

14/04/1997

PM approves the use of naltrexone to treat addicts

TELUK INTAN, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has approved the use of naltrexone to treat dadah addicts and an allocation of RM3 million will be used for a pilot project to treat the addicts.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub said the approval was given last month.

The National Dadah Council would endorse the use of naltrexone for treating addicts at its meeting next week, he added.

Megat Junid said the RM3 million allocation would be used to get supplies of naltrexone to treat an initial 2,000 selected dadah addicts.

He also said the addicts would be selected from the 29 dadah rehabilitation centres nationwide but priority would be given to those who came forward voluntarily.

Megat Junid said this to reporters after addressing a special gathering of youth organisations which have pledged to assist the Government in the fight against social ills.

The gathering was organised by the Teluk Intan Umno Youth division.

Naltrexone, a narcotic antagonist, has been found to be effective in treating dadah addicts. After the treatment, if an addict resumes his habit he would start vomiting.

Naltrexone comes in tablet form and has a long-term effect by keeping heroin or other opiate addicts off dadah.

Naltrexone works by blocking the opiate receptor sites on the cell membranes where the dadah takes effect.

If a person on naltrexone later takes an opiate, it will have no addictive effect.

Megat Junid, who is Pemadam president, said the National Dadah Council would also liaise with the Health Ministry on the proper administration of naltrexone to dadah addicts.

To date, there is approximately 200,000 registered dadah addicts.

Out of that, about 50,000 have undergone rehabilitation.

On whether affluent parents who did not want to subject themselves to public humiliation by sending their children to rehabilitation centres, could purchase the drug on their own, Megat Junid said it all depended on the success of the pilot project.

He said the use of naltrexone would be extended to all addicts if the pilot project proved successful.

On plans to set up more rehabilitation centres, Megat Junid said there were plans to set up Pusat Serenti at suitable ex-military camps.

He said a camp in Besut, Terengganu, was found unsuitable in terms of logistics.

"We are currently looking for other ex-military camps to set up rehabilitation centres."

(END)