



MEDIA RELEASE

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JOINT NOMINATION FOR THE INSCRIPTION OF CHINGAY ONTO THE UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

Singapore, 5 November 2024 – Malaysia and Singapore will be jointly nominating “*Chingay: a street parade that showcases multiculturalism, traditions, and artistic displays of communities*”, onto the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity in end March 2025. This would mark Singapore’s third UNESCO nomination to the Representative List, and second multinational nomination to the same List¹.

2 The nomination was decided jointly by Singapore and Malaysia, as there are *Chingay*-practising communities in Singapore, Penang and Johor Bahru. *Chingay* reflects the shared heritage of both countries, celebrates our connected cultures, and continues to be actively practised in both countries today. This joint nomination commemorates the 60th bilateral anniversary between Singapore and Malaysia in 2025, and presents an opportunity for Singapore and Malaysia to promote cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations.

3 During the National Heritage Board’s (NHB) consultations with the public from 2021 to 2022², *Chingay*, organised by the People’s Association, was one of the top ICH elements selected by Singaporeans for future UNESCO ICH nominations because of its multicultural nature and familiarity to Singaporeans. The engagements also revealed that Singaporeans recognised that UNESCO ICH inscriptions helped promote Singapore’s culture to the world and deepened a sense of pride, identity and belonging to Singapore.

4 Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth said, “It is meaningful that the joint nomination of *Chingay* onto the UNESCO Representative List of ICH in March 2025

¹ Singapore’s first UNESCO nomination to the Representative List of the ICH of Humanity is *Hawker Culture*, a single-country nomination which was successfully inscribed in 2020. Singapore’s second UNESCO nomination is *kebaya* which was jointly nominated with Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. The results are expected to be announced in December 2024.

² NHB conducted a public engagement survey between August – October 2022 to determine ICH elements suitable for Singapore’s next nomination. The survey followed a series of Focus Group Discussions held between June 2021 – January 2022 with close to 170 participants where a shortlist of 10 ICH elements were chosen by the participants.



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would be part of the commemorations marking the 60th anniversary of Singapore-Malaysia bilateral relations. *Chingay Parade*, as practised in Singapore, reflects our multicultural and diverse society. I hope more Singaporeans will support and attend the Parade in the coming year, as 2025 also marks our 60th National Day.”

5 Ms Chang Hwee Nee, Chief Executive Officer of NHB, Singapore, said, “*Chingay* is still a thriving practice after more than five decades. This is a testament to its adaptability as living heritage, and the dedication and resourcefulness of its practitioners to pass down the knowledge and skills to the next generation. We have embarked on this joint nomination to celebrate *Chingay's* importance as living heritage, as part of our continued commitment to promoting and raising awareness of Singapore’s shared multicultural heritage for future generations, and bridging communities between the two countries through the *Chingay*.”

6 Mr Jimmy Toh, Chief Executive Director of the People’s Association (PA), Singapore, said, “In Singapore, many Singaporeans grew up experiencing *Chingay* as an annual tradition on joy and jubilation, some as spectators, others as performers, artists or volunteers. *Chingay* is more than just a parade; it is a cherished celebration that unites Singaporeans across diverse ethnic communities. This joint nomination with Malaysia showcases the vibrant multiculturalism of our societies and highlights how *Chingay* continues to unite communities in a shared celebration of our rich heritage. In the journey to jointly inscribe *Chingay* on the UNESCO Representative List, we aim to honour the many individuals and groups, both past and present, who have been involved in keeping this form of intangible cultural heritage, alive.”

7 Malaysia and Singapore aim to submit the nomination file to UNESCO in March 2025, and the result is expected to be announced in end 2026, at the earliest.

