

MEDIA RELEASE***For Immediate Publication*****SINGAPORE TO NOMINATE HAWKER CULTURE FOR UNESCO'S REPRESENTATIVE
LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Singaporeans are invited to pledge their support during the nomination journey

Singapore, 19 August 2018 – Ask any Singaporean and it would be rare to find someone who hasn't enjoyed a good meal at our hawker centres. As food is to our Singaporean identity, so is the hawker centre to our culinary landscape. Hawker centres, with their variety of affordable dishes well-loved by Singaporeans from all walks of life, have become an integral part of our daily lives, as well as a distinctive feature of our nation's food heritage. These sentiments were echoed through a series of engagements with Singaporeans to discover what aspects of our intangible cultural heritage really matter to them. As such, Singapore will be nominating Hawker Culture for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

2 The decision to nominate Hawker Culture was announced by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the National Day Rally on 19 August 2018, where he spoke about hawker centres being a unique part of Singapore's society, heritage and identity. This follows Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu's earlier announcement at the Committee of Supply Debate 2018 in March, where she shared how Singapore is looking at a possible listing of an intangible cultural heritage element on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The chosen element, she stressed, has to be one that resonates with all Singaporeans, and reflects Singapore's multicultural heritage to the world.

3 Ms Chang Hwee Nee, Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Board (NHB), said, "Hawker centres and hawker food have grown to become an integral part of the Singaporean identity, and is a reflection of our multi-cultural society. Just as how our hawker centres bring people together through our shared love for food, I believe this nomination will help bond Singaporeans through the celebration of our living heritage, and make us feel even prouder to be Singaporean. Through the bid, we hope to put Singapore's Hawker Culture on the world stage, thus increasing recognition of its importance, and ensuring its sustainability for the future."

Strong Support for the Selection of Hawker Culture as Singapore's Nomination for UNESCO's Representative List

4 The selection of Hawker Culture was made after a series of public engagement efforts involving Singaporeans from all walks of life. In a poll conducted earlier this year as part of NHB's Our SG Heritage Plan, a five-year master plan that maps out strategies and initiatives for the future of Singapore's heritage, "Food Heritage" came up top, as the most important aspect of Singapore's intangible cultural heritage amongst more than 3,000 respondents.

5 Further to the above, in-depth focus group discussions were conducted from April to July 2018 with more than 140 participants on Singapore's intangible cultural heritage, to uncover what aspects of our diverse intangible cultural heritage resonate best with Singaporeans. Participants included academics, heritage experts, youths, cultural practitioners and members of the public. Across the sessions, Hawker Culture was consistently highlighted as an intangible cultural heritage that best represents Singapore's multicultural heritage, with hawker centres viewed as important community spaces. It emerged as a firm favourite among the participants who indicated their support for Hawker Culture to be nominated for UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

6 The findings from the focus group discussions are similar to other studies conducted in the past. For instance, in a survey conducted by the National Environment Agency (NEA) in 2016 showed that close to 85 per cent of respondents felt that hawker centres play an important role in community bonding. The same survey revealed that 9 in 10 respondents strongly agreed or agreed that hawker centres are an integral part of Singapore's identity.

Significance of Singapore's Hawker Culture

7 Singapore's Hawker Culture constitutes not just the hawker centres and the wide variety of food they offer, but also their role as vibrant social and community spaces, serving as our "community dining rooms", well-loved and patronised by Singaporeans from all backgrounds. Our hawkers and their repertoire of skills are also central to keeping our Hawker Culture sustainable. All of these make Hawker Culture an important part of our country's intangible cultural heritage, one that is living and very much part of everyday Singaporean life. The three important characteristics of Hawker Culture, which were highlighted during the focus group discussions conducted from April to July 2018, are summarised as follows:

- A Reflection of Our Multi-Cultural Heritage

At hawker centres, one can savour Singapore's multi-cultural food heritage all under one roof, including dishes from all ethnic groups, some of which were brought to our shores by the early communities who settled in Singapore. These food offerings have evolved with the times to cater to the needs and palates of generations of Singaporeans.

- Accessible Hawker Centres

There are more than 110 hawker centres in Singapore today, and these are spread across our island to serve as convenient nodes for Singaporeans to enjoy their favourite hawker fare in a clean and hygienic setting. Hawker centres are integrated into the spaces where we work, live and play, and they serve as "community dining rooms" for Singaporeans from all social backgrounds, to gather and bond over their shared love for food.

