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**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Improvement of  
Environmental Hygiene and Cityscape**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 27 April 2021**

**Administration's efforts in improving the environmental hygiene  
of public markets and public toilets**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the public markets and public toilets managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD"), and summarizes major views and concerns of members of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on the Administration's efforts to improve the environmental hygiene of these venues.

**Background**

Public markets managed by FEHD

2. According to the information available on FEHD's website, FEHD provides 97 public markets and cooked food markets/centres where some 14 000 stalls offer a wide choice of commodities ranging from fresh produce, cooked food, clothing to household items. FEHD is responsible for properly managing these markets and keeping them clean and tidy; and has set performance standards and targets in respect of the various services under its purview. For "market services", one of the performance standards is "to cleanse thoroughly the common parts of public markets three times a day" with the target set at 100%.

### Public toilets managed by FEHD

3. According to the information on FEHD's website, there are altogether 809 public toilets under FEHD's management: 91 on Hong Kong Island, 62 in Kowloon and 656 in the New Territories and on outlying islands. In addition, there are 39 aqua privies in the New Territories and on outlying islands. Other public toilets at parks, beaches and other recreational venues are, however, managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. All public toilets are open 24 hours a day and are cleansed at least twice a day.

### **Members' concerns**

4. The Panel has not discussed hygiene issues relating to public markets *per se*.<sup>1</sup> Environmental hygiene issues relating to public toilets managed by FEHD were last discussed at the Panel meeting on 16 April 2019. Members' major views and concerns expressed in respect of the latter are summarized below.

### Measures for improving the hygiene condition of public toilets

#### *On the software front*

5. Grave concern was raised about the poor hygiene condition of public toilets managed by FEHD, especially considering that there were always complaints about odour problem, inadequate ventilation and wet floor. Members held the view that there was a need to enhance the cleanliness and the hygiene condition of public toilets. There were suggestions that (a) FEHD should require its service contractors to increase the manpower and resources for performing the cleansing work, so as to ensure that they would provide up to standard services; and (b) improvement measures should be worked out with regard to the hygiene condition and level of utilization of public toilets.

6. According to the Administration, in addition to cleansing all public toilets at least twice a day, those toilets with high usage rates (i.e. a daily average of at least 300 man-times) were provided with toilet attendants to strengthen the cleansing services. To enhance the overall hygiene condition, FEHD had stepped up inspections (including conducting surprise inspections) and monitoring of contractors' performance in respect of public toilets with

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant issues have been raised in the context of the Panel's discussions on the Administration's work in rodent control. As this subject matter was discussed at the Subcommittee meeting on 23 March 2021, it is therefore not covered in this background brief.

relatively high usage rates to ensure that cleansing services provided were up to standard. In November 2018, FEHD had created three posts at the rank of Senior Health Inspector. They were mainly responsible for stepping up surprise inspections of cleansing services and toilet facilities in various districts.

7. The Administration further advised that on top of routine cleansing services, FEHD had set up dedicated deep cleansing teams starting from March 2019 to perform regular deep cleansing services for public toilets with high usage rates. Such dedicated deep cleansing teams had been progressively extended to all public toilets over the territory upon renewal of street cleansing service contracts starting from mid-2019. The Administration would make use of the additional resources allocated by the 2019-2020 Budget to improve toilet facilities and enhance their cleanliness and hygiene.

*On the hardware front*

8. In the context of discussing the Government's plan to refurbish public toilets managed by FEHD, some members considered that the Administration should, in carrying out the refurbishment works for FEHD-managed public toilets, improve the ventilation of and ensure sufficient fresh air supply/air change rates in public toilets. There was a suggestion that, if funding was available, consideration should be given to installing air-conditioning systems and dehumidifiers in all public toilets, so as to ameliorate the wet floor and odour problems therein.

9. The Administration advised that in order to address the problems of inadequate ventilation and wet toilet floor arising from the humid weather in Hong Kong, FEHD would provide air exhaust outlet in each toilet cubicle as applicable in refurbishing a toilet. In consultation with the Architectural Services Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, FEHD was exploring two initiatives for putting on trial in certain toilet refurbishment projects, i.e. (a) provision of air-conditioning systems and dehumidifiers, if feasible, to ameliorate the wet floor and odour problems; and (b) one stop provision of wash hand basin, soap dispenser and hand dryer in the form of a Cabinet Wash Hand Basin System to alleviate the wet floor problem caused by water dripping from the hands of toilet users.

