Cultural ministers and senior officials of 11 Asian countries have come together in Hong Kong this morning (October 8) to share their insights and experiences of translating the vision of supporting the continuation and enhancement of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) into actions.

Today's "Panel Discussion by Asia Cultural Ministers" Session, hosted by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), is the highlight of the "Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum (ACCF) 2011".

The ACCF was launched in 2003 as one of HAB's key initiatives to foster regional cultural co-operation, share good practices and promote culture and the arts.

This year's ACCF is the seventh forum that Hong Kong has hosted. It carries the theme of "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: From Vision to Action".

Cultural ministers and senior officials of the Mainland China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have joined today's panel discussion session.

Addressing the panel discussion session, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, said that Hong Kong was highly committed to promoting regional cultural co-operation and exchange in Asia.

"While the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) provides a framework, how this is translated into practice is a huge subject that has been tackled in different and creative ways by different governments depending on the local context, needs and wishes of the population."

"Here in Hong Kong, we adopt a multi-pronged approach to protect, nurture and promote ICH. This includes in-depth research, education, promotion, application for inscription and transmission," Mr Tsang explained.

He noted that apart from financial and human resources provided by the Government, local communities and organisations were encouraged to participate and
support safeguarding measures as part of our concerted efforts to preserve local ICH.

"We are also carrying out a major survey of ICH in Hong Kong to identify local elements in accordance with the framework set out in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH."

"We expect the survey will help identify more heritage items from local communities, groups and individuals," Mr Tsang said, adding that the survey findings would also provide a comprehensive basis for formulating further supporting measures for the preservation, promotion and enhancement of ICH.

In Hong Kong, four local ICH items, namely the Cheung Chau Jiao Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, the Tai Hang fire dragon dance and the Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community, have been successfully inscribed onto the third national list of intangible cultural heritage this year. Another heritage item, Cantonese opera, was inscribed onto UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009.

The Minister of Culture of the People's Republic of China, Dr Cai Wu, has also addressed today's panel discussion session. Other cultural ministers and senior officials attending the session have taken turns to speak on the theme and joined together to exchange views with the audience in a Q&A session.

Ends/Saturday, October 8, 2011

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