

Presentation Ceremony of Commemorative Plaques for Representative Items of National Intangible Cultural Heritage (with photos)

Two intangible cultural heritage (ICH) items from Hong Kong, the Tin Hau Festival in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong cheongsam making technique, were successfully inscribed onto the fifth batch of the list of the representative items of the national ICH announced by the State Council in 2021. The Minister of Culture and Tourism, Mr Hu Heping, came to Hong Kong and presented the plaques at a ceremony held at the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum today (September 22) to the protection organisations of the two national ICH items, representatives of the Hong Kong Tin Hau Festival Association and the Hong Kong Cheongsam Association, in the presence of the Acting Chief Executive, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Acting Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Raistlin Lau; and the Acting Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, Miss Eve Tam.

At the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China in June 2019 to apply for inscription onto the list of the national ICH, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government submitted the application after consulting the views of the ICH Advisory Committee.

The two successfully inscribed items are under the categories of "social practices, rituals and festive events" and "traditional craftsmanship" defined by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH promulgated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. With outstanding historical and cultural value, these two items are representative of their kind. Both items were also inscribed onto the First ICH Inventory of Hong Kong and the Representative List of the ICH of Hong Kong in 2014 and 2017 respectively.

Details of the two items are as follows:

(1) Tin Hau Festival in Hong Kong

The Tin Hau belief and customs have a long history in Hong Kong. It is believed that the Tin Hau Temple located in Joss House Bay, Sai Kung, was built in the Southern Song dynasty. Every year, on the 23rd day of the third lunar month, or on other designated dates, the birthday of Tin Hau is celebrated on different scales in various districts. Some local organisations stage Cantonese opera performances to express gratitude to Tin Hau, and organise the fa pau (paper floral tributes) lots drawing ceremony. Some may also hold parades along waterways or on land. The communities and ethnic groups are united through the celebrations.

(2) Hong Kong cheongsam making technique

The origin of the cheongsam dates back to decades ago and it became popular during the early Republican period. After World War II, many tailors moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong. As a result, the craftsmanship of the Hong Kong cheongsam was enriched and Western sewing skills were taken up, resulting in the uniqueness of the Hong Kong cheongsam making technique. Once everyday attire for Hong Kong women, Hong Kong cheongsam becomes the elegant dress at special occasions nowadays. The men's cheongsam is a symbol of the seniority of clan elders in the New Territories, and carries important social significance.

The State Council announced four batches totalling 1 372 items inscribed onto the list of the national ICH in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2014. The Governments of Guangdong, the HKSAR and the Macao Special Administrative Region jointly applied and succeeded in inscribing Cantonese opera and herbal tea onto the first batch of the list. In 2011, four local ICH items, namely the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, Mid-Autumn Festival – the Tai Hang fire dragon dance and the Yu Lan Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community, were successfully inscribed onto the third batch of the list. In 2014, four local ICH items, namely the Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau in Sai Kung, the Wong Tai Sin belief and customs, the Quanzhen Temples Taoist ritual music and the arts of the guqin, were successfully inscribed onto the fourth batch of the list.

The Government is dedicated to preserving and promoting local ICH. The ICH Office co-organised the "Transmission Scheme for Hong Kong-Style Cheongsam Sewing Technique" with the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong in 2018 and 2019, organised a talk "The Aesthetics and Sewing Craft of Cheongsam for Men and Ladies" in 2019, and co-organised an "Intangible Cultural Heritage Seminar – Hong Kong Cheongsam Making Technique" with the Hong Kong Cheongsam Association and respective academic institutions in 2022.

To further promote the safeguarding of ICH, the Government approved a funding of \$300 million in late 2018 for launching the ICH Funding Scheme to engage the community and strengthen various aspects of safeguarding work for the ICH of Hong Kong. Among those, funds were allocated to enable local academic institutions to carry out research and survey of the items and the subsequent publication, as well as launching educational programmes and establishing database regarding cheongsam. In addition, local organisations were funded to organise Tin Hau Festivals in various districts, such as Kowloon City, Yau Ma Tei, Fat Tong Mun, Po Toi Island, Tai O Fan Lau and Hang Hau.

The Government will continue its commitment to preserving and promoting local ICH and will also encourage the participation of the community in supporting the transmission and development of Hong Kong's traditional culture.

