NHB LAUNCHES SURVEY ON INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

SINGAPORE, 19 July 2016 – The National Heritage Board (NHB) is launching a heritage survey on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) on 19 July 2016. This project contributes towards the establishment of a national inventory for Singapore’s ICH.

2. The ICH survey seeks to identify key aspects of Singapore’s ICH, which are as important to Singapore’s heritage and identity as our preserved heritage buildings and sites. It will contribute towards a better understanding of ICH in Singapore, as well as its value and significance to the different communities, and to Singapore society in general.

3. ICH elements form part of Singapore’s living heritage, and as such are susceptible to changes and loss over time, NHB will work with the community, especially ICH practitioners, to regularly build on and update the findings from the ICH survey. The information gathered will be shared to raise awareness of ICH elements in Singapore, whether through policy formulation, exhibitions, or programmes.

4. The ICH survey, together with the tangible heritage survey launched in September 2015, are part of NHB’s efforts to further research on Singapore’s heritage. Findings from both surveys will add on to existing research and knowledge gathered over the years, thus providing us with a more holistic understanding of Singapore’s tangible and intangible heritage landscape.

5. Both heritage surveys on tangible heritage and ICH are guided by advice from NHB’s Heritage Advisory Panel (HAP), such as on the survey methodology and implementation strategy. Chaired by Professor Brenda Yeoh, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, the HAP comprises experts from various fields, such as architecture, geography, sociology, anthropology and history, who bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience from their different sectors.

6. Said Mrs Rosa Daniel, Chief Executive Officer of NHB, “Researching Singapore’s heritage is not just about studying the past; it helps shape our aspirations and future, and our understanding of it. It is thus vital that we continually enhance, and add to, our knowledge bank of Singapore’s history. Findings from the ICH heritage survey will complement research done by NHB over the years, and help plug the gaps in our heritage repository. This provides us with a more complete understanding of Singapore’s heritage landscape.”

Definition and Scope of ICH Survey

7. In defining Singapore’s ICH for the purpose of the heritage survey, NHB took reference from the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. According to the Convention, ICH is characterised as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities and individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage”. It can be classified under five categories, as seen below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICH Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Singapore Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Oral Traditions and Expressions       | UNESCO currently does not recognise languages and regional dialects as ICH elements per se. However, languages are vital in the transmission of oral traditions and the expression of certain cultural values and heritage. These elements which use languages as a vehicle of conveyance may be recognised as ICH. | • Foktales and legends (e.g., ‘Hang Tuah’, ‘The Swordfish Attack’)  
• Children’s rhymes  
• Dikir barat                                                                                                           |
| 2 Performing Arts                       | Traditional forms of performing arts may be recognised as expressions of cultural values, aesthetics, languages (which once again may cross into the domain of oral traditions and expressions), etc., and are thus important ICH elements to the various communities. | • Traditional Chinese puppetry  
• Dikir barat  
• Bharatanatyam                                                                                                                   |
| 3 Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events | ICH elements bind communities and the society. Social customs and practices, including religious and non-religious rituals, ceremonies, and festivals, contribute to the social fabric and celebrate the various facets of the communities and society. | • Lou hei  
• Qing Ming festival  
• Thimithi  
• Huat kueh  
• Peranakan cuisine                                                                                                               |
| 4 Knowledge and Practices concerning Nature and the Universe | This category refers primarily to folk practices, knowledge and customs. They are usually based on the community’s understanding of its environment, surroundings, the cosmos, etc. | • Fengshui  
• Traditional medicine (e.g., traditional Chinese medicine, jamu, Ayurveda)                                                                                                  |
| 5 Traditional Craftsmanship             | This category may be broadly defined to include traditional trades, industries, businesses, handicrafts, and even food heritage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | • Food heritage (e.g., Hainanese chicken rice, chilli crab, nasi padang, murtabak, kopi, kaya toast, Peranakan cuisine, Teochew cakes and pastries)  
• Traditional industries (e.g., joss-stick maker, traditional coffee grinder, traditional Indian goldsmith, Teochew cakes and pastries) |

8. The ICH survey will be conducted through two layers of research. Primary research, in the form of field surveys, will capture information on the various ICH elements in Singapore, through different mediums such as photography, videography, interviews, and descriptions of the practices, skills, techniques and knowledge involved. Interviewees will be asked to share
on the historical and socio-cultural aspects of the ICH element in question, and also on the challenges faced in preserving and passing it on to newcomers or younger generations. Secondary research will see the collation of information from resources such as archival materials, recorded oral history interviews, newspapers print media, video documentaries, and even blogs.

