

# KERATAN AKHBAR

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## Many clean toilet campaigns held to instil awareness

**PETALING JAYA:** There have been numerous "clean toilet campaigns" organised all over the country in the past.

These campaigns basically have the same goal - to instil public awareness and responsibility on the proper use of public toilets.

The Housing and Local Government Ministry first embarked on such a campaign in 1997.

Former deputy housing and local government minister, the late Datuk Robert Lau Hoi Chew, was nicknamed the "toilet king" because of his zest to "flush out" thousands of stinking cubicles in the country.

He was at the forefront of the issue and told *The Star* in an interview that unflushed toilets, used toilet papers strewn all over, wet and stained toilet floors and vandalism were testimony to the low level of civic consciousness among Malaysians.

"When using the public toilet, use it as if you are using your toilet at home. And always think of the next user as yourself. Apart from this, the public should also boycott eateries with dirty toilets," he said in the December 2008 interview.

Lau had said that since he took over the campaign in 2004, they had

set up the National Toilet Expo and Forum (Natef), National Toilet Cleanliness Committee (NTCC) and Quality Restroom Association Malaysia (QRAM).

Over the years, *The Star* had reported on numerous clean toilet campaigns - from Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baru to Kuching.

In 2005, a nationwide toilet-cleaning exercise to promote social awareness on the importance of clean public toilets was held in conjunction with World Toilet Day, which involved presidents and officers of 145 local councils.

In September 2007, the Kuala

Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) was reported to have launched a Clean Toilet Month campaign.

DBKL's Health Department had released pamphlets and flyers containing guidelines on toilet usage as well as a standard cleanliness protocol to be adhered to by cleaners.

"City Hall has spent a lot of money in maintaining and providing public toilet facilities.

"The issue of toilet hygiene is everyone's responsibility and not just the authorities.

"If all toilet users start practising

good civic consciousness towards toilet usage, I'm sure the problem of dirty toilets will be solved," said then DBKL deputy director-general for service Mohd Amin Nordin Abd Aziz.



Today is World Lizard Day. Unknown to many, there are over **5,600 lizard** species globally and a large number of these reptiles are listed as endangered due to the loss of habitat and preyed upon by cats and dogs.

## 'Mind your toilet manners'

### Dr M peeved by the public's disregard for cleanliness

**PUTRAJAYA:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is downright peeved by dirty public toilets for it is a reflection of Malaysians' lack of civic consciousness.

"I am very ashamed (of the condition). This reflects our attitude. We should feel embarrassed but instead, we feel it is all right (not to keep the toilets clean) because we have this notion that no one will know who does what.

"This shows the lack of civic consciousness in our hearts," the Prime Minister said at the launch of Civic Education yesterday. The subject was reintroduced in June and has been incorporated into Bahasa Melayu, English, Islamic Education, Moral Education and History lessons.

In contrast, public toilets in some other countries are very clean, he said, adding that this is because the users do not dirty them.

"Why? It's because they feel they have a responsibility and appreciate

the public perception of them. As such, they will keep themselves clean and will not do anything that dirties the toilets," he added.

He said that being civic conscious is not only important for one's success but is also the yardstick to measure one's ability to live in a society.

It is not about having strict laws but about having self-discipline, said Dr Mahathir who also called out those who tarnish public spaces by scribbling on walls and littering indiscriminately.

"It is all right if we do a mural on walls, but scribbling only tarnishes the cleanliness of the walls alongside roads in the cities.

"Doing graffiti shows that the person is not civic-minded. It is not about having laws (to prevent this) but if we are civic-minded, we will not be scribbling or splashing paint on walls," he said.

The Prime Minister said that people want to live in a clean and rubbish-free environment but they are

also the ones who dirty it.

"If three million people in Kuala Lumpur throw cigarette butts indiscriminately, in no time, we will be living in a mountain of cigarette butts," he said.

The Prime Minister, whose admiration for the Japanese culture is well known, said he is impressed by how they placed importance on cleanliness and teach their children to look after the environment.

