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UU ISA LEN BAS CAW FBA
'CUBA-AIDS (NEWS ANALYSIS)
ONE FIFTH OF ALL CUBANS HAVE BEEN TESTED FOR AIDS:
BY LIONEL MARTIN

HAVANA, MAY 15, REUTER - CUBA, WHICH HAS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MASSIVE AIDS TESTING PROGRAMMES IN THE WORLD ANNOUNCED WEDNESDAY THAT TWO MILLION OF ITS TEN MILLION POPULATION HAVE BEEN TESTED FOR THE DESEASE.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE BY DR. ENRIQUE GALBAN, CHIEF OF EPIDEMIOLOGY OF CUBA'S MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, WHO SAID THAT THE ISLAND IS PLANNING TO TEST ALL CUBANS OVER 15 YEARS OF AGE BY THE END OF THE DECADE.

THE LATEST STATISTICS RELEASED EARLIER THIS MONTH SHOW THAT 205 CUBANS HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR AIDS. OF THIS NUMBER, 171 ARE CARRIERS, 27 HAVE SYMPTOMS OF THE DESEASE AND SEVEN HAVE DIED.

ALL CUBANS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR AIDS ARE PUT UNDER QUARANTINE AT A SPECIAL ESTABLISHMENT OUTSIDE OF HAVANA. CUBAN HEALTH OFFICIALS HAVE DECLARED THAT THE AIDS VICTIMS HAVE NOT OBJECTED TO THEIR ISOLATION. THEY SAID THAT THE CARRIERS ARE ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME ON WEEKENDS.

A RECENT TELEVISION PROGRAMME SAID THAT THE SPREAD OF THE DESEASE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN STABILIZED ON THE ISLAND. IT SAID THAT 102 AIDS POSIVITE VICTIMS WERE DETECTED IN 1986, 70 IN 1987 AND 33 IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF THIS YEAR.

STATISTICS PUBLISHED IN CUBAN NEWSPAPERS INDICATE THAT OF THE 205 AIDS POSITIVE VICTIMS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ARE SICK AND THOSE WHO HAVE DIED, 159 ARE MEN AND 46 ARE WOMEN. OF THE TOTAL NUMBER, 163 ARE HETEROSEXUAL WHILE 42 WERE EITHER HOMOSEXUAL OR BISEXUAL.

THE OFFICIAL STATISTICS SHOWED THAT OF THE 207 AIDS CASES, 177 O F THE VICTIMS WERE INFECTED THROUGH SEXUCAL CONTACT WHILE OVERSEAS OR BY SEXUAL CONTACTS WITH FOREIGNERS WITHIN CUBA.

THE DESEASE IS FOUND IN ALL OF CUBA'S FOURTEEN PROVINCES ALTHOUGH THE CITY OF HAVANA HAS HAD THE GREATEST NUMBER OF AIDS POSITIVE CASES WITH FIFTY NINE.

DR. HECTOR TERRY, THE VICE-MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH STATED EARLIER THIS MONTHS THAT WHILE AIDS IS NOT AT THIS MOMENT A CRITICAL PROBLEM, IT COULD BECOME SO BECAUSE THE TRANSMISSION OF VENEREAL DESEASES HAS BEEN GROWING.

TERRY SAID THAT THE REGISTERED CASES OF GONORRHEA ROSE FROM SLIGHTLY LESS THAN 20,000 IN 1981 TO MORE THAN 36,000 IN BOTH 1986 AND 1987. CASE OF SYPHILIS HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED OVER THE PAST SEVENYEARS, FROM 3621 CASES IN 1981 TO OVER 8500 CASES IN 1987. THE CUBAN VICE-MINISTER SAID THAT THE RISE IN VENEREAL DESEASE RATE IS A CLEAR WARNING THAT AIDS COULD ALSO EXPERIENCEE A JUMP.

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ACCORDING TO DR. TERRY, WHEN THOSE WHO TESTED AIDS POSITIVE WERE ASKED IF THEY KNEW OF THE DESEASE AND WAYS OF PREVENTING IT THROUGH THE USE OF CONDOMS, THE IMMENSE MAJORITY ASNWERED YES.

CUBAN MEDICAL OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THAT SEXUAL PROMISCUITY IS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTORS IN THE SPREAD OF AIDS. THEY POINT OUT THAT OF THE 46 WOMEN WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR AIDS, 45 CAUGHT THE DESEASE FROM THEIR HUSBANDS.

A COMMISSION HAS BEEN SET UP UNDER DR. TERRY TO TRY TO TRACK DOWN PERSONS WITH WHOM AIDS POSITIVE VICTIMS HAVE HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS. WHILE RELATIVE SUCCESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, IT HAS BEEN FOUND THAT IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO LOCATE ALL OF THOSE INVOLVED.

IN ONE CASE RECENTLY REPORTED IN THE CUBAN PRESS, A HETEROSEXUAL MAN WAS ABLE TO RECALL THAT HE HAD HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS WITH TWENTY SEVEN WOMEN. HOWEVER, WHILE HE KNEW THE NAMES OR ADDRESSES OF SOME, HE WAS NOT SURE OF OTHERS. THE COMMISSION SUCCEEDED IN LOCATING TWENTY FOUR OF THE WOMEN BUT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO LOCATE THE OTHER THREE WHO COULD BE TRANSMITTING AIDS TO OTHERS AT THIS MOMENT.

CUBAN HEALTHOFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT CUBA HAS AN ADVANTAGE OVER OTHER NATIONS IN THE BATTLE AGAINST AIDS. ONE OF THEM IS THAT DRUG ADDICTION AND WITH IT TRANSFER OF AIDS BY WAY OF HYPERDERMIC NEEDLES IS VIRTUALLY NONE EXISTANT ON THE ISLAND. ANOTHER ADVANTAGE IS THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS A VERY EXTENSIVE HEALTH CARE NETWORK, THAT MEDICAL ATTENTION IS FREE AND THAT THE ISLAND IS NOW PRODUCING ITS OWN REAGENTS FOR THE TESTINGOF AIDS.

CUBAN TELEVISION HAS DEVOTED NUMEROUS PROGRAMMES TO THE AIDS PROBLEM. TYPICALLY, THESE PROGRAMMES ARE INTERVIEWS WITH DR. TERRY OR OTHER HIGH CUBAN PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS AND ARE BOTH INFORMATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL IN NATURE. THE CUBAN HEALTH MINISTRY HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A TABLOID ON THE SUBJECT OF AIDS IS BEING PREPARED AND THAT IT WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL SECTORS OF THE POPULATION.

THE MINISTRY ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT BEGINNING NEXT OCTOBER, CLASSES ON SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DESEASES AND THEIR PREVENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO STUDENTS IN ALL JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN CUBA.

THE MAIN THRUST OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME IS AIMED AT CONVINCING PEOPLE TO BE LESS SEXUALLY PROMISCUOUS AND TO PROPAGANDISE THE USE OF CONDOMS WHICH ARE AVAILABLE A MODERATE PRICES AT ALL CUBAN PHARMACIES.
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