Shared History and Significance of *Chingay*

8 *Chingay* represents a significant part of Singapore and Malaysia’s shared cultural histories, and remains actively practised in both countries. *Chingay* is deeply rooted in Singapore’s history. From its inception in 1973, it has evolved and grown to become a significant community-centred event in the socio-cultural calendar, reflecting the dynamism of Singapore’s multiculturalism, traditions as well as visual and performing arts. Today, it is commemorated through an engaging parade that is renowned for its dazzling and characteristic floats, intricate props and cultural performances from diverse cultural and ethnic



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communities. These require specific skills and knowledge which are passed down from the senior to younger practitioners, and between cultural communities. In addition, the annual parade involves multiple communities of all ages and backgrounds, such as local practitioners and artists from a wide range of performing art forms, community groups and interest groups; community volunteers; as well as international participants which facilitate cross-cultural exchanges.

9 As a form of ICH, or living heritage, *Chingay* is constantly adapting and evolving over time, incorporating modern elements and new technology to reach out to new audiences. For instance, more recent editions of *Chingay* made use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) effects and interactive floor projections to present traditional art forms, which had greater appeal to younger audiences while retaining the essence of the art form.

10 *Chingay* is also practised as important cultural events, in the Malaysian cities of Johor Bahru and Penang³. In Johor Bahru, it is organised by *Johor Bahru Tionghua Association* and held annually at the Johor Bahru Old Chinese Temple on the 21st day of the first month of the Lunar New Year since 1870, featuring creative floats and traditional performances from both Chinese and non-Chinese groups. In Penang, it is organised as a multicultural and secular performance by *Penang Chingay Association* in the Historic City of George Town, involving both local and overseas performers and communities.

11 The joint nomination underscores the significance of *Chingay* as a unifying celebration of shared history and culture, and celebrates its cultural richness while appreciating the diverse practices observed in both countries.

Support of Singaporeans required for successful nomination

³ The following are a selection of online sources of how Chingay practised in the cities of Johor Bahru and Penang, Malaysia.

a. Chingay listed on Malaysia's ICH Inventory <https://www.heritage.gov.my/en/chingay.html>

b. Chingay in Johor Bahru

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=wbkMr2JpITM&si=u88xKUv3Z2YPbJPA>

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/02/10/jb-chingay-festival-expected-to-draw-30000-visitors-says-association-chief>

c. Chingay in Penang

https://youtu.be/iZ5_2wGy5vw?si=z0wb-nw53nFkVZnH

<https://www.buletinmutiara.com/spectacular-chingay-parade-draws-enthusiastic-crowds/>



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12 UNESCO will evaluate the nomination file collectively submitted by the participating countries, and focus on aspects such as:

- How the nominated element is aligned with UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage;
- How the existing and future safeguarding measures in each of the participating countries ensure the promotion and transmission of the practice; and
- How the nomination effort has involved the participation of the community (or communities) in each of the participating countries.

13 NHB and PA will be steering the nomination in Singapore. As part of continued public engagement efforts, NHB and PA have held five focus group discussions from August to October 2024 to seek consent and support from key *Chingay* stakeholders for the joint nomination, their views on *Chingay* and the nomination, as well as existing and suggested safeguarding measures for *Chingay*. These focus group discussions were attended by a total of about 70 participants comprising stakeholders such as practitioners and representatives from cultural associations who have been participating in and organising the *Chingay Parade*, and many participants had expressed their support.

14 Beyond the preparation of the nomination file, NHB and PA will coordinate *Chingay* community engagement programmes to raise awareness of the joint nomination. These engagement programmes include the *PAassionArts x Chingay Community Floats* in end October 2024 where the public can participate in co-creating the floats for *Chingay 2025*. The *Chingay National Education Assembly Programme* will continue to be held in Primary and Secondary schools in Singapore to introduce *Chingay* to students. The awareness campaign will continue into 2025 at the *Chingay National Education (NE) Show, Chingay Parade 2025* and *Chingay@Heartlands 2025* celebrations.

15 Through these efforts, it is hoped that there will be a greater appreciation of *Chingay*, and awareness of the nomination effort. The feedback and support from Singaporeans have been crucial in shaping the nominations for UNESCO recognition, and members of the public and interested community groups are encouraged to participate in the preparation for the nomination, and in safeguarding and celebrating Singapore's diverse ICH. More details on the public outreach initiatives will be shared on PA's website on *Chingay* (<https://www.chingay.gov.sg>) and NHB's and PA's social media channels (NHB: Facebook



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@NationalHeritageBoardSG and Instagram @nhb_sg; PA's Chingay Facebook: @ChingayParadeSG, Instagram: @chingayparadesg and TikTok: @chingayparadesg) at a later date.