9. NHB will share relevant information and findings from the ICH survey with the Singapore populace, as part of our efforts to raise awareness and appreciation of our intangible cultural heritage, and to further cross-cultural understanding.

10. Professor Brenda Yeoh, Chair of the HAP, adds, “ICH is an important part of our shared identity and belonging, and links us to our past and our roots. As ICH is a living heritage, the ICH practitioners and the community play an important role in transmitting such knowledge. Thus, it is essential that NHB works in close partnership with the practitioners, to document the different elements of Singapore’s ICH, and share them with future generations.”

**Update on Tangible Heritage Survey**

11. The tangible heritage survey builds on NHB’s existing database of heritage resources, and includes research and documentation of buildings and sites of historic or cultural interest found in mainland Singapore completed in and before 1980. Since its commencement, both desktop research and field surveys have been conducted on sites and buildings around the island. Information on 20 buildings amongst those covered in the survey will be available on NHB’s heritage portal, Roots.sg, from 19 July 2016. Information on more buildings and sites will be shared progressively.

12. “Findings from the tangible heritage survey will strengthen, and add to, our existing research of Singapore’s heritage. We have a wealth of tangible heritage, such as our first UNESCO World Heritage Site, 72 national monuments, over 7,000 conserved buildings, heritage trails and historic sites across Singapore. The tangible heritage survey helps to address possible gaps in existing information, and enriches our understanding of what is already there,” added Mrs Rosa Daniel.

13. NHB welcomes all to contribute their stories, memories and photographs of the 20 buildings and sites covered in the survey on Roots.sg from 19 July 2016. These would add to the research information gathered from the survey, and enhance our understanding of Singapore’s heritage.

14. For more details on both heritage surveys and the Heritage Advisory Panel, please refer to the following annexes:

- **Annex A**: About the Intangible Cultural Heritage Survey
- **Annex B**: An Update on the Tangible Heritage Survey and the 20 Buildings and Sites
- **Annex C**: NHB’s Heritage Advisory Panel

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore’s heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. NHB’s mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE SURVEY
MEDIA FACTSHEET

About the Intangible Cultural Heritage Survey

1. Our intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is an important part of the multi-cultural and multi-religious identity of Singapore. As part of our efforts to document and promote ICH, the National Heritage Board (NHB) will be launching a tender in July 2016 for a heritage survey of Singapore’s ICH. This survey aims to identify key aspects of Singapore’s ICH, and will complement the work of the heritage survey covering tangible heritage in Singapore, which was launched in September 2015.

2. The duration of the heritage survey for ICH is 16 months. Following the closure of the tender, work on the survey is tentatively scheduled to commence in September 2016, and the projected date of completion for this survey is set to be early-2018. In developing this project, NHB took reference from the international practices on ICH-related policies and initiatives, particularly to those set out by the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. NHB also studied and adapted learning points from similar surveys done in other countries or cities, such as Hong Kong and George Town, Penang.

3. The ICH survey is an attempt to systematically document Singapore’s ICH, and adds to our existing knowledge. The survey will enable NHB to have a greater understanding and overview of ICH in Singapore, as well as its value and significance to communities and the society at large.

4. With the information collected in this survey, NHB will be better equipped to formulate initiatives and work with the community to safeguard and promote ICH elements in Singapore. Relevant information and findings from the heritage survey on ICH will be made available in time to the public as part of our efforts to raise the awareness and appreciation of our ICH and cross-cultural understanding.

