

# 'Inmate was electrocuted'

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The authorities yesterday confirmed that an inmate at the Simpang Renggam detention centre was electrocuted while scaling an opening near his cell.

But it dismissed the notion that there were holes in the walls that enabled prisoners to move into each others' cells and mingle freely.

"There is no such thing as holes in the wall which allow detainees to mingle freely.

"There was a section where there was a gap and this has been nailed down", said Internal Security Deputy Minister Datuk Fu Ah Kiow.

He said this when commenting on a *New Straits Times* report on the state of affairs in the detention centre.

The report was based on ob-

servations made by a team from Suhakam which visited the centre to conduct an inquiry into the death of Ramjit Singh last month.

Suhakam said that it visited Ramjit's cell and found that he left his cell and made his way up to the upper floor by climbing up the fire hose chamber.

Prison authorities said that inmates were allowed to come out of their cells and mingle.

On his way down, Ramjit apparently came into contact with a live wire.

He was pronounced dead on arrival at Kluang Hospital two hours after the incident on Aug 3.

Suhakam later clarified that there were no holes in the wall and Datuk Siva Subramaniam told the NST that inmates communicated with each other by moving through the fire hose chamber.

commissioners also noted that conditions at the centre were deplorable.

The centre was overcrowded, and a high number of inmates were suffering from a skin condition due to frequent diet of "salted fish".

Their visit to the infirmary revealed that besides a hospital assistant dispensing pills, there was no qualified medical personnel available.

The commissioners were also troubled by the ratio of guards to inmates.

Fu said that Suhakam was entitled to its own views but he stressed that the issue of overcrowding was being looked into.

"New prisons are being planned and we hope this would ease this problem," he said.

At present, some cells in Simpang Renggam hold 11

detainees while smaller ones were occupied by six detainees. "Between cells, there is a corridor and an open area where detainees mingle daily when they come out for recreation."

This group activity of mingling, the deputy minister explained, was allowed under prison department guidelines.

There are more than 4,000 inmates here. Many of them are remand prisoners.

With such a large number, Fu noted that it was inevitable that some of them were suffering from skin diseases.

He also said that moves were under way to improve the standard of medical treatment available.

"We have also obtained approvals to set up a panel comprising doctors from private practice to serve at the prison infirmary," he said.