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M'sians study human rights police practise in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: A group of six Malaysian police and human rights experts has concluded a four-day visit here to observe human rights-based police practice with regard to drug users.

Leader of the group, Fifa Rahman, from the Malaysia Aids Council, said the aim of the visit was to increase police leadership in public health.

"Basically, there is no way we can effectively deal with addiction, death in police custody, HIV and Hepatitis C without the help of the police," she said.

Senior officers from the Victorian State Police and health experts gave talks on the drug problem in the state and took the visitors on a tour of spots frequented by drug addicts.

"Victoria has very successfully improved HIV rates. Victoria police say they don't come across that many people with HIV because of their successful needle exchange and methadone programme," she said here.

Fifa said the meeting with the Professional Standards Command and the Custodial Medicine Unit was enlightening.

"The custodial medicine service is basically a bunch of doctors, nurses and pharmacists hired by the Victorian Police to ensure individuals in police cus-

tody get access to health services, including methadone and anti-retroviral therapy for HIV.

"Depriving an individual of HIV and other medicines would result in an investigation by the Professional Standards Command which monitors police misconduct and looks at trends in police misconduct," Fifa said.

She claimed that Malaysians with HIV do not get access to their medicines in lock-ups, even if they already have prescription.

"This is not a good thing because if they miss a dose, they become resistant to the medicine," she said.

Fifa said police here referred drug users to health services for better outcomes.

The Malaysians also visited the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in the inner city suburb of Richmond where children were housed while their parents received addiction treatment.

The group, which comprised ASPs Mohamed Rafiq Mustafa, Ng Soon Wah and Ng Siew Hiang, as well as Simon Karunagaram from the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, and Dr Ilias Yee from the Centre of Excellence for Research in Aids, Universiti Malaya, was hosted by the Centre for Law Enforcement and Public Health here. - Bernama