

 PETALING JAYA: More human rights organisations have come out to lambast the controversial statements made by the Federal Territories Welfare Department on the homeless at Jalan Pudu.

Human rights body Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram) said the remarks made by the department's operation head Mat Darus Hassan that it was out of the department's jurisdiction to aid Jalan Pudu's homeless as they had "mental conditions" were "inhumane".

The Malay Mail had gone down to the homeless asylum in Jalan Pudu recently and found Mat Darus' comments did not hold water as most were found to be mentally sound.

The hand-washing exercise by this person is inhumane, especially considering they are a humanitarian body, said Suaram coordinator E. Nalini.

If these homeless people are mentally ill, then they deserve even more aid. As the welfare department, they should take up this responsibility and get them to a mental institution.

Nalini said Suaram felt the government should introduce policies to help get the homeless off the streets and provide them shelter, plus train them for the working world.

Provide shelter for these people and give them temporary jobs or vocational training. In the future, they can get better jobs and improve their lives.

Checks by The Malay Mail at Jalan Pudu revealed how, after midnight, a large group of homeless people in groups of 30 to 40 would be sleeping outdoors on tiled pavements.

Our interviews revealed an overwhelming number of them appeared sound and were able to converse coherently.

One of them insisted it was cruel to label them as "crazy", "insane" or "senile".

Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) commissioner Muhammad Sha'ani Abdullah said it was "irresponsible" of Mat Darus to be so dismissive.

How could he just make such a statement? It is irresponsible of him as a public servant in charge of welfare.

Sha'ani also lambasted the welfare officer for not wanting to reveal how the department had established Jalan Pudu's homeless were mentally ill.

He said it could not be revealed because it was confidential. He is just trying to hide his department's weakness and negligence.

Sha'ani added the Welfare Department should be made accountable for vagrancy problems in the city.

If the crime rate is high, it is the chief of police who is made accountable for it. Likewise, the Welfare Department should be made accountable for the many homeless people in the city. They need to do their job.