



Fifty expatriates from 15 countries are honored with the Shanghai Magnolia Silver Award on December 3. — Jiang Xiaowei

Magnolia Award honor for fifty expats

Wang Yanlin

Fifty expatriates from 15 countries were honored with the Shanghai Magnolia Silver Award on Sunday afternoon in recognition of their contributions to the city's development.

At the awards ceremony, Kong Fu'an, director-general of the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office, expressed his gratitude to expatriates, saying that they are much more than witnesses to the city's development, they are in fact important and active participants and contributors.

"Shanghai will keep reforming and opening up, accelerating cooperation and communication to create a better environment for investing, working and living to attract more expatriates," Kong said.

The awarded expatriates, outstanding in various fields ranging from

commerce, finance, technology, shipping, health care and culture, are from around the world, namely, Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Romania, Singapore, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. But they have one thing in common - Shanghai is their second home.

Alexander Rhys Gregg-Smith, senior vice president and chief executive for marine & offshore division North Asia and China of Bureau Veritas Marine (China) Co Ltd from the UK, said in his speech at the ceremony that the Magnolia award was more than a mere medal or title.

"It is a symbol of the enthusiastic support and warm welcome consistently felt in this truly international megacity," he noted. "It is not just a place of work, it is my spiritual home."

A total of 1,827 expatriates have

received the Magnolia Award since its inception in 1989, and the stories of expatriates vary.

Singaporean Linda Painan, who has been in Shanghai for 27 years, regards herself as a part-time entrepreneur, but a full-time volunteer for the non-profit Shanghai Family Life Services Center (The Expatriate Center) that helps foreigners get well accustomed to life in the city.

"I am immensely honored to get this award and it reaffirms that Shanghai is an inclusive city with a focus on community building. It also shows the city's commitment and care toward its foreign expat community," Painan said. "We are foreigners but not outsiders, let's build a home away from home together."

Another award winner was Poghosyan Astrid, an Armenian violinist and the first non-Chinese management employee in the 140-year history of the

Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

Having studied and worked in Shanghai for 14 years, Poghosyan has now become a real China hand, well-versed in Chinese language and culture.

Fabrice Megarbane, president of L'Oréal North Asia Zone and CEO of L'Oréal China, was also among the award winners. Before arriving in Shanghai in 2019, he had developed a deep yearning for China.

"Shanghai can become a powerhouse of 'consumption for good' in China and even the world, and a benchmark for 'international consumption center cities,'" Megarbane insisted.

He will take over as chief global growth officer of L'Oréal next year. But "whether I return to Paris or go anywhere in the world, I will continue to support Shanghai, support China, and support everyone on this land," the Frenchman said.