

Joint effort to flush out dirty toilets islandwide

■ BY DARYL CHIN

GOVERNMENT agencies, private companies and the Restroom Association of Singapore (RAS) are coming together for the first time to flush out dirty toilets islandwide.

This joint effort, detailed in the first Inter-Agency Working Committee report released by the RAS yesterday, maps out a plan to have at least 70 per cent of all toilets in Singapore meet a three-star standard by 2013.

This means the toilet has basic amenities like hand soap and toilet paper, working facilities, no odour and is litter-free.

Recommendations in the report included subsidies for restroom cleaning courses and shared cleaning services among small operators. This will hopefully help small businesses resistant to hiring trained restroom cleaners due to higher costs.

The report also recommended developing performance-based standards of cleaning services, as well as improving the welfare of restroom cleaners.

Under its Happy Toilet Programme, the RAS rates toilets from three to five stars.



The RAS, which awarded this restroom in a Tampines coffee shop five stars, hopes at least 70 per cent of all toilets here meet a three-star standard by 2013. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

A five-star toilet, for example, will have eco-friendly features like water-saving taps.

At present, only about 30 per cent of the 30,000 restrooms in Singapore meet the three-star standard.

One of the changes in the report has been the discontinuation of the "Singapore's OK" campaign, which promoted the widespread adoption of good hygiene practices and was started by the National Environment Agency (NEA) in 2003.

The NEA will now work with the RAS to promote clean toilets through the Happy Toilet Programme.

RAS president Tan Puay Hoon stressed the importance of clean toilets yesterday.

"For us, toilet etiquette reflects Singaporeans' culture. It tells people how civilised we are. We are a First World country and we want a gracious society to reflect that."

Mr John Selvan, managing director of Shiners Facilities, said cleaning companies here need to change their mindsets.

He said: "We need to adopt new ideologies of how we see restroom maintenance. In places like Japan, Australia and Europe, the cleaning job is a professional job and not a blue-collar job."

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