Changes to law on mandatory cleaning standards expected to be passed in October: Grace Fu

SINGAPORE - Changes to the law on cleaning standards are expected to be passed in Parliament next month to help the country deal with Covid-19 and other health risks, said Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu on September 8.

She said the amendments to the Environmental Public Health Act are part of efforts to strengthen Singapore’s environmental public health resilience against the current pandemic and other public health threats.

The changes to the Act include implementing mandatory cleaning standards, such as a regime that specifies frequency for routine cleaning and deep cleaning for different environments. Environmental sanitisation controls will also be enhanced and accountability will be required of premises owners.

The proposed changes were announced earlier this year when Singapore was in the early stages of its fight against Covid-19.

The new rules will be progressively implemented from next year, starting with high-risk areas with high footfall, and areas with vulnerable users, such as childcare centres, said Ms Fu, who was speaking at a virtual launch of the Public Hygiene Council’s (PHC) month-long string Clean Drive: Singapore campaign.

The annual campaign encourages Singaporeans to take ownership of the cleanliness of shared public spaces, which has become more relevant as the country has to fight against Covid-19 pandemic andupgrade methodology.

This year’s campaign aims to highlight that Singapore is in a “war against bacteria” by getting Singaporeans to recognise that it is not just an aesthetic problem, but can also be a public health threat.

Ms Fu also gave an update on the number of premises that have been accorded the 5G Clean quality mark, which signifies if the premises have met certain hygiene standards.

As of end August, more than 32,000 premises across Singapore have received the quality mark, she said.

“This mark will be important to businesses, such as schools and restaurants, who want to get their customers back by assuring them of the measures taken to safeguard their health,” said Ms Fu.

“Ensuring the cleanliness of our public spaces is our shared responsibility. Beyond what the Government and owners of premises can do, members of the public - that’s us - must help keep Singapore clean.”

She cited the latest Public Cleanliness Satisfaction Survey released by the Singapore Management University on Friday, where 93 per cent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the cleanliness of public spaces they recently visited.

The survey was based on responses collected from December to April, before the onset of the circuit breaker.

The findings, however, show that 99 per cent of respondents acknowledged that Singapore can do only better next time in the efficiency of its cleaning services.

On Saturday, the essential work of cleaners was also recognised by the PHC, which shared that 368 commendations were given out to cleaners to recognise the nation’s cleanliness. Singapore’s clean and green image is in large part, thanks to the country’s army of over 68,000 cleaners.

As the event, five of them had the opportunity to model the winning uniform designs created by students from Temasek Polytechnic’s School of Design. The students had been tasked to come up with uniforms that are comfortable and functional but also instil a greater sense of pride.

In her speech, Ms Fu said: “They are our essential workers and front-line heroes. They have worked hard, particularly during the pandemic, to keep our public spaces clean, sanitised and litter-free.”

The Covid-19 situation has provided the environmental services industry with an opportunity to transform, she added.