5. The findings from the ICH survey will go towards the creation of a national inventory of ICH elements. The survey does not seek to produce an exhaustive or detailed list of all the ICH elements in Singapore. As ICH elements form part of Singapore’s living heritage and are thus susceptible to changes and developments over time, NHB will continue to work with our partners to build on the knowledge and identify additional ICH elements over time. Further research and documentation may also be conducted on ICH elements identified in the heritage survey that have particularly high socio-cultural significance.

Scope of the ICH Survey

6. ICH may be classified under five categories, as proposed by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, namely oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship.

Methodology of the ICH Survey

7. The survey will involve primary research in the form of field surveys, as well as secondary research. The field surveys will capture information on the various ICH elements in Singapore, including photographs, video footages, interviews, and descriptions of the practices, skills, techniques and knowledge involved. The secondary research includes
combing and collation of data from archival materials, oral history interviews, newspapers print media, video documentaries, blogs, etc.

8. The information on ICH elements in Singapore to be obtained from the heritage survey for ICH will include:

   a) Basic information on the ICH elements (i.e., location, date, frequency, existing practitioners, etc.);
   b) History of the ICH elements;
   c) Description of the ICH elements;
   d) Importance and significance to the group/community; and
   e) Challenges in preserving and transmitting the ICH elements.

9. Photographs and video footages will also be taken as part of the documentation of the ICH elements during the field surveys. Interviews will also be conducted with the practitioners and other informants to flesh out the historical and socio-cultural significance, as well as to gather other relevant information, pertaining to the ICH elements surveyed.
TANGIBLE HERITAGE SURVEY
MEDIA FACTSHEET

Update on the Tangible Heritage Survey

1. NHB launched the tangible heritage survey in Singapore in September 2015. It builds on NHB’s existing repository of heritage information, and includes research and documentation of buildings and sites of architectural, historical or cultural interest, found in mainland Singapore completed in and before 1980. The duration of the survey is 20 months, and is expected to be completed in mid-2017.

2. The tangible heritage survey was first announced by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth during the Parliamentary Committee of Supply (COS) debate in March 2015. Apart from the tangible heritage survey, another heritage survey covering the intangible cultural heritage of Singapore will be launched in July 2016.

3. Research company Art Logica has been appointed to carry out the tangible heritage survey. The company is experienced in conducting heritage related research studies in Singapore. Since the commencement of the project, the research company has carried out desktop research as well as field surveys. Desktop research includes the research and collation of information from archival materials, maps and publications. It also identifies sites or buildings of potential heritage interest, and guides the field work. Field surveys involve capturing information through photographs on the historic, cultural and architectural aspects of the building or site and its activities.

4. The survey aims to build on our existing knowledge on tangible heritage, which includes the knowledge that we have on our national monuments, conserved buildings, heritage trails, and other historic sites. When completed, the tangible heritage survey will enable NHB to get a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse heritage of our buildings and sites across the island, and address the current gaps in our repository of information. It builds on our past research and documentation efforts, such as that of our National Monuments as well as sites marked in NHB’s heritage trails.

5. To complement the research information gathered from the tangible heritage survey and to raise public awareness of buildings and sites documented under the survey, NHB is launching on 19 July 2016 a public contribution drive on Roots.sg, NHB’s heritage portal, for the 20 buildings and sites amongst those covered in the survey. These buildings and sites cover a range of functions, including former and current educational sites, infrastructure sites, civic and commercial sites, as well as community and religious sites. These buildings and sites, and their associated organisations, have existed before or since 1980, and are familiar to some, if not most Singaporeans. NHB will progressively release information on more buildings and sites documented under the survey, as part of our efforts to allow public contributions to, and raise awareness of, Singapore’s heritage.

6. NHB hopes that members of the public will contribute their memories, photographs and videos featuring any of these 20 buildings and sites to enrich our survey findings. Selected contributions will be featured as stories on Roots.sg. For more information and to contribute, please visit Roots.sg from 19 July 2016.
Scope of the Tangible Heritage Survey

7. The tangible heritage survey covers buildings, structures, sites and landscape features of architectural, historical or cultural interest. The following aspects will be covered in the survey:

- Heritage buildings, structures or sites completed in or before 1980;
- Heritage buildings, structures or sites associated with historical events that influenced the development of the nation or the local community;
- Heritage buildings, structures or sites of unique or interesting architectural design or decoration;
- Heritage buildings, structures or sites that function as unique landmarks or widely known among local residents in a particular neighbourhood or locality; and
- Heritage buildings, structures or sites that are have historical significance in terms of with social, cultural, political, economic or value, including but not restricted to notable figures or personalities, traditional trades, festivals, cultural practices (such as customs, rituals and festivals), or community activities.

