

CID may probe 'fraud' in sports equipment

Staff Reporter

HYDERABAD: The State government is likely to order a CID probe into the purchase of imported sports equipment worth Rs 2.69 crore by the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh for the 2002 National Games and the inaugural 2003 Afro-Asian Games.

This follows a detailed note sent to the government by the SAAP officials after they found that there were no proper records to indicate the "whereabouts" of the equipment. "This may look too small for a CID enquiry under normal circumstances. But, considering that the annual budget of SAAP itself is about Rs. 25 crores, we deemed it a fit case," a senior SAAP official said.

During internal check, it was also found that official in charge of the stores was at the same posting for 10 years. And ironically, the same official was later suspended on disciplinary grounds and now has even retired from service.

"We have completed all the formalities in informing the State government including submitting all the relevant details in the prescribed format including seeking legal advice," explained the SAAP official. Officials said a few heads are likely to roll given the magnitude of the alleged fraud in the issue.

Cardiac stem cell therapy holds promise

Findings of trials presented at 'BioAsia-2010'

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Stem cell therapy promises to become "standard treatment" in five years for people who suffered a heart failure as results in an ongoing study in Germany revealed beneficial effects to patients.

"There is hope. We can develop new therapies to restore functioning of tissues by the use of stem cells", said Prof. Gustav Steinhoff, who heads Reference and Translation Centre for Cardiac Stem Cell Therapy at University of Rostock. Heart muscle gets damaged or scarred in people who suffer heart failure due to myocardial infarction and affects the pumping of the blood.

Talking to *The Hindu* after presenting the findings of the trials at 'BioAsia-2010', he said that generally the regenerative capacity was low for tissues in brain, heart and spine. Efforts were on to develop therapies for tissue regeneration and replacement in diseases caused by infections or heart failure or heart valve ailment.

In the studies conducted at Rostock since 2001, bone marrow stem cells were injected into diseased heart tissue. In all, 141 patients were treated and it was found that the heart's function improved by 5-20 per cent. The survival



LEARNING EXPERIENCE: Students interacting with a foreign expert at the BioAsia conference in the city on Thursday. - PHOTO: G. KRISHNASWAMY

of these patients was 10 per cent higher than those in control group after five years. The major effect was improvement of blood perfusion in heart blood vessels. It was found that bone marrow stem cells had regenerated tissue. "Bone marrow stem cells can grow small blood vessels which restore blood supply to heart", Prof. Steinhoff explained.

Meanwhile, Prof. Narinder Mehra, Head, Department of Transplant Immunology and Immunogenetics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) said plans were afoot to create a network of centres in India to expand the registry of unrelated bone marrow donors. Every year at least one lakh bone marrow transplants were needed to be done in the country as against

a few hundred.

"Unless we expand the registry to 1,00,000 (currently only 3,500), we are not going to do justice", said Prof. Mehra added, who is national co-ordinator of the Asian Indian Donor Marrow Registry (AIDMR). The transplants are done mostly for patients of leukaemia and others suffering from genetic disorders like thalassemia.