

Guards lose modesty to answer call of nature

Agnes Lam

Security guards at the Beas River equestrian event venue in Hong Kong say a lack of toilet facilities is forcing them to answer the call of nature in the open air.

They say female modesty has been abandoned and they have to carry waste with them in plastic bags before disposing of it in rubbish bins.

A guard at the Sheung Shui venue, giving her name only as Ms Lee, said there had been temporary toilets around the sprawling site, but they had all been removed days before Vice-President Xi Jinping's (習近平) visit to Hong Kong this month and not been replaced.

Now all the workers had to use a toilet at the front gate, which was up to an hour's walk from the more remote parts of the site.

"It takes me about an hour to walk to and from my post just for a toilet trip. We - men and women - have no choice and have to do it in the open air," she said.

"Many female security guards don't care about privacy anymore. We have to bring many plastic bags with us when going to work, as we have to put used tampons and tissues in plastic bags before disposing of them into trash cans.

"Our working hours are very long, as we have to show up earlier for security checks before and after work. I should work 12 hours a day - from

7am till 7pm. But my working hours are at least 13.5 every day because of the checks," she said.

"It is just humiliating. We just want to make a contribution to this big event. Yet we are treated worse than the horses and our working environment is disastrous due to human stupidity."

Some security guards had resigned over the poor working conditions, Ms Lee said.

Organising secretary of the Hong Kong Buildings Management and Security Workers General Union Li Hoi said he had received complaints from some workers at the Sheung Shui venue. "I also heard that security guards at the Sha Tin venues had complained about long working hours due to security checks before and after work," he said.

Lam Woon-kwong, chief executive of the Hong Kong Equestrian Company, said staff turnover had been higher than expected, but there had been no mass resignations.

He said security work at the venue required workers to stay in outdoor areas for a long time and stressed the company cared about workers' welfare very much and had already had meetings with security companies.

A spokeswoman for the company said turnover was expected to be high due to the hot weather.

More than 1,000 security guards had been recruited to tackle the problem, she said.