

LCQ7: Intangible cultural heritage

Following is a question by the Hon Audrey Eu and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (November 7):

Question:

In the 2006-2007 Policy Agenda, the Government stated that it would compile a comprehensive inventory of Hong Kong's intangible cultural heritage and set up a central web-based "Hong Kong Memory" database. At the same time, some cities in the Pearl River Delta Region such as Foshan have been working actively in recent years on preserving intangible cultural heritage, including Lingnan culture and Cantonese operatic songs and story-singing, etc. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the progress of work in compiling the above inventory, and the number of items that have been confirmed to be intangible cultural heritage hitherto;

(b) of the details in setting up the above web-based database; and

(c) whether it has exchanged views and cooperated with mainland provinces and cities regarding joint preservation of intangible cultural heritage; if it has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) To comply with Article 12 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which formally entered into force on April 20, 2006, Hong Kong is required to compile an inventory of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Having considered

that inventory-making of ICH is new to most countries in the world, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department commissioned the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) in October 2006 to conduct a pilot study before compiling a comprehensive ICH inventory. By making reference to the 78 items of ICH inscribed on the first provincial list of ICH of Guangdong promulgated by the Guangdong government in 2006, the pilot study is intended to identify if there are relevant ICH items in Hong Kong and to highlight the important issues and give recommendations for conducting a territory-wide survey. HKUST submitted the pilot study report to the Government in mid October 2007. According to the report findings, 34 out of the 78 items listed by Guangdong have existed and developed in Hong Kong. The Government is examining the report and will consider commissioning an agency to conduct a territory-wide survey and compile a comprehensive inventory with a view to enhancing the preservation and promotion of ICH in the territory.

(b) In response to UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Programme, the Government and The Hong Kong Jockey Club have jointly launched the "Hong Kong Memory" Project for the preservation of Hong Kong's historical records through digitisation. Through the establishment of a multi-media website, the Project will provide one-stop access, free and open to the general public, to digital collections and records covering a wide range of subjects on Hong Kong's history. With a funding of \$80 million from The Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Centre of Asian Studies of The University of Hong Kong has been commissioned to develop the contents and system infrastructure of the "Hong Kong Memory" platform. The Working Group on the Project has been liaising with libraries, museums and archives etc, for the collection, preservation and presentation of relevant documentaries in digitised format. The web-based platform will be implemented by phases and the first test version will be available at the soonest in 2010.

(c) Preservation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is one of the discussion items at the Greater Pearl River Delta Cultural Cooperation, a forum organised annually by the Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and Macao. The three places are actively working together to prepare for the submission to UNESCO to apply for the inscription of Cantonese opera

on the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". The three places also join hands to promote ICH related studies, such as holding a 5-day international symposium on Cantonese opera in the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in September 2007. We will continue to strengthen collaboration with the other two places on the study and preservation of ICH through the Greater Pearl River Delta Cultural Cooperation Summit.

Ends/Wednesday, November 7, 2007