

# Towards more 'Happy Toilets' in Singapore

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**SINGAPORE** — An ERP system for toilets during peak hours? Cleaners who have the authority to act as “inspectors” to warn or fine irresponsible users? These are just two suggestions to bring Singapore’s 30,000 public toilets up to acceptable standards.

Other ideas — such as shared cleaning services, and better restroom lightings and brighter colours to influence improved user behaviour — are contained in a three-year blueprint unveiled yesterday by the Restroom Association of Singapore (RAS). In all, the association has compiled 35 recommendations.

Said RAS president Tan Puay Hoon: “In the committee, we have a lot of creative ideas, like the Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) system — during peak hours, we’ll charge the user. But, of course, that will depend on whether it is practical or not to set up the system at the restroom. So we will leave this to the restroom owners to decide which method is best for them.”

Only about 30 per cent of public toilets now meet the association’s 3-star rating. That rating is given to odour- and litter-free toilets which provide toilet paper and soap.

Smaller toilet operators such as coffeeshops are often unable to hire trained cleaners because of costs. Hence, more cost-effective restroom cleaning and maintenance is needed.

Mr John Selvan, who chairs the Cleaners & Contractors sub-committee of Inter-Agencies Working Committee, said owners have to put aside more realistic figures into meeting the costs of cleaning and maintenance of washrooms.

Mr Selvan, who is managing director of Shiners Facilities, a cleaning services

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company with 700 cleaners, said: “Because the cost of living has gone up, the cleaning contract sum must also go up, which would also relate to how we pay our cleaners.”

San Rich Cleaning & Maintenance Service owner Tan Teck Chai said he faced the difficulty of getting workers, following the Government’s tightening of the import quota for foreign workers. Most Singaporeans, he said, did not like to do cleaning work.

Ms Grace Tan, 57, a toilet cleaner at 21 Street Eating House, faces her share of woes daily, including users who do not flush toilets and others who wet the floors after washing at the sinks.

Ms Tan said: “When the floor gets wet, it’s very dangerous for old people, who face the risk of slipping and falling down.”

Yesterday, the RAS launched its first LOO@heartlands campaign at a coffeeshop in Tampines (21 Street Eating House) which has earned a 5-star rating.

The campaign will involve the distribution of tissue packets with tips to toilet users at food and beverage outlets.

The RAS also revealed that the National Environment Agency’s Singapore’s OK Public Toilet programme will be discontinued and merged with the RAS’ Happy Toilet Programme.