- Hawkers as Dedicated Masters of Trade

Hawkers are central to the continued relevance of our hawker centres. It is thus important that their knowledge, culinary techniques and values are passed on through the generations. Greater awareness, recognition and appreciation of our Hawker Culture will hopefully encourage the active transmission of our hawker trade from one generation to the next.

8 Mr Ronnie Tay, Chief Executive Officer of NEA, said, "In the 1970s, the main purpose of hawker centres was to allow street hawkers to sell food in a hygienic setting with proper sanitation. The role of our hawker centres has evolved over the years. Today, our hawker centres are acknowledged as important communal spaces where people gather, interact and forge community bonds. Recognising the key role that hawker centres play in the daily lives of Singaporeans, NEA will continue to work with all stakeholders to sustain the hawker trade and ensure that our hawker centres remain a popular and well-loved dining location amongst all Singaporeans."

9 Singapore aims to submit Singapore's nomination documents to UNESCO in March 2019, so as to be considered for the 2019/2020 cycle of evaluation. The results are expected to be announced in end 2020.

10 UNESCO will evaluate the nomination documents submitted by countries, and focus on aspects such as:

- How the nominated element is aligned to UNESCO's definition of intangible cultural heritage;
- How the existing and future safeguarding measures ensure the promotion and transmission of the practice; and
- How the nomination effort has involved the widespread participation of the community.

11 If Singapore's UNESCO inscription is successful, our Hawker Culture will join the ranks of other intangible heritage elements on the world stage, such as Korea's Kimjang (the making and sharing of Kimchi), Indonesia's Batik and India's Yoga.

Support of Singaporeans Required for a Successful Nomination

12 For Singapore's nomination of Hawker Culture to be successful, strong community support for the element by Singaporeans is crucial. From now till end 2020, Singaporeans can play their part in celebrating our Hawker Culture and pledge their support for our hawker centres, hawkers and hawker food via www.oursgheritage.sg. Come October 2018, there will also be other public outreach initiatives to garner support from Singaporeans, such as a travelling exhibition to learn about the Hawker Culture nomination and support the nomination effort.

13 The Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS), NHB and NEA will be driving the nomination, and will oversee the formation of a nomination committee to lend guidance to the nomination effort. The committee will comprise selected individuals from both the public and private sectors, who will provide expertise and advice on the nomination details and garner the support of fellow Singaporeans. More details of the nomination committee will be provided at a later date.

14 Mr Yeo Hiang Meng, President of FMAS, said, "Singapore's nomination of Hawker Culture reflects the prized position that our Hawker Culture occupies in the hearts of Singaporeans. We hope that more Singaporeans will actively pledge their support for our Hawker Culture. This will strengthen our bid and support its successful inscription on UNESCO's Representative List."

15 For more information, please refer to:

- **Annex A:** Journey and timeline for nominating Hawker Culture for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Annex B:** About the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Annex C:** UNESCO's assessment criteria for nominations for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Annex D:** Details on upcoming public outreach initiatives
- **Annex E:** Factsheet on NEA's initiatives to sustain the hawker trade and enhance the vibrancy of our hawker centres

– END –

For media enquiries, please contact:

Sylvia Goh
National Heritage Board
DID: 6332 4485
Mobile: 9873 7746
Email: Sylvia_Goh@nhb.gov.sg

Bridget Chang
National Environment Agency
DID: 6708 6237
HP: 8481 8697
Email: Bridget_Chang@nea.gov.sg

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.

About the National Environment Agency

Formed on 1 July 2002, the National Environment Agency (NEA) is the leading public organisation responsible for improving and sustaining a clean and green environment in Singapore. The NEA develops and spearheads environmental initiatives and programmes through its partnership with the People, Public and Private sectors. It is committed to motivating every individual to take up environmental ownership and to care for the environment as a way of life.

By protecting Singapore's resources from pollution, maintaining a high level of public health and providing timely meteorological information, the NEA endeavours to ensure sustainable development and a quality living environment for present and future generations.

About the Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore

Registered as an association in 1989, the Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS) is a non-profit organisation formed to represent interest of merchants operating in the Housing and Development Board (HDB) neighbourhood and town centres, as well as stallholders selling in the National Environmental Agency (NEA) hawker centres and markets. Its vision is to be the champion for the heartland business community, and the bridge between the government and heartland retailers and hawkers.

