

KERATAN AKHBAR

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Time to turn nose up to dirty toilets

MANY foreign visitors to Malaysia have nice things to say about our country but they are appalled by the condition of our public toilets and those in shops and eateries.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself has rightly voiced out his dismay over the condition of public toilets in the country, "Dr M peeved by the public's disregard for cleanliness" (*The Star*, Aug 14). Dr Mahathir said he often inspected public toilets and more often than not, they were smelly and dirty.

Despite all the campaigns for clean toilets over the years, we do not seem to have achieved much because our toilets still leave much to be desired where cleanliness and proper usage are concerned.

I've been highlighting this issue for more than 20 years in the media and writing to the respective authorities to solve the problem. Unfortunately, nothing seems to have changed.

Using the standard of toilets in developed countries as a benchmark may be too ambitious. We should instead emulate some of the developing countries such as our neighbour Thailand, which is known for having clean toilets



even in rural areas.

It was once reported that 61% of the 10,257 public toilets in Malaysia were a disgrace.

Only a miserable 350 or 3.4% achieved the top five-star rating while 1,086 or 10% were too defiled to meet the minimum one-star.

Audit findings by the local authorities indicate that the majority of our public toilets were found to be unsatisfactory.

Even toilets in shopping complexes and fancy restaurants,

which patrons have to pay a fee to use, are not clean or odourless. Restaurant operators will find ways to improve the quality of their food but not the toilets in their premises.

It all boils down to maintenance, proper usage and, of course, cleanliness and civic mindedness. Our children should embrace and practise the principles of Civic Education that is taught in schools instead of just memorising them to pass examinations.

Vandalism and improper usage

of the facilities also contribute to the deplorable condition of public toilets in our country.

The design of our toilets should also be improved, as Malaysians of various backgrounds have different ways of using the facilities. For example, some are not keen to use the urinal but prefer the cubicle when they want to take a pee.

It is high time for the public to be educated on how to use toilets in a proper manner. In short, we need a toilet revolution where we can do something about keeping our toilets clean all the time.

We need to change our perception of toilets. We must not think that toilets are meant to be dirty, hence we do not need to keep them clean.

All authorities and every Malaysian must absorb a strong maintenance culture and make it a way of life. Let us not have first world infrastructure but a third class mentality when it comes to maintenance. The Prime Minister should make this his national agenda and see it through.

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