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Council suggests new national drug policy emulate Switzerland's

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Aids Council (MAC) yesterday suggested that the new national drug policy being drafted to address the drug abuse problem in Malaysia should emulate the Swiss Drug Policy (SDP).

Its president, Datuk Dr Raj Karim, said the SDP comprised a four-pillar strategy that covered treatment, harm reduction, prevention, and law enforcement as a comprehensive approach to the drug issue.

"Having studied the strength of the SDP, we recommend that the government take it up as an example of good practice to guide our response to the drug issue as well as HIV infections," she told reporters at the launch of the 'Health, Safety, Public Order: A Photo Report on Swiss Drug Policy' here.

She said the cornerstone of the SDP was to offer access to medicine and health to drug addicts through institutes such as the Arud Drug Treatment Centre in Switzerland that provides holistic drug treatment and placement of medical professionals in remand centres.

"These guarantee immediate access for people who use drugs to critical medicine such as anti-retrovirals (for HIV treatment) and methadone (for opiate substitution therapy) as well as psychiatric and psychological help," she said.

The MAC also suggested that the new drug policy should establish a special governmental body called the Security, Intervention, Prevention (SIP) team such as in Switzerland, she added.

"The SIP team in Zurich is composed of 70 social workers, ethnographers, and psychologists and they are tasked with walking around the city every day to resolve or mediate public order issues by approaching individuals respectfully without stigma, and divert street-based drug users to voluntary healthcare services," she said. - Bernama