

## Ganja for medical use must be approved

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➤ Registration with government required for obtaining possession or distribution

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Companies or individuals involved in obtaining, possessing or distributing ganja for medical purposes will not be penalised if the drug is registered as a medicine.

Deputy Health Minister Dr Lee Boon Chye said capital punishment only applied to those using the drug without registering it with the Pharmaceutical Department or obtaining the appropriate licence.

"The Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 (DDA) deals with how drugs are obtained, distributed or prescribed, so if you possess marijuana, you

must prove that you have the proper licence," he said yesterday at a press conference after the launching of OurCheckup, a doctor-assisted connected health platform.

"Even when you give it to patients, you must have a proper doctor's prescription," he added.

"This applies to other drugs such as morphine, for which a proper licence is also required for usage and distribution."

Lee was asked to clarify a statement he made on Monday saying it was allowed to use ganja for medical purposes provided there was strong evidence of its efficacy and safety.

This came a month after a man, Muhammad Lukman, was

sentenced to death for possession of ganja for medical purposes. On Sunday, National Anti-Drugs Agency director-general Datuk Seri Zulkifli Abdullah, had also said that cultivating ganja was permitted with the ministry's approval.

Lee explained that Lukman was charged under the DDA as he had distributed the drug without having the required licences.

He added that for a drug to be registered as a medicine, there must be proof that the formulation is safe and effective for public use.

When there is an application to register a new drug as a medicine, the Pharmaceutical Department will conduct tests to determine if it is safe and effective before granting approval. Even so, the drug can only be used under prescription.

However, Lee said the ministry has yet to issue a licence to any individual or company to use ganja for medicinal purposes.