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AVA TESTING POPULAR
SWEETS AFTER BAN
IN PHILIPPINES

PAGE 6

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REPORT

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JUDGE IN CANING CONTROVERSY

SHOULDN'T HIS BOSSES
HAVE NAMED HIM?

TAN HUI LENG

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AMID startling statistics that one in 350 hospital patients are HIV-positive, at least one voluntary welfare organisation here has called for mandatory testing of high-risk groups, in what some have described as a highly controversial and intrusive move.

The group – Focus on the Family – said it would be submitting a proposal, drafted together with doctors, to the Ministry of Health (MOH) soon.

High-risk groups, such as men who visit sex workers and sexually-active gay men, should go for compulsory testing, said its director, Mr Tan Thuan Seng.

WHERE ARE YOU, YOUNG MALE DANCER?

WOMEN CAN'T GET
THEIR ADRENALIN RUSH

S'POREANS SITTING ON A GOLDMINE

PERTH'S PROPERTY
MARKET IS RED HOT

ALL IN YOUR WEEKEND TODAY – OUT TOMORROW

Should Aids testing be mandatory?

“We should not allow people who choose high-risk lifestyles to avoid testing and thereby subject innocents in their households and medical workers to unfair risks of infection,” said Mr Tan.

“These undiagnosed infected are walking time-bombs as they have the potential to knowingly or unknowingly infect others.”

On Tuesday, it was revealed that a recent MOH study of over 3,000 anonymous blood samples collected in hospitals showed that 0.28 per cent of those who thought they were free of the disease were in fact HIV-positive.

This was followed by the news that the MOH is investigating the case of a man suspected of spreading the virus knowingly.

However, MPs and Aids volunteers TODAY

spoke to were concerned about how the identification of such HIV-positive carriers is intrusive and stigmatises those affected.

“In implementing it, it's hard to not intrude into the privacy and rights of individuals,” said chairman of the Aids Business Alliance, Mr Zulkifli Baharuddin.

Mr Benedict Jacob-Thambiah, an Action for Aids volunteer and the programme director of Heat Consultants, which provides HIV education at the workplace, agreed.

“Mandatory testing of any group only serves to stigmatise, isolate and deepen discrimination. It is not something I would advocate as I do not think any Singaporean should be subject to something that is patently wrong. It does no one any good,” he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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From library fines to unused millions

Missing artefacts, forgotten grants among accounting oversights unearthed by Auditor-General's report

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FOR more than a decade, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) was holding on to some \$5 million that didn't belong to it.

The reason: The Ministry of Transport had neglected to follow up on the money that went to the LTA.

This was just one of the accounting lapses found in various ministries, statutory boards and Government-owned companies revealed by the Auditor-General's latest annual report released yesterday.

When LTA was formed in 1995, it absorbed the Mass Rapid Transit Corporation, and in the process, the agency also received \$5 million of unused Government grants for rail projects held by the company.

Because the Transport Ministry did not track the unused grants transferred to LTA, it did not offset the amount against subsequent request for grants by LTA. About \$230,000 worth of interest on the amount was also not returned to the Government.

The \$5 million, along with \$230,155 in backdated interest, was finally returned

SOME OF THE FINDINGS

MOH

Financial assistance to 106 needy disabled persons continued for up to 40 months after their deaths. \$55,850 of the \$178,150 that had been paid has been recovered. At time of audit, 11 others who had died were still on the scheme.

MHA

Lapses in payments made under a consultancy contract, including a \$1,549 hotel bill paid for twice and a \$5,832 reimbursement for meals, taxi fares and other expenses not meant to be reimbursed under the contract.

MOM

Of \$3 million the ministry paid to an estate management services company in 2005, the company only used \$300,000 to pay its contractors. Unused balances have since been recovered.

MCYS

People's Association, which from 2001 to 2004 had ceased to occupy certain properties or was given reductions in rental rates, returned \$6.9 million in rental grants to the Ministry.

– also revealed that it was not the first time the Ministry had failed to recover unused grants from LTA.

Two years ago, the Auditor-General found that the Ministry had paid \$28.8 million more in grants than what the LTA needed to pay as interest on bonds issued for its rail projects.

And although it was required to, the LTA also failed to return the Ministry more than \$338,000 worth of interest on an advance held for staff loans earned between 1995 and 2000.

The money has since been recovered by the Ministry.

Another organisation that has had problems getting its money back was the National Library Board (NLB), which has been owed about \$5.4 million in fines by borrowers for more than a year.

The board had to write off \$3.5 million in unpaid fines for the 2005/2006 financial year.

Some of the errant borrowers included NLB's own staff, with seven of the staff each owing between \$100 to \$500 in unpaid fines and charges. And for more than five years, another 27 employees had owed the board a total of \$1,306 in fines and charges.

According to the NLB, it was “balancing the resources for collection against the benefits of doing so” and would “recover staff fines through payroll”.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

to the Ministry following the audit by the Auditor-General's Office (AGO).

The audit – done annually on Government accounts at the end of each fiscal year