

VITAL TO KEEP 'KAKI LIMA' CLEAR

THERE is a five-foot way for pedestrians in shophouse areas.

This walkway is essential and welcomed by people. It was designed by British town planners and architects in Malaya and Singapore.

They insisted that rows of shophouses should be built with the ground floor recessed by five feet, thus forming a covered pathway.

This facility enabled pedestrians to walk without getting wet or sunburnt.

Kaki lima are found all over the country, but they are blocked by fences, motorbikes, goods and clutter.

Keeping them clear of obstructions is a struggle for council enforcers.

During a walkabout in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, a few friends and I came across two situations.

One was when some restaurant operators placed tables and chairs on the kaki lima. This is fine when the walkway is wide and allows space for pedestrians.

But one restaurant sealed (blocked) the walk way with its own gate, forcing pedestrians to walk outside the path.

When asked, the reply was: "The five-foot way is our property and we

have obtained Kuala Lumpur City Hall approval to close the walkway."

Another situation was about water meters. In another section of shophouses, a utility company installed new pipes and meter devices that protrude onto the walkway.

Attempts to check with Air Selangor received this reply: "The water meters are always located within the five-foot way, so we installed the new devices in the same place."

When the safety of pedestrians was raised, the reply was: "Don't know."

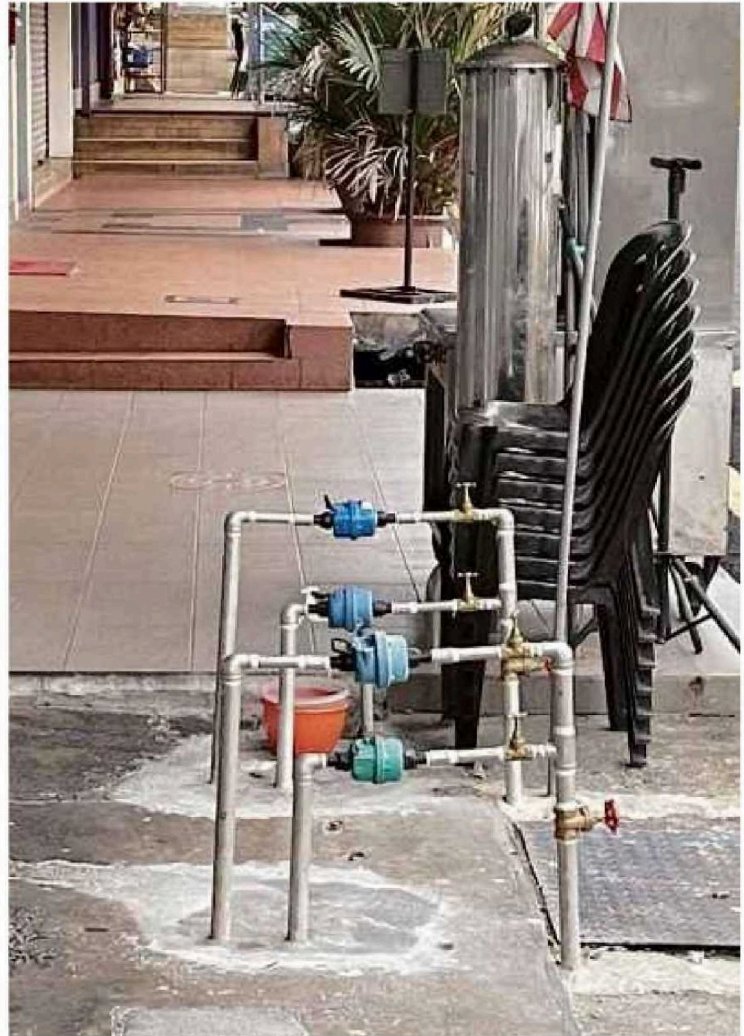
We're not sure how modern-day town planners and engineers approach safety requirements, or whether kaki lima will soon be phased out by the authorities.

Perhaps it is time for City Hall officials to observe how the ground has been built up over the years.

A check of the bylaws shows that it is essential to provide footways for pedestrians along shophouses, but it appears this has been sidelined to accommodate dealing with customers and the desire to expand shop space.

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The installation of new water pipes and meters on a city walkway can endanger pedestrians. PIC COURTESY OF WRITER