This marked the beginning of what would become a nearly 30-year dedication to cemetery preservation.
- Pioneering the concept of a "Heritage Park" and modern reform (2000-present): Determined to change the public's perception of cemeteries, Lee championed efforts to landscape and beautify the site, with the goal of one day applying for World Heritage status. Over two decades, he oversaw the construction of a new funeral hall, museum, columbarium, Peace Park, and the publication of multiple research volumes. He also established a multi-million-dollar

research fund to turn the cemetery into a vibrant hub of history, culture, and education.

- Modernizing administration and cultivating new leadership: Lee pushed for the professionalization of cemetery boards, bringing in legal, engineering, and IT consultants. He implemented ISO quality management, launched a bilingual website, and computerized administrative systems to improve governance. Known respectfully as the “Cemetery Elder,” Lee has long served as chairman and advisor to the Federation of Chinese Cemeteries Malaysia(華人義山聯合總會), leading the way in modernizing cemetery management across the country.

Lee hopes cemeteries will no longer be seen solely as places of mourning, but as vessels for preserving and passing on Chinese values and cultural heritage. He plans to continue promoting heritage designation, educational resource sharing, and youth docent programs. This award, he says, does not belong to him alone - it belongs to everyone who has quietly toiled to preserve culture and heritage through the years. Inspired by this honor, Lee vows to continue dedicating his energy to cemeteries, the Chinese community, and history itself.