Journey and Timeline for Nominating Hawker Culture for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

- **February 2018:** Singapore ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as part of the country's ongoing efforts to safeguard, promote and commemorate Singapore's intangible cultural heritage under Our SG Heritage Plan, the first master plan for the future of Singapore's heritage and museum sector.
 - Ratifying, or consenting to be bound by, the convention signals a country's commitment to safeguarding and promoting its intangible cultural heritage. Following the ratification of the convention, Singapore joins the other 177 countries which are signatories to the convention.
 - As a signatory to the convention, Singapore will be allowed to submit nomination(s) to inscribe intangible cultural heritage elements onto the UNESCO Representative List.
- **April 2018:** National Heritage Board co-created an intangible cultural heritage inventory with Singaporeans.
 - Singapore's intangible cultural heritage inventory exists as a repository to showcase the diverse elements of intangible cultural heritage that are present and practised in multicultural Singapore, and includes the contributions of Singaporeans.
 - The elements in the intangible cultural heritage inventory are classified into six broad categories, which are largely based on UNESCO's categories¹ for intangible cultural heritage, and include an additional category dedicated specially to Singapore's food heritage. The latter was based on feedback gathered from stakeholders and Singaporeans during the public engagement phase of Our SG Heritage Plan.
 - The establishment of such an inventory is the first step towards, and a criteria for nominating an intangible cultural heritage element for the UNESCO Representative List.
 - The inventory will be an ongoing and growing one to which we will continue to add more intangible cultural heritage elements as well as more research and documentation materials over time.
 - Singaporeans can contribute information to the inventory, or suggest additional elements for it, via roots.sg (www.roots.sg/ICH) – NHB's heritage resource portal.

¹ UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage indicates five broad domains or categories in which, among others, intangible cultural heritage is manifested: (a) *Oral Traditions and Expressions*; (b) *Performing Arts*; (c) *Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events*; (d) *Knowledge and Practices about Nature and Universe*; and (e) *Traditional Craftsmanship*.

- **August 2018: Singapore selects Hawker Culture as the element from Singapore's intangible cultural heritage inventory to be nominated for inscription onto the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
 - This UNESCO Representative List is made up of intangible cultural heritage elements from different countries that showcase the diversity of cultural heritage around the world, increase visibility and raise awareness about their importance so that they can be safeguarded.
 - The successful nomination of an element from Singapore will allow us to share our multicultural aspects of our heritage with the international community, and contribute to the diverse cultures of the world.
 - The successful listing of an element on UNESCO's Representative List by a country does not imply that this element belongs, originates from, or exists only in the submitting country.
- **March 2019: Singapore will submit the nomination documents to UNESCO for evaluation and decision on the inscription.**
 - The aim is to submit the nomination documents to UNESCO by March 2019, which is the next submission timeline.
 - The dossier will first be evaluated by a panel of experts appointed by UNESCO and then assessed by the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee which comprises representatives from different countries.
 - The evaluation process will take place over a period of one year and eight months, and the results will be announced in end 2020.
- **End 2020: Announcement of results of Singapore's nomination of Hawker Culture for UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
 - If successful, Singapore's nominated element will be listed on the said list, just as the Singapore Botanic Gardens had been listed as a World Heritage Site.

Notes for media: Do note that the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity are two different things and should not be confused. The UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was created by the 2003 UNESCO Convention as a means to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of humanity at the international level.

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 399 intangible cultural heritage elements have been inscribed as of 2017.

Some of the intangible cultural heritage elements on UNESCO's Representative List include Mak Yong theatre (Malaysia, 2008), Gastronomic Meal of the French (France, 2010), Indonesian Angklung (Indonesia, 2010), Chinese Shadow Puppetry (China, 2011), Kimjang, or the making and sharing of Kimchi (Korea, 2013), Washoku (Japan, 2013), Bagpipe Culture (Slovakia, 2015) and Yoga (India, 2016).

UNESCO's Assessment Criteria for Nominations for 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 documents 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.

Details on Upcoming Public Outreach Initiatives

For Singapore's nomination of Hawker Culture to be successful, strong community support for the element by Singaporeans is crucial.

1) Website to Pledge Support

From now till end 2020, Singaporeans can pledge their support for Singapore's Hawker Culture to be inscribed as Singapore's element on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity via www.oursqheritage.sg.

