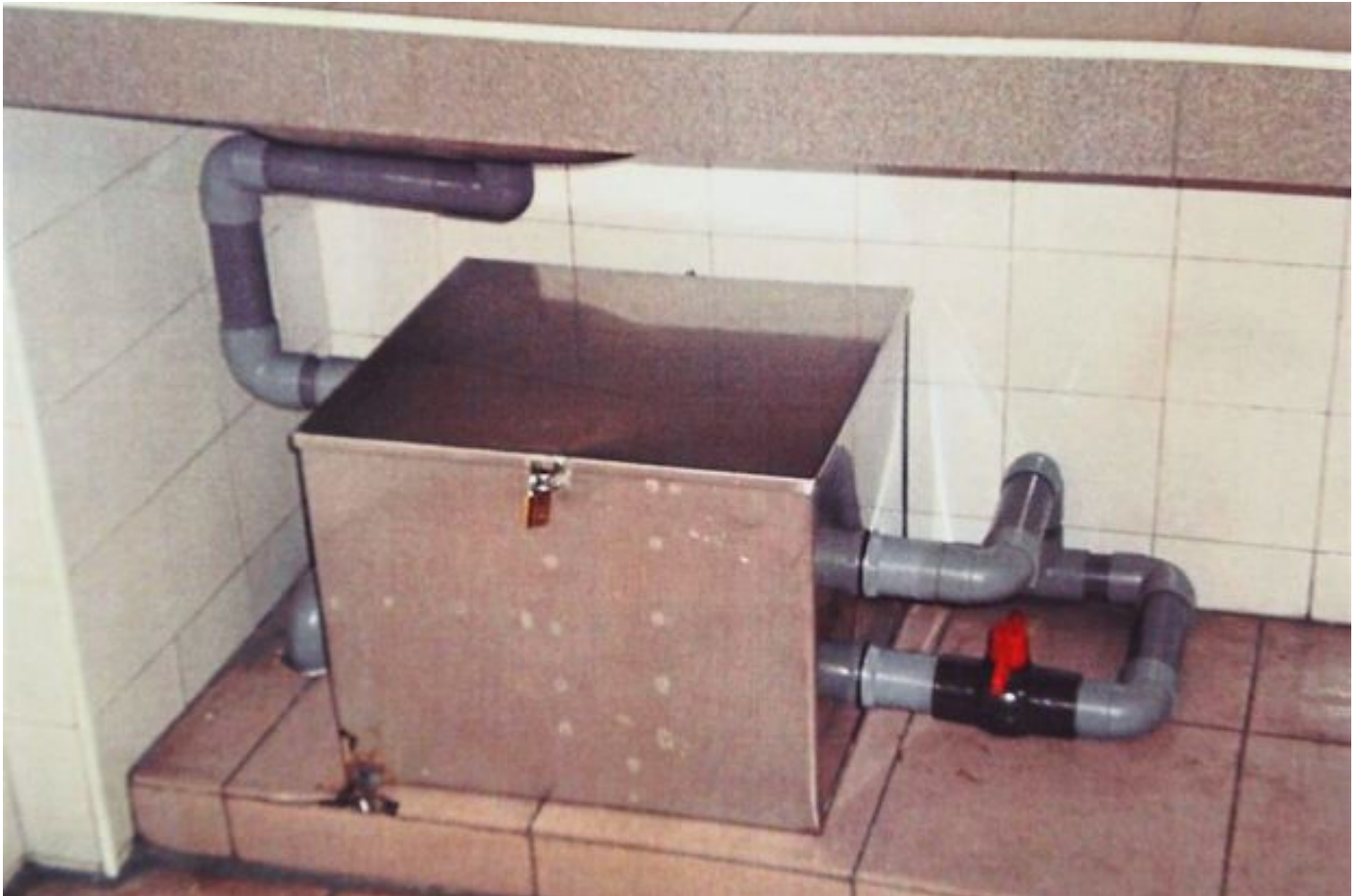


Put more heat on grease trap law

LETTERS

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GREASE traps (*pic*) are designed to separate and capture waste fats, oils, grease (FOG) and food waste before they enter the drain and sewers.

Grease traps are needed to stop these wastes from clogging the drains and sewers and to prevent environmental pollution of the waterways.

FOG are mainly the by-products of cooking, and include food scraps, meat fat, lard, tallow, cooking oil, butter, margarine and sauces.

Fats, oils and grease released into the drains will clog them and block water flow, resulting in flash floods during heavy rain.

The clogged drains will also attract rodents and other pests that carry diseases.

Food premises are among the major contributors to river pollution. According to the Klang Municipal Council (MPK), oil and food particles are polluting the Klang River, causing floods in several neighbourhoods there.

A high grease content in wastewater or effluents from public markets and restaurants was among the major causes of pollution in Kinta River, according to the local authority in 2011.

And according to Indah Water Konsortium Sdn Bhd (IWK), restaurant grease is the main reason behind the overflow of sewer pipes.

It is compulsory for all operators of hotels, restaurants and other food-related businesses to install grease traps in their premises.

But, according to Dr K. Kalithasan, programme coordinator of the Global Environment Centre's (GEC) river care project, the existing law only requires food operators to install grease traps as a condition for obtaining or renewing their licence.

It does not specify details for the grease trap, such as size, maintenance and cleaning schedules, making it easy for the operators to flout the law, he said.

Most restaurant operators and workers also do not have any knowledge of grease traps and their maintenance.

Poorly maintained and low capacity grease trap will allow FOG to flow into the sewer pipes and drains, causing the build-up of fatberg, a congealed lump in a sewer system formed by the combination of non-biodegradable solid matter with grease or cooking fat.

Continuous build-up of the fatberg will reduce the capacity of the sewer system, and will ultimately cause blockages.

It is therefore vital for those involved in the food production business to ensure that grease traps of the right capacity are installed in their premises and to keep them well maintained.

The capacity of the grease traps should be based on the operating hours and the scale of activity of the business concerned.

Food operators must also ensure that their workers are well trained in maintaining the grease traps and clean them regularly. The frequency of cleaning depends on the type of food served and how active the business is.

The local authorities also need to regularly check the grease traps installed in food premises. Some operators might install grease traps just to obtain or renew their business licence and forget about their maintenance thereafter. The law on grease traps is inadequate and needs to be tightened as well.

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