



PHOTO: AFP

24-CARAT LOO: Hang Fung Jewellers will smelt a tonne of gold in its famous toilet if the price of gold hits US\$1,000 an ounce.

Solid gold loo never smelt this good

HONG KONG

HONG KONG'S famed solid gold toilet is, well, a fixture on the city's tourist itinerary. But with gold prices touching record highs, part of it could soon be headed down the pan.

Hang Fung Jewellers, which draws Chinese tourists by the busload to its unique Hall of Gold, said it will smelt one tonne of gold in its 24-carat lavatory if the price of gold hits US\$1,000 (S\$1,400) an ounce.

The toilet is part of an extravagant display which includes a golden palace and statues of Chinese goddesses, originally created to attract people to the shop.

Hang Fung promises that the toilet will stay, but a tonne of ornaments around it will come to an end.

In January, Hang Fung smelted one tonne of gold from its display and sold it for about US\$855 an ounce, nearly double the price it originally paid.

Chief financial officer Frank Wu said the group wants to increase its 160 outlets on the mainland to 1,000 to take advantage of China's booming economy – and its thirst for all things gold.

Jewellery sales rose 40 per cent in China last year, he said.

Even though prices are now around US\$990, jewellers and retailers say there is an almost unquenchable appetite for gold jewellery in China, no matter what the cost is.

Hang Fung says it is looking to keep costs down by using less gold in its jewellery without sacrificing a luxurious look.