About Chingay 2025

16 The PA annual multicultural extravaganza *Chingay Parade* will return with the theme "JOY" on 7 and 8 February 2025 (10th and 11th day of the Chinese New Year). The vibrant parade celebrates joy and unity within our community, and showcases our shared journey that transcends ethnicity, language and age. To celebrate Singapore's 60th birthday, *Chingay* unites us through the universal language of "Food" in a vibrant, people-powered performance. The audience will experience a sensory feast of food-inspired floats, costumes and PASSionArts installations, celebrating shared meals and cherished memories. Adding to the spectacle will be a roaring showcase of 60 lion dancers that embody the energy and spirit of Singapore. With an all-new immersive layout, be dazzled by large-scale performances, eye-catching inflatables, and the signature excitement that is brought to you by over 4,000 performers from 150 organisations. More than 20,000 audience members will come together to celebrate SG60 at *Chingay 2025*.

17 Tickets for *Chingay Parade 2025* will be available for sale from 6 November 2024 onwards and PASSion Card members can enjoy a *Chingay 2025* exclusive early-bird discount of 60% off standard ticket prices between 6 November and 3 December 2024, and PASSion Card members can continue enjoying a 20% off standard ticket prices after the early-bird promotion period ends. For more information on *Chingay Parade 2025*, visit <https://www.chingay.gov.sg>, Chingay Facebook [@ChingayParadeSG](https://www.facebook.com/ChingayParadeSG) and Instagram [@chingayparadesg](https://www.instagram.com/chingayparadesg).

18 For more information on *Chingay* and the UNESCO nomination, please refer to:

- Article on *Chingay* in NHB's national inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage <https://www.roots.gov.sg/ich-landing/ich/Chingay>
- [Annex A](#): About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- [Annex B](#): UNESCO's assessment criteria for nominations for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity



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- [Annex C](#): Quotes by community profiles who have been involved in *Chingay*

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About 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, safeguards and promotes intangible cultural heritage, 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.

About the People's Association

The People's Association (PA) is a statutory board established on 1 July 1960. Our mission is to spark and nurture community participation for a caring and united Singapore. Our network includes 2,000 Grassroots Organisations (GROs), over 100 Community Clubs, five Community Development Councils, six PAssion WaVe outlets, imPAct, and the National Community Leadership Institute. For more information, please visit www.pa.gov.sg.



ANNEX A

About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity comprises the diverse cultural practices and expressions of humanity, and seeks to raise awareness of the importance of such practices and expressions, encourage dialogue that respects cultural diversity, as well as give due recognition to the practices and expressions of communities worldwide.

The successful listing of an element on UNESCO's Representative List by a country does not imply that this element belongs to, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country. Since the Representative List was developed in 2008, a total of 611 intangible cultural heritage elements have been inscribed as of December 2023.

Some of the intangible cultural heritage elements on UNESCO's Representative List include Hawker culture in Singapore, community dining and culinary practices in a multicultural urban context (2020), Timber rafting (a joint nomination by Austria, Czechia, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Spain; 2022), Alheda'a, oral traditions of calling camel flocks (a joint nomination by Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates; 2022), and Rotterdam Summer Carnival (a single-state nomination by The Netherlands; 2023).



