



PRESS RELEASE

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Korean cities win awards for their public toilets

MANILA, 3 November 2008—When it comes to the provision of good public toilets, two cities in the Republic of Korea have flushed away the opposition. The cities, Seongbuk and Jinju, have won an international competition to find the best public sanitary facilities in the region.

In citing Seongbuk, which is part of the Korean capital of Seoul, the judges said the municipality had invested significant sums of money into rehabilitating and upgrading government-operated facilities and those in public institutions. The number of public toilets had grown from 129 in 2003 to 201 in 2008, for a population of about 460 000. The number of users had almost doubled from 1.3 million to 2.4 million. At the same time Seongbuk had introduced measures to ensure safety in its facilities and to make them more accessible to disabled people, the elderly, children and foreign visitors.

Similarly, the judges praised efforts by Jinju authorities to provide more facilities and to upgrade existing ones. The number of toilets in the city had more than tripled to a total of 336 between 1995 and today. Jinju has a population of about 340 000. A programme of custodian training and regular inspections ensured that the facilities were well maintained and hygienic. A recent survey showed that among users of Jinju's public toilets, more than 80% reported satisfaction with the state of the facilities.

The mayors of Seongbuk and Jinju will receive the awards at the World Toilet Summit & Expo 2008, to be held in Macau (China), from 4 to 6 November at The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel. World Toilet Summit & Expo is an annual event jointly organized by the World Toilet Organization and MP Asia, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank. Health and sanitation experts from around the world will meet to discuss new ways to provide safe and hygienic toilets. The awards are given by the World Health Organization in collaboration with The Alliance for Healthy Cities.

In a statement, WHO said the provision of public toilets is not just a service to the public but promotes a cleaner and more healthful urban environment. On the other hand, a lack of toilets may, to some extent, discourage some people from leaving their homes for long periods of time or visitors from venturing far from their hotels, with a loss of income for local businesses.

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