

Media Release

For immediate release

NHB'S HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS THE FIRST IN ASIA TO USE MOBILE TELEPRESENCE ROBOT TO INCREASE ACCESS TO GALLERIES, EXHIBITIONS AND COLLECTIONS

SINGAPORE, 18 March 2019 – The National Heritage Board's (NHB) heritage institutions, comprising the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, Malay Heritage Centre and Indian Heritage Centre, will be the first museums in Asia to introduce the use of a mobile telepresence robot to allow visitors to “walk through” its galleries and exhibitions, and converse with a museum guide remotely – without having to physically set foot inside each institution.

2. Under Our SG Heritage Plan launched in April 2018, NHB seeks to reach out to underserved communities by developing a suite of programmes targeting these communities. As part of the aforementioned initiative, NHB has been developing a range of signature, age-friendly programmes¹ for seniors at the three heritage institutions as part of their Silver Hubs initiative.

3. In order to further reach out to the silver generation, all three heritage institutions will be introducing the “Be My Robo-Date” programme, which aims to make the heritage institutions more accessible to people who cannot physically visit because of old age, sickness and/or physical disability. It will comprise a mobile telepresence robot that can be remotely controlled by a visitor, which will be available for booking on a specific date and timeslot.

4. The “Be My Robo-Date” programme will allow the remote visitor(s) to experience the heritage institutions and their collections from their own homes through a mobile telepresence robot. In the case of the silver generation, the programme will allow senior citizens (especially bed-ridden ones) in nursing homes to “remotely” visit and experience the heritage institutions.

5. As part of the programme, the remote visitor(s) will have to register for available one-hour slots. The remote visitor(s) will then be required to install a controlling software which will allow him/her/them to connect through at a specific time. The remote visitor(s) will be able to control the mobile telepresence robot and guide it through the heritage institutions at their preferred pace. There will always be a museum guide to accompany the robot and to converse with the remote visitor(s).

¹ Programmes under the Silver Hubs initiative include:

- a) **Conversation Starter Kit for Seniors**, a facilitation tool, co-developed by NHB, the National Council of Social Service and a core team of social service organisations, to help conduct more engaging and enriching conversations with seniors, and encourage them to share their personal and community experiences.
- b) **Reminiscence Walks**, which is jointly developed with SAGE Counselling Centre to encourage the empowerment of, and social interaction amongst, seniors, through guided heritage tours. It seeks to enhance the psychological and social well-being of seniors through the process of reminiscence and recall.

6. The mobile telepresence robot is equipped with video and audio features that allow the remote visitor(s) to view the galleries and their artefacts, and to converse with the guide. It will also have a digital zoom forward-facing function to allow remote visitor(s) to zoom in on artefacts that he/she/they are interested in. In addition, the mobile telepresence robot is equipped with an assisted driving function that adjusts its speed according to its surroundings to prevent the robot from knocking into sculptures, showcases and/or paintings on display within the heritage institutions.

7. NHB's heritage institutions are partnering St Andrew's Nursing Home (SANH) to trial test² the mobile telepresence robot with its residents before making the robot available for online booking through the websites of the three heritage institutions from June 2019. Ms Joan Lee, Assistant Director of Nursing, SANH (Queenstown) shared, "The programme will engage our residents with limited mobility in activities that will keep them physically and mentally active. Reminiscing about the past will also promote social interaction among the residents as they bond over a shared experience. We believe that our residents will enjoy the "live" digital experience provided by the mobile telepresence robot, a varied experience from the home's rehabilitative programmes.

8. Mr Alvin Tan, Assistant Chief Executive (Policy & Community) has this to add: "Through the use of innovative technology such as the mobile telepresence robot, we hope to reach out to new audience segments and make our galleries and their collections more accessible. Consequently, in addition to nursing homes, we hope to roll out the programme to include other underserved communities such as inmates in prisons, centres for persons with disabilities and terminally ill children in hospitals."

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² **Note:** The trial test will take place over a three-month period from March to May 2019 and involve other partners including nursing homes and social services organisations.



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.

St. Andrew's Mission Hospital (SAMH)

Out of passion to care for the physical, emotional and social well-being of the community, the St. Andrew's Medical Mission was founded in 1913 by Dr. Charlotte Ferguson-Davie, the wife of the first Anglican Bishop of Singapore who was also a medical doctor herself. Seeing the plight of the local women and children of that time and the lack of medical services for them, Dr. Ferguson-Davie set up a dispensary along Bencoolen Street for the destitute women and children. The Medical Mission continued to meet the locals' needs and thus led to the opening of more dispensaries and eventually, St. Andrew's Mission Hospital in 1923 and St. Andrew's Orthopaedic Hospital in 1939.

Working closely with the Government, SAMH constantly developed its services to meet the relevant needs of our local community at all times. Today, SAMH has under its operation:

- St. Andrew's Autism Centre - providing special needs services to children and adults with autism,
- St. Andrew's Community Hospital - providing intermediate rehabilitative and medical care for the community,
- St. Andrew's Nursing Home (Buangkok) - a psychiatric nursing home facility,
- St. Andrew's Nursing Home (Henderson and Queenstown) - nursing home facilities with co-located Senior Care Centres,
- St. Andrew's Senior Care (JOY Connect) and St. Andrew's Senior Care (Tampines) - provides daycare, community rehabilitation, dementia daycare, centre-based nursing, integrated homecare services (medical, nursing, therapy) and community case management services.