

He spends \$150,000 on toilets and 5 hours a day in the loo

Why? Mr Toilet wants you to smile when you come out



By SKYE TAN

PEOPLE enter many public toilets with a look of concentration, and leave with a look of disgust.

One man is crusading to change all that.

Mr Jack Sim is on a solitary crusade: To make a trip to the public toilet a pleasure.

He is founder of the World Toilet Organisation and president of the Restroom Association of Singapore (RAS), which is spearheading the Happy Toilet Programme all over the island.

RATING RESTROOMS

Being launched this month, the programme will test, judge and rate Singapore's 70,000 public toilets and award Happy Toilet plaques to those that fulfil the criteria (See report on facing page).

Mr Sim, 46, said: "I am Mr Toilet. My friends introduce me as Mr Toilet."

Even his children call him that sometimes, he said.

And he lives up to it.

Mr Sim, who runs a building materials company, wore a tie bearing the symbols for men's and ladies' toilets ("My favourite tie") for a tour of the country's restrooms.

We stopped at four toilets: At Tampines Mall, Chef's Choice coffee shop on Ubi Avenue, the Shangri-La hotel and the Botanic Gardens.

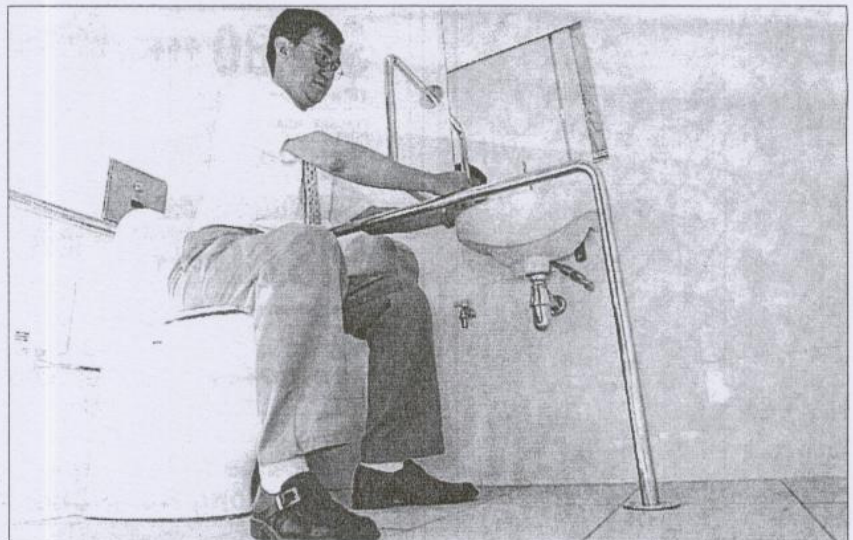
At the Tampines Mall, the restroom for the handicapped got the thumbs-up for its friendly design.

The reason? The basin is easy to access while seated on the commode.

The diaper changing rooms outside of the ladies' room also got the nod.

The father of four said: "It's unisex. Lots of fathers change their kid's diapers these days.

"It's not good to have diaper rooms inside



the ladies' toilets."

With children between the ages of 6 and 11, Mr Sim talks from experience.

Mr Sim is convinced that the Happy Toilet campaign is a worthy cause.

He said: "I wanted to do something important for society."

Since the non-profit RAS was started in 1998, Mr Sim has sunk \$150,000 into it.

But why this particular cause?

He said he prefers to tackle something that others have not taken up as the challenge is greater.

He said: "With causes like Aids, people may say it doesn't involve me. But everyone needs to use public toilets."

The average person goes to the toilet six

times a day and cleaner toilets make for happier people.

Making sure that public toilets are well kept is extremely important, he added.

"You often see people coming out of toilets with a disgusted face.

"They are used to being punished when they go into a public toilet," said Mr Sim, who spends around five hours every day working on trying to make Singapore a land of Happy Toilets.

If he had his way, people would leave public toilets smiling.

Would there come a day when we actually linger in public toilets willingly and leave reluctantly?

Mr Toilet certainly hopes so.