8. The following information on heritage buildings, structures and sites will be obtained from the survey:

- Information pertaining to the site, including the name, address, function and typology of the site, etc;
- Geographic coordinates of the site;
- Description of the architecture and physical condition of the site;
- Description of the historical and cultural interest associated with the site;
- Description of intangible heritage located within the buildings or sites, including cultural activities, traditional trades, crafts or businesses associated with the building;
- Photos indicating the architectural features, architectural style and physical condition of the site;
- Where there is limited information of the site, interviews with locals and other informants should be conducted to ascertain the local historical, architectural, social and other cultural information related to the site.

9. In formulating the tangible heritage survey, NHB studied and adapted learning points and procedures from similar surveys done in other cities. For example, Hong Kong had carried out a survey of historic buildings between 1996 and 2000. The survey identified more than 8,800 buildings built before 1950. This was followed by more in-depth research and assessment to identify buildings of greater heritage value. The identification and documentation of heritage buildings was also carried out in the City of Melbourne, Australia. NHB also studied the Survey LA, a city-wide survey of historic buildings in Los Angeles, USA.

10. 20 buildings and sites for public contributions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ascott Centre for Excellence (Former Chaoyang Special School)</td>
<td>Anthony Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Goodman Arts Centre</td>
<td>Goodman Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah</td>
<td>Jalan Sultan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>36 - 38 Armenian Street</td>
<td>Armenian Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kim Mui Hoey Kuan</td>
<td>Keng Lee Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Communicable Disease Centre 1</td>
<td>Jalan Tan Tock Seng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kheng Chiu Building and Tin Hou Kong</td>
<td>Beach Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kreta Ayer People's Theatre</td>
<td>Kreta Ayer Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Maxwell Road Food Centre</td>
<td>Kadayanallur Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>People's Park Complex</td>
<td>Park Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Plaza Singapura</td>
<td>Orchard Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Singapore Polytechnic</td>
<td>Dover Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Fairfield Methodist Church ( Former Metropole Cinema)</td>
<td>Tanjong Pagar Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sri Senpaga Vinayagar Temple</td>
<td>Ceylon Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Substation</td>
<td>Armenian Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Orchard Road Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Orchard Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mount Emily Villa</td>
<td>Upper Wilkie Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dragon Fountain at Whampoa Drive</td>
<td>Whampoa Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Paya Lebar Airbase ( Former Singapore International Airport)</td>
<td>Airport Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Changi Cottage</td>
<td>Netheravon Road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NHB has formed the Heritage Advisory Panel (HAP) comprising experts across different disciplines. The Panel was set up to guide the work for the upcoming heritage survey, and advise NHB on best practices and procedures relating to the various heritage initiatives that it will be rolling out. The composition of the HAP for the period 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2017 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Role in HAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professor Brenda Yeoh</td>
<td>Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS and Professor, Department of Geography, NUS</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Associate Professor Kwok Kian Woon Anthony</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Division of Sociology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, NTU</td>
<td>Deputy-Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Associate Professor Goh Beng Lan</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Associate Professor Rajesh Rai</td>
<td>Associate Professor, South Asian Studies Programme, NUS and Assistant Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dr Yeo Kang Shua</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Sustainable Design, SUTD/ Honorary Secretary, Singapore Heritage Society (SHS)</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mr Zahidi Bin Abdul Rahman</td>
<td>Principal Architect of Zahidi A. R. Arkitek</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mr Ler Seng Ann</td>
<td>Group Director, Development Services, Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mr Eric Chin</td>
<td>Director, National Archives of Singapore (NAS)</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dr Koh Keng We</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Humanities, Arts &amp; Social Sciences, NTU</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mr Leong Weng Kam</td>
<td>Senior Writer, The Straits Times</td>
<td>Member</td>
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