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Saturday, 1 April 2017

Keeping food waste out of our rivers

BY VINCENT TAN



Shagivarnam scooping up grease collected in a grease trap after the device was installed at one of the 10 stalls in the SS2 Food Court. Looking on are Nur Wahida (standing) and Dr Kalithasan (left). – AIMAN ARIFUDDIN/The Star



SEVENTY stall operators in the SS2 Food Court received new food waste segregation bins, while 10 of the stalls had new grease traps installed as part of a “Waste Segregation and Oil and Grease Trap” initiative.

The collaboration was between Heineken Malaysia’s GAB Foundation, Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) and environmental NGO, the Global Environment Centre (GEC).

The initiative also comes as part of World Water Day 2017 and is an extension of GAB Foundation’s “Working Actively Through Education and Rehabilitation” (WATER) project with the GEC to rehabilitate Sungai Penchala and raise its water quality level to a level of 2B (recreational use with body contact).

Preparation for the food waste segregation initiative began as early as 2015, with an initial waste audit of 18 food operators, followed by a training session later the same year to educate operators on waste segregation, food composting and correct use of grease traps.

MBPJ Solid Waste Management and Public Sanitary Department assistant director Nur Wahida Zakaria said the SS2 stall operators were a strategic group, and their participation was necessary in the effort to rehabilitate Sungai Penchala.

“Today’s initiative is another step in Petaling Jaya’s low-carbon city target, as solid waste management is a vital part of ensuring a safe, clean and healthy environment and community,” said Nur Wahida.

Stall operators from the SS2 morning market and hawker stalls opposite the Seapark police station will also be given waste segregation bins.

Stall operator Othman Md Isa said the segregation bins were a good idea, although it would take a bit more effort to separate the food waste, which could come up to more than 4kg a day.

“We can still take the food waste out and turn it into fertiliser, then pass it on to an agent or someone who can use it. It will just take a bit more effort to separate it from the plastics and other non-food waste,” said Othman.

Yong tau foo seller Loo Siew Choo, whose stall was one of the 10 selected for the grease-trap installation, said the new mechanism would help filter lesser amounts of grease that came off from washing her cutlery and bowls.

“We already save the used cooking oil from our large woks after frying ingredients, because the council comes by to collect the used oil in large five-litre containers, but this trap fitted to our sink will help filter the oil which usually just washes away into the drain,” said Loo.

GAB Foundation corporate affairs head Shagivarnam Ratnam said the focus was on providing assistance in managing raw food waste disposal, while MBPJ would soon be installing a food waste composting machine next to the hawker centre.

Shagivarnam added that GAB Foundation was committing RM700,000 this year to its three WATER projects in Sungai Way and Sungai Penchala, Selangor, as well as Sungai Kinta in Perak.

GEC River Care coordinator Dr K. Kalithasan said the 2B level was a realistic target for Sungai Way and Sungai Penchala, given the urban setting in Petaling Jaya.

“Currently, parts of Sungai Penchala, including the river’s source, are Class 1, but equally, there are parts that are Class 3 or lower, so if we can clean it up to 2B and keep it that way, that would be a good result already,” said Dr Kalithasan.

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Central Region , GAB Foundation , Global Environment Centre , river rehabilitation in Petaling Jaya , MBPJ , grease traps