"The children will fold the food wrapper and only throw it in waste baskets or bins by the roadside. They will only throw rubbish there and not anywhere else. This is what we need to teach the public," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this is why civic education is important, so that the younger generation are taught good values, are considerate of others and act to contribute to the wellbeing of society.

"A fine example of good civic-mindedness can be seen in the

search for the missing girl. Those involved in the operations have sacrificed their holiday and Hari Raya Aidiladha celebration to help search for her.

"To me, that is a reflection of high civic-mindedness because if we are civic-minded, we will know what our responsibilities are," he said in reference to the search for Irish teen Nora Anne Quoirin who has been missing since Aug 4 while on vacation near Seremban with her family.

The Prime Minister said he hoped civic education will mould individuals and society to be responsible and considerate to all.

"With its people being civic-minded, Malaysia will be progressive and clean and will be looked up to by the world," he said.

Watch the video [thestartv.com](http://thestartv.com)



## Follow the art of cleanliness of the Japanese

**PETALING JAYA:** The Japanese word *kirei* can be defined as pretty, clean, beautiful, pure and orderly.

The term is often used by experts to explain the high civic mentality among the Japanese.

"*Kirei* guides many Japanese in their everyday life and chores. Cleanliness is very important to them," said marketing executive Calyn Ong who was always impressed by how sparkling clean Japan's public toilets are, which is an indication of their high civic consciousness.

"It is always dry, smells good and looks clean. The Japanese really know how to take care of their public space," said the avid traveller.

The Japanese are also known for their 100% return rate on their umbrella sharing facility, and for clearing food items with the earliest use by date in supermarkets.

Analyst Julian Theseira also had similar positive experiences with public toilets when he was studying in Switzerland.

"The Swiss are very civic conscious people. It has to do with their culture and strong traditions of local governance," he said.

Public toilets in Japan and Switzerland - as well as other countries like Scandinavia and Germany - are often commended for their cleanliness.

Apple Vacations founder Datuk Eh Leesan said toilets offer some insight as to how "refined" the locals are.

"I believe that the quality of a public toilet is equal to the living standards of a country," he said.

Eh recently wrote a column for *StarLifestyle* where he compared the public toilets abroad to the ones back home.

"Having travelled far and wide, I believe that Japanese public toilets are the best. The etiquette of the Japanese people is the main reason for this cleanliness," he said.

Quality Restroom Association Malaysia (QRAM) chairman Hasan Hamzah said toilets are a good indication of a nation's civic consciousness.

"You can tell a lot about a person by looking at the condition of the toilet and kitchen in their homes.

"We need to inculcate the importance of cleanliness from young. Children need to be trained to take

## Cleanliness begins at home, M'sians reminded

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysians on Facebook have linked the "poor" conditions of the country's public toilets to the lack of education on the matter.

They were responding to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's lament on dirty public toilets on a Facebook post on The Star Online's page.

Many citizens linked the lack of cleanliness to education.

"Let us teach cleanliness in school. We should start from kindergarten. As for the parents, be cooperative and do not sue the schools if your kids are made to clean the toilets.

"These kids will grow up and will lead by example of what cleanliness is," Facebook user Zachary Eastmire said.

Moe Bharudin echoed his comment, saying "Teach our kids to clean toilets in school like the Japanese do".

"Cleanliness starts at home," Tajuddin Hussin said. "Malaysians, in general, need to clean up their act and not blame the government and authorities whenever things don't go your way.

"If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make that change."



the lack of enforcement and "non-functional plumbing systems".

"The old water cistern system does not have a continuous water flow system. More than likely, the user is not going to wait in the stinking toilet for the water to fill up," Annie Khoo said.

is faulty, not repaired and maintained at all times."

"There is no strict enforcement," Charlie Giap added. "Why not follow methods of Singapore?"

Some also pointed out the amount of litter that is apparent in our public toilets.

water bottles, food wrappers carelessly chucked everywhere ..." Heather Fairhead said.



Moulding responsible adults; See page 5