10. In response to members' suggestion that the Administration should explore the application of technologies with regard to overseas experience in refurbishing and improving the design/facilities of existing public toilets, the Administration advised that FEHD was exploring new technologies with reference to the practices of other countries. For examples, to abate odour and improve air quality, FEHD was exploring (a) the application of advance ozone

technology whereby ozonated water was injected into the flushing system to inhibit bacteria growth and degrade odour molecules; and (b) the application of Nano Confined Catalytic Oxidation technology whereby odour molecules and pollutants were decomposed into harmless water molecules and carbon dioxide. If the above technologies were proven effective, FEHD would gradually apply these technologies to wider use in the public toilet refurbishment programme.

### **Motions passed by the Panel**

11. At the Panel meeting on 16 April 2019, members passed two motions concerning the hygiene condition of public toilets managed by FEHD. The wording of the motions is in **Appendix I**.

### **Recent developments**

#### Audit report on the management of public toilets

12. The Audit Commission had conducted a review to examine the planning, provision and management of public toilets by FEHD, with a view to identifying areas for improvement. The findings, observations and recommendations of the Audit Commission were set out in Chapter 1 of Report No. 73 of the Director of Audit on the results of value for money audits ("Director of Audit's Report") tabled in the Council on 30 October 2019.<sup>2</sup>

13. The Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") subsequently conducted public hearings and completed its report ("PAC's Report") in respect of, among others, the subject covered in Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report. PAC's Report on the subject was published and presented to the Council on 26 February 2020.<sup>3</sup> The parts covering FEHD's management of public toilets (including hygiene condition of public toilets) are in paragraphs 74 to 117 of PAC's Report.

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<sup>2</sup> The full report and executive summary of the Director of Audit's Report are accessible at: [https://www.aud.gov.hk/eng/pubpr\\_arpt/rpt\\_73.htm](https://www.aud.gov.hk/eng/pubpr_arpt/rpt_73.htm)

<sup>3</sup> See PAC's Report No. 73 – Chapter 1 of Part 9, which is accessible at: [https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/pac/reports/73/m\\_9a.pdf](https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/english/pac/reports/73/m_9a.pdf)

Cleansing of public markets arising from Coronavirus Disease 2019

14. According to press releases issued by the Administration between July and August 2020,<sup>4</sup> FEHD had, in view of confirmed cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 found to be related to several public markets, arranged deep cleansing work to thoroughly clean and disinfect communal areas and facilities in those markets. Deep cleansing work and disinfection were also carried out at the periphery of the markets and nearby streets.

Meeting of the Subcommittee

15. The Administration will brief the Subcommittee on its efforts in improving the environmental hygiene of public markets and public toilets at the meeting on 27 April 2021.

**Relevant papers**

16. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix II**.

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<sup>4</sup> A sample press release is accessible at:  
<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202008/11/P2020081100429.htm>

食物安全及環境衛生事務委員會  
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

在 2019 年 4 月 16 日的會議上就議程項目 IV  
"為食物環境衛生署管理的公廁進行翻新工程"通過的議案  
Motions passed under agenda item IV "Refurbishment of public toilets  
managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department"  
at the meeting on 16 April 2019

**議案(一)**

(議案中文措辭)

香港作為國際大都會，但食物環境衛生署("食環署")管理的公廁的衛生情況卻一直為市民所詬病。政府今年於《財政預算案》中宣布撥款約 6 億元，在未來五年(即 2019-2020 至 2023-2024 年度)分階段為約 240 間食環署管理的公廁開展翻新或優化工程。就此，本事務委員會促請政府：

- (i) 盡快諮詢 18 區區議會，鼓勵各界人士就改善公廁一事提供意見；
- (ii) 完善公廁管理制度，包括優化食環署外判承辦商的招標機制，提升服務質素，改善員工的待遇，要求承辦商嚴格執行清潔守則；研究引入第三方(如顧問公司或區議會)參與監察承辦商的表現，並就維修損壞的公廁設施訂定服務承諾，以解決過往建築署維修設施緩慢的問題；
- (iii) 為所有公廁設廁所事務員，並優先翻新未能為廁所事務員提供合適工作及休息地方的舊式公廁；為公廁消耗品(如廁紙、洗手液)訂定衛生標準；及
- (iv) 盡快更新技術的應用；包括積極推廣 NCCO 氧聚解空氣處理技術與臭氧水注入沖廁系統技術至各個公廁，並引入智能科技提升公廁的管理與服務，例如引入人流監控系統，以收集公廁使用量等不涉及個人私隱的資訊，並善用相關數據以改善服務。

