Gambling and addiction woes? Let the experts help

AS SINGAPORE gets ready for the casinos, an international advisory panel has been set up to help the authorities deal with issues such as problem gambling and addiction.

The panel will hold a three-day meeting from today to look into issues such as how to prevent, manage and treat problem gambling and other addictions in Singapore.

They will also advise on the proposed National Addictions Management Centre (NAMC), which aims to provide a more holistic approach to help people overcome addictions.

The panel will be co-chaired by Professor Goh Chee Leok, senior consultant at the Office of Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health; and Professor David Chan, interim dean, School of Social Sciences at Singapore Management University (SMU).

Its eight overseas members, from countries such as United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, are experts in problem gambling, drug abuse, alcoholism and other high-risk behaviours.

The experts include Dr Gracemary Leung, director of the Psychological Services Unit at the University of Hong Kong, who has experience in counselling problem gamblers; Dr Alex Blaszczynski, an internationally-renowned researcher in gambling and problem gambling from Australia; Dr Samson Tse from New Zealand, an expert on Asian mental health and problem gambling; and Dr Lori Rugle, a clinical psychologist from the US who is an expert on pathological gambling.

The panel will submit their recommendations to the Ministry of Health and the National Council on Problem Gambling by the end of this month.