2) Travelling Exhibition: Our SG Hawker Culture

- Dates: 26 Oct 2018 – 31 Jan 2019
- Venue: Islandwide

At this travelling exhibition, visitors can learn more about Singapore's Hawker Culture and Singaporeans' love for hawker centres and hawker food, as well as find out more about Singapore's nomination of Hawker Culture for inscription onto the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

More importantly, they can also be part of the nomination process by pledging their support for Singapore's Hawker Culture to be inscribed as Singapore's element on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The exhibition will travel to over 10 locations islandwide, including Tiong Bahru Market, Our Tampines Hub, Yuhua Village Market and Food Centre, Kampung Admiralty Hawker Centre, as well as selected libraries and shopping malls.

NEA's Initiatives to Sustain the Hawker Trade and Enhance the Vibrancy of Our Hawker Centres

Sustaining the hawker trade and supporting new entrants

1 In line with the recommendations of the Hawker Centre 3.0 Committee, NEA has been providing training opportunities and pathways for aspiring hawkers, and offering funding support to existing hawkers who wish to adopt automation and raise productivity.

Hawker Fare Series

2 The NEA collaborated with the People's Association to introduce the first Hawker Fare Series which consisted of culinary classes on hawker fare, with each class conducted over two 3.5-hour lessons by veteran hawkers. The Series was also organised with the aim of generating interest in hawker food and culture, and contributing to sustaining the hawker trade in the long run.

3 A total of 180 participants attended the 17 classes, which were held from May to August 2017 and January to April 2018, and had hands-on experience in learning to prepare hawker fare such as Chicken Rice, Yong Tau Foo and Roti Prata.

Hawker Business Management Course – “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business”

4 Adding to the Hawker Fare Series, the NEA and Institute of Technical Education (ITE) jointly developed the “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” course, which is held over three weekday evenings. The course offers individuals the chance to gain insights and be equipped with the necessary knowledge to run a stall in a hawker centre, such as how to perform basic profit and loss analysis, identify external stakeholders such as competitors, suppliers and customers, apply the principles of marketing and write a simple business plan.

5 The inaugural course was held from 25 to 27 July 2017. Due to the good response, ITE increased the class size from 15 to 25 persons, and conducted four additional classes in August and September 2017. A total of 119 people participated in the classes in 2017. In 2018, four classes will run (in March, April, August and October).

Incubation Stall Programme

6 Launched on 23 February 2018, eligible aspiring hawkers can apply for an incubation stall after they have attended the “Introduction to Managing a Hawker Business” course conducted by ITE, or equivalent courses. Applicants will also need to submit a business plan to NEA and have their proposed offering undergo a food tasting evaluation by a panel.

7 Successful applicants will be offered an incubation stall for a non-renewable six-month tenancy at 50% of the assessed market rent. In addition, the incubation stalls come pre-fitted

with basic equipment, and hence, successful applicants will be able to save on some start-up capital costs. Since the launch of the programme in February 2018, NEA received over 20 applications.

Hawkers' Productivity Grant

8 Eligible cooked food stallholders at hawker centres managed by NEA or NEA-appointed managing agents can apply for the Hawkets' Productivity Grant that was launched on 9 October 2017. Under this grant, NEA will co-fund the purchase of suitable kitchen automation equipment by cooked food stallholders for three years. Each stallholder will be able to claim 80 per cent of the qualifying cost of the equipment on a reimbursement basis, up to a total of S\$5,000 within a three-year time frame.

9 Under the grant, eligible kitchen automation equipment must result in significant man-hours savings in food preparation and/or cooking time, and must be of at least commercial grade. As at 30 June 2018, 118 applications for the grant have been approved. The total amount of grant committed for these applications so far is about \$250,000. Some of the equipment which these stallholders have purchased include:

- Food processor
- Vegetable cutter
- Automatic cooker
- Dough mixer
- Sugar cane press machine

Promoting greater public ownership in enhancing hawker centres as social spaces and improving vibrancy of hawker centres

Vibrant Hawker Centres Programme

10 The three-year Vibrant Hawker Centres Programme was launched on 10 June 2017 to encourage public and private partners, grassroots and community organisations, as well as educational institutions to adopt hawker centres and organise activities there on a sustained basis. Every organisation which adopts a hawker centre can apply for a grant of up to \$2,000 for an event or activity organised within the hawker centre, and up to an annual cap of \$10,000 for each adopter. Nanyang Polytechnic is the first adopter in the programme.

11 From June 2017 to 30 June 2018, the programme achieved 17 adopters and a total of 40 events ranging from music performances, digital art showcase, interactive games, public dialogue sessions to art and music workshops. Adopters include individuals, groups or organisations which have committed to holding two or more events per year.