

Governments developing Cantonese opera (with photo)

The announcement of Cantonese opera being officially inscribed onto UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity had encouraged the Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong SAR governments, the Under Secretary for Home Affairs, Ms Florence Hui, said today (October 30).

Ms Hui was speaking at the press conference "Successful Inscription of Cantonese opera on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". She deeply believed that the governments of the three regions would keep on collaborating in preserving, promoting and developing the art of Cantonese opera.

Ms Hui said the governments of the three regions had decided to start off joint projects to promote the art and culture of Cantonese opera since the First Greater Pearl River Delta Cultural Co-operation Meeting held in Hong Kong in November, 2002. A working group was subsequently established. Collaboration projects include holding Cantonese Opera Day and international seminar, making application to UNESCO for inscribing Cantonese opera on the Representative List, as well as holding joint presentations.

As early as in 2003, the governments of the three regions joined efforts to prepare an application to UNESCO for inscribing Cantonese opera on the Representative List. Cantonese opera was inscribed onto the first national list of intangible cultural heritage by the State Council in May, 2006. The Central Government in September, 2008 submitted to UNESCO applications, which included the Cantonese opera jointly nominated by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

Ms Hui said that the Home Affairs Bureau set up the Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee (COAC) in May, 2004 to advise the Government on policies and issues in relation to the promotion, preservation, study and development of Cantonese opera in Hong Kong. The bureau established the Cantonese Opera Development Fund (CODF) in November, 2005 to raise donations to provide funding support to programmes and activities on the study, promotion and sustainable development of Cantonese opera.

The CODF has granted about \$20.3 million to support about 260 Cantonese opera projects since its establishment, about \$3 million of which was granted for the implementation of a three-year grant scheme for the Hong Kong Cantonese Opera Troupe for New Talents. The CODF has supported various Cantonese opera

performance projects, children or youth cultural exchange, arts education programmes, and professional training and community promotional projects. Subsidies are also made available to venue development projects, research and archival projects to provide comprehensive support for the development of Cantonese opera.

The Government has also supported the development of Cantonese opera through different forms and channels. These include support by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to about 500 Cantonese opera and operatic singing performances each year; collecting, studying and showcasing of Cantonese Opera artifacts by the Hong Kong Heritage Museum under the LCSD; funding dedicated to Cantonese opera performances, education, promotion and other development projects by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; and subsidy by the Home Affairs Bureau to the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts for organising Cantonese opera educational programmes. The Government estimates that in 2009 to 2010, around \$33 million will be deployed for the promotion and development of Cantonese opera.

Other representatives who attended today's press conference included the Director of Department of Culture, Guangdong Province, Mr Fang Jianhong; Vice-President of Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao SAR, Ms Alice Wong; the Deputy Director of Bureau of Culture, Guangzhou Municipality, Mr Zhang Runhua; the Chairman of Cantonese Opera Advisory Committee, Hong Kong, Dr Stephen Chow; the Director of Cantonese Opera Theatre of Guangdong Province, Mr Ding Fan; the Deputy Director of Cantonese Opera Artistic Advisory Committee, Guangdong, Mr Luo Jiabao; the Chairman of the Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong, Dr Liza Wang; the President of the Associacao Geral de Opera Chinesa e Arte Musical de Macau, Ms Lam Fong-ngo.

Ends/Friday, October 30, 2009

Issued at HKT 18:59

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