ANNEX B

UNESCO's Assessment Criteria for Nominations onto the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Based on UNESCO's requirements for nomination, the submitting State(s) Party(ies) is (are) requested to demonstrate in its(their) nomination file, that an element proposed for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity satisfies all of the following criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- **Criterion 2:** Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity.
- **Criterion 3:** Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element.
- **Criterion 4:** The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent.
- **Criterion 5:** The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies), as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

VOICES OF CHINGAY

S/No.	Name	Quote
1	Mr Deryk Lo 32-year-old Community Volunteer	<p><i>Chingay truly brings out the spirit of community volunteerism</i></p> <p>"I started my volunteer journey with <i>Chingay</i> more than eight years ago, it's like a big family to me. My role is recruitment, training and deployment of volunteers which would last approximately five months. <i>Chingay</i> is a great opportunity for youths to develop skillsets and to showcase their leadership potential. The most memorable moment was to manage the crowd during a heavy downpour, all our volunteers were drenched yet we held on to our light sticks and distributed ponchos to the spectators. <i>Chingay</i> truly brings out the spirit of community volunteerism."</p>
2	Ms Kumudha d/o M.R. Panneerchelvam, 41-year-old Member People's Association Narpani Council	<p><i>Fostering cultural learning among younger performers</i></p> <p>"<i>Chingay</i> is a celebration of multiculturalism in Singapore, promoting inclusivity and community spirit. It provides a significant platform for showcasing Indian culture through dance, allowing us to highlight our rich heritage through creative and vibrant concepts. Each year, we develop engaging themes and costumes, encouraging cultural learning and participation among younger performers. Our contingents have received awards for the most popular floats from 2018 to 2020, reflecting our dedication and creativity in celebrating diverse art forms."</p>
3	Mr Johnny Tan 55-year-old Pole Flag Instructor Relan Dragon and Lion Arts	<p><i>Chingay would attract more youth to understand more about our culture and heritage</i></p> <p>"My journey with <i>Chingay</i> began 20 years ago as part of the performers' contingent in Singapore. We maintain a good relationship with Malaysia through exchanges, enriching our younger members. Each <i>Chingay</i> is an immersion in different themes, and we're proud to be part of this annual people's parade, infusing performance with traditional elements. I support its potential for UNESCO listing, I believe Singapore's focus on multicultural elements sets it apart from Malaysia's religious emphasis. This recognition could enhance <i>Chingay's</i> branding and attract more youth to understand more about our culture and heritage."</p>



4	Mr Osman Abdul Hamid 62-year-old Choreographer	<p><i>Safeguarding Malay heritage through dance</i></p> <p>“Through a blend of traditional Malay dance with modern choreography, I want to bring out a mix of Javanese and Malay style of dance as culture is always almost alive and yet keeping our heritage. <i>Chingay</i> is a great platform to bring people to learn about the Malay culture and heritage. Regardless if you have any dance background, we typically get 70% non-dancers with a mix across all ages coming together. My hope is for the parade to continuously bring joy to everyone so that we can understand different cultures, appreciate one another and make existence meaningful. This is truly a people’s parade.”</p>
5	Mr Goh Kim Hua 57-year-old General Director SOKA Gakkai Singapore	<p><i>Chingay is a process that fosters a strong sense of belonging and pride</i></p> <p>“My journey with <i>Chingay</i> began in 1981. This festival is significant in promoting peace and harmony in society. Initially, participants had to manage their costume design and performances, and the process fosters a strong sense of belonging and pride. Over the years, the event became more creative in choreography, props and costumes. Despite personal commitments, participants remained dedicated. <i>Chingay</i> reflects Singapore’s multicultural spirit, and its UNESCO recognition will honour its legacy, inspiring future generations to uphold its message of peace and happiness.”</p>
6	Mdm AJ Suhani 56-year-old Chairman People’s Association MESRA	<p><i>The joint nomination reinforces shared histories and inspiring ongoing unity and collaboration for years to come</i></p> <p>“<i>Chingay</i> is a vibrant celebration that unites diverse communities, highlighting our shared heritage. As a volunteer, I cherish the connections it fosters and the unique stories it showcases. <i>Chingay</i> promotes and preserves Malay culture through performances and traditional costumes, inspiring future generations to uphold our values. Safeguarding <i>Chingay</i> ensures a vibrant culture and a sense of belonging. The joint nomination underscores our interconnectedness with Malaysians, reinforcing shared histories and inspiring ongoing unity and collaboration for years to come.”</p>