

# Grants for restroom cleaners to upgrade skills

GRANTS will be given to encourage more companies to send their restroom cleaners for training to improve their skills and raise hygiene standards here.

The World Toilet Organisation, a Singapore-based non-profit group that aims to improve toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide, hopes to prevent a repeat of a recent food poisoning incident at a Geylang Serai market that killed two people.

Its founder, Mr Jack Sim, said: "With the outbreak of swine flu, there is a greater need for proper hygiene in our toilets, where viruses and bacteria may be transmitted easily."

The group runs a training course, which teaches restroom cleaners skills such as customer service and odour-removal techniques, at a fee of \$700.

The Workforce Development Agency's Skills Development Fund pays between 50 and 80 per cent of Singaporean students' fees, but the employers

have to pay the balance.

From October, to encourage more companies to enrol their cleaners, the organisation will subsidise the balance of the fees - up to \$364 - for Singaporeans.

It will also work with cleaning companies to subsidise foreign workers on a case-by-case basis.

Yesterday, it held a charity golf event at Raffles Country Club to raise funds for these subsidies.

The guest of honour, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Lim Swee Say, said that improving restroom cleaners' skills would help them land better-paying jobs.

But public toilet hygiene was not just their duty, but a collective responsibility of the society, he said.

"Pride in our public restrooms is what will lead them to eventually be among the cleanest in the world one day," he added.

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