

# LCQ1: Intangible cultural heritage

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Tan Yueheng (Hon Chan Pui-leung to ask on his behalf) and a reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 31):

Question:

It is learnt that Hong Kong is very rich in intangible cultural heritage (ICH), with the first ICH Inventory of Hong Kong covering 480 items and the first Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong covering a total of 20 items. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) regarding the safeguarding, promotion and transmission of ICH, of the work recently done by the Government, and the Government's subsequent planning for that;
- (2) as there are views that the transmission of ICH items is very important, whether the Government has carried out relevant work to nurture young ICH bearers; if so, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such work; and
- (3) whether it has considered integrating the current frontier artificial intelligence technology, metaverse technology, etc. with the promotion and safeguarding of ICH?

Reply:

President,

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the Convention) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) includes the following domains:

1. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the ICH;
2. performing arts;
3. social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
5. traditional craftsmanship.

Based on the Convention, the Government announced the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong covering 480 items in 2014 and the first Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong with 20 items in 2017. Twelve of the items in the Representative List have been successfully inscribed onto the National List of ICH. Among these, Cantonese opera has been further inscribed onto UNESCO's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity", making it a world-class ICH item.

The Government will continue to follow up on the updating of the

Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong and the ICH inventory of Hong Kong, and has planned to announce the updated lists by the end of 2024.

In response to Dr Hon Tan's three-part question, my replies are as follows:

(1) The Government attaches great importance to the safeguarding, transmission and promotion of Hong Kong's ICH, strives to raise the public awareness of ICH by encouraging community participation, to enable the culture and tradition of Hong Kong to be preserved, passed on and developed.

We encourage and promote the community's participation in the safeguarding, research, education, promotion and transmission of ICH, and support the transmission work of local ICH bearers and organisations. A funding of \$300 million was approved in 2018 for Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to launch the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme" (ICH Funding Scheme). Up till now, a total of 92 projects have already been supported with a total grant of around \$85 million. The funded projects include traditional festive events, research and publications, educational activities, public programmes, as well as transmission and training programmes.

In 2016, Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Centre was set up at Sam Tung Uk Museum, Tsuen Wan, to showcase, promote and educate the public on the Representative List of ICH of Hong Kong and the selected items in the ICH inventory of Hong Kong. The Government has also set up the "Trace of Human Touch" exhibition gallery, which targets youngsters as audience, at the CLP Pulse, to showcase ten ICH items of Hong Kong through the collaborative works of the masters and the apprentices to present the transmission of the items between the two.

Meanwhile, we have been organising a series of public, educational and outreach programmes. These programmes include "Fun in ICH" Series and ICH fun days which let the public explore Hong Kong's ICH from different perspectives; "Meet the Masters" Series which invite ICH bearers to demonstrate their skills; "ICH Domain", "ICH Puppetry Shows" and "Mobile ICH" targeting students; and the programmes under "ICH for All" specially arranged for persons with disabilities.

We will continue to organise public, educational and outreach programmes, and further engage the community to enable the continuous preservation, continuity and development of ICH.

(2) Through ICH Funding Scheme, the Government provides support for the local bearers and bearer organisations to transmit ICH and train the younger generation to become the future ICH bearers. Among the funded projects in the past three years, 16 are related to the transmission of ICH by bearers or bearer organisations. For instance, "Tracing the Legacy and Origin of the Cantonese Narrative Nanyin", "Hang Hau Traditional Hakka Unicorn Dance Conservation Project", "Training and Promotion of Hakka Pixiu Dance", "Inheritance Hong Kong Porcelain Paintings, Guangcai", "Traditional

Craftsmanship â™™ Transmission of Paper Crafting Technique" and "Courses on Hong Kong Traditional Paper Crafting Arts". As at the first quarter of 2023, 138 training sessions with over 2 000 participants have been completed. Many of the participants are students and young people. These programmes could stimulate young people's interest in ICH and help to identify the young people with potential to continue their studies and practices in the field of ICH, enabling them to organise the core techniques and accumulating experiences to become new ICH bearers. We will further enhance the supports for local ICH bearers and bearer organisation under the ICH Funding Scheme, to train up the ICH practitioners with a view to promoting the transmission of ICH items, in particular the 20 items on the Representative List of ICH.

(3) In recent years, we have been using digital technology to facilitate the promotion and recording on ICH. In the exhibition "300 Years of Hakka Kung Fu: Digital Vision of its Legacy and Future" held at Hong Kong Heritage Museum in 2016, the essence of traditional martial arts was displayed through 3D multimedia technology. The movement of a martial arts practitioner was captured using 3D motion capture technology to interpret and record the forms of Kung Fu accurately. This makes it easier for the audience to understand and grasp the essence of martial arts, in addition to effectively preserving the forms of martial arts.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICH Office) is also showcasing 360-degree Virtual Reality (VR) videos under the section "ICH On-line" on its webpage. These videos capture ICH items, including Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance in Mid-Autumn Festival and Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade falling within the domain of "social practices, rituals and festive events", as well as Bamboo Theatre Building Technique falling within the domain of "traditional craftsmanship". The videos allow audience to experience and understand the rituals of the festive events and the exquisite craftsmanship of bamboo theatre through first-person perspective.

In addition, through the ICH Funding Scheme, LCSD has supported the "Three Yu Lan Festivals: Research, Transmission and Promotion" project of Hong Kong Shue Yan University to develop its virtual museum of Yu Lan Festival. The virtual museum of Yu Lan Festival is an example of the application of metaverse technology, showcasing the traditional culture in the form of a metaverse with a 360-degree panoramic view of Yu Lan Festival in 8K Ultra HD. Audience can use computers or VR headsets to access the virtual museum free of charge and create their own avatars for experiencing the festive event in virtual space created by the concept of the metaverse.

ICH Office has already launched an online "Intangible Cultural Heritage Database" in 2018 to digitise the 480 items on the ICH inventory of Hong Kong in phases. The work is planned to be completed by 2025.

Thank you, President.