動議人：何俊賢議員, BBS 及鄭泳舜議員, MH

## **Motion 1**

(English translation of the motion)

Hong Kong is an international metropolis, yet the hygiene condition of public toilets managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") has always attracted criticisms from the general public. As announced in this year's Budget, the Government will allocate a sum of about \$600 million to commence refurbishment or facelifting works for about 240 public toilets managed by FEHD by phases in the coming five years (i.e. 2019-2020 to 2023-2024). In this connection, this Panel urges the Government to:

- (i) expeditiously consult the 18 District Councils ("DCs") and encourage people from different sectors to give views on how to improve public toilets;
- (ii) improve the system for managing public toilets, including refining the tendering mechanism for FEHD's outsourced contracts, enhancing service quality, improving staff employment terms and conditions, and requiring the contractors to strictly follow the cleansing guidelines; explore the engagement of third-party players (e.g. consultants or DCs) to participate in the monitoring of the performance of contractors; and formulate performance pledges on the repair of defective public toilet facilities, so as to address past problems of slow progress of repair works carried out by the Architectural Services Department;
- (iii) deploy toilet attendants in all public toilets and give priority to refurbishing old-type toilets which fail to provide a suitable work and rest environment for toilet attendants; and formulate hygiene standards for consumables (e.g. toilet papers and hand soap) in public toilets; and
- (iv) expeditiously update the application of technologies, including proactively promoting the application of Nano Confined Catalytic Oxidation technology and the technology of injecting ozonated water into the flushing system in all public toilets; apply smart technologies to improve the management and services of public toilets, such as introducing a toilet usage monitoring system to collect data (e.g. the patronage of public toilets) which do not involve personal privacy; and properly utilize such data for service improvement.

Moved by : Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS and  
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH

## **議案(二)**

(議案中文措辭)

本事務委員會要求政府：

- (i) 檢視全港公廁的設施，改善外判公廁清潔工人的工作環境，提供合理的休息空間、用膳地方及其他基本設備；
- (ii) 應優先翻新使用率高及駐有廁所事務員的公廁，並同步改善公廁設施及清潔工人的工作環境；及
- (iii) 應確保外判清潔工人享有有薪用膳時間；食物環境衛生署應確保承辦商提供足夠人手、工具裝備及工作環境設施，增加每天駐有廁所事務員的公廁數量，並劃一派駐廁所事務員到公廁服務的時段為早晚兩更，以改善公廁服務人手安排及分擔公廁清潔工人的工作量。

動議人：譚文豪議員

## **Motion 2**

(English translation of the motion)

This Panel requests the Government to:

- (i) review the facilities of all public toilets in Hong Kong, improve the work environment of outsourced public toilet cleaners, and provide them with a reasonable rest space and meal area, as well as other basic facilities;
- (ii) accord priority to refurbishing those public toilets with high usage rates and toilet attendants, so that public toilet facilities and work environment of toilet cleaners can be improved concurrently; and
- (iii) ensure that outsourced toilet cleaners are provided with paid meal breaks; and that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department should ensure that its outsourced contractors would provide adequate manpower, tools and equipment as well as proper work environment and facilities, increase the number of public toilets that would be provided with toilet attendants every day, and standardize the deployment of toilet attendants to provide services in public toilets into two works shifts, i.e. one morning shift and one night shift, so as to improve the staffing arrangement for providing services in public toilets and share out the workload of public toilet cleaners.

Moved by : Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho



**Relevant papers on the Administration's efforts in improving the environmental hygiene of public markets and public toilets**

| Committee                                      | Date of meeting        | Paper  |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene | 16.4.2019<br>(Item IV) | <u>Agenda</u><br><u>Minutes</u><br><br>Administration's response to two motions passed at the meeting in relation to refurbishment of public toilets managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (LC Paper No. <u>CB(2)1387/18-19(01)</u> ) |
| Legislative Council                            | 27.5.2020              | <u>Official Record of Proceedings</u><br><u>Pages 7310 to 7314 (Written question raised by Hon Michael Tien on "Management of public toilets")</u>   |

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