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## Trump seeks death for drug dealers



**Tough approach:** Trump, seen here at a White House event in Washington with First Lady Melania Trump, is set to unveil his plan to combat opioid abuse in New Hampshire, a state hit hard by the epidemic. — AP

### Trump seeks death for drug dealers

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is set to present his plan to combat an opioid abuse epidemic, including seeking the death penalty for drug traffickers.

The Department of Justice "will seek the death penalty against drug traffickers where appropriate under current law," a White House official indicated on Sunday whilst outlining the plan's main points.

The official did not offer greater detail on how the death penalty could be invoked against drug dealers without amending statutes.

Trump was due to unveil his plan in a speech yesterday in Manchester, New Hampshire, a state hard hit by the crisis.

Roughly 2.4 million Americans are said to be addicted to opiates,

the narcotics that include prescription painkillers, as well as heroin.

Nationwide, emergency room visits for overdoses from drugs such as heroin, fentanyl and prescription painkillers went up by 30% from 2016 to 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said earlier this month.

The report found that from July 2016 to September 2017, a total of 142,557 emergency room visits were due to suspected opioid overdoses.

Trump has previously mooted the "ultimate" punishment for drug dealers and is said to have spoken in glowing terms about the policies of controversial Filipino leader Rodrigo Duterte, who has ordered extra-judicial killings of traffickers.

"If you shoot one person, they give you life and the death penalty. These people (who sell drugs) can kill 2,000, 3,000 people and nothing happens to them," Trump said.

Many opposition Democrats oppose the idea of executing drug dealers, and changing the law would require an act of Congress.

"We will not incarcerate or execute our way out of the opioid epidemic," said Democratic senator Ed Markey last week.

"Extreme proposals like using the death penalty only perpetuate a harmful stigma associated with opioid use disorders and divert attention from meaningful conversations and progress on expanding access to treatment, recovery and other public health initiatives." — AFP