

Bahamas begins to look at marijuana licences

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THE Bahamas government says will start accepting licence applications for cannabis operators towards the end of the second quarter of this year.

Attorney General Ryan Pinder said the legislation passed last year regulates cannabis for medicinal, religious, and scientific use, establishing a licensing regime for cultivation, retail and research.

It also allows for religious use by Rastafarians.

'The Cannabis Authority's board has been constituted, and is working to put in place the necessary controls, technology and processes to be able to issue and regulate licences. That's a big job as well. The law is big. Actually, putting it in place and administering it is very difficult. We are drafting the initial guidelines for the requirement of licences,' said Pinder.

'In fact, I've received the first set of guidelines for my review, which we will pass on to the authority, and we hope to be in a position...by the end of quarter of this year to be able to start accepting applications for licences. I don't find that unreasonable,' he told the University of The Bahamas' Legal Week 2025.

'We're not the first jurisdiction to do this. In fact, I've already received expert advice on some of the technology and the actual portals that are being utilised in other jurisdictions, which I will share with the Cannabis Authority for them to review,' said Pinder.

'If you are a legal entity, you have to be 100% Bahamian-owned. If you're applying for a cultivation, retail transport or a religious-use licence, the entity has to be 100% Bahamian-owned. We allow more ownership flexibility in analytical testing, manufacturing and research. We have a minimum a floor of 30% Bahamian- owned.'

The government says there will also be special provisions for the use of cannabis for religious purposes to placate the Rastafarian community.

'The Cannabis Act also ensures that the use of cannabis as a sacrament by parishioners of the Rastafarian faith, when handled under religious use licence, would be lawful.

'This part of the Cannabis Act was benchmarked against approaches that happen in Jamaica and in Barbados, benchmarked against some of our regional counterparts, because we view that we share similar cultural

and religious backgrounds and legal systems as these two countries,' said Pinder.

He said that some may regard the situation as controversial.

'Certainly, in our consultations, we had representations to this effect, mostly by the Christian Council. However, if you track the legal development in the region on this issue, it certainly can be argued that this is a fundamental right for those members of the Rastafarian faith,' he said.

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