

# NEWS

## HEALTH MINISTER KHAW OUT OF HOSPITAL

Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan has been discharged from hospital. He had undergone bypass surgery at the National Heart Centre Singapore on May 4.

A spokesperson from the Ministry of Health said doctors have advised Mr Khaw to continue to have undisturbed rest at home during this critical period of recuperation. This is crucial for a fast and full recovery, and will enable him to resume his duties expediently. Transport Minister Raymond Lim is covering his duties for now.

Mr Khaw was found to have an abnormal stress electrocardiogram in a recent routine medical check-up.



Further tests had revealed significant narrowing of a major heart artery.

The Prime Minister has granted Mr Khaw leave of absence from his duties until May 25.

## CPF MINIMUM SUM REVISED TO \$123,000 IN JULY

From July, the prevailing CPF Minimum Sum will be revised to \$123,000, up from \$117,000.

Members who can set aside the full minimum sum will receive about \$1,100 per month when they reach their draw down age, said the Manpower Ministry (MOM).

The new minimum sum will apply to CPF members who turn 55 from July until June next year.

MOM said the minimum sum will be raised gradually to reach \$120,000 (in 2003 dollars) in 2013. The increase, which includes an adjustment for inflation, is to ensure that Singaporeans set aside sufficient savings for their retirement.

Also from July, the Medisave Minimum Sum

(MMS) will be raised to \$34,500 from \$32,000.

The CPF Board said members will be able to withdraw their Medisave savings in excess of the MMS at or after 55 years old.

The maximum balance a member may have in his Medisave Account, known as the Medisave Contribution Ceiling (MCC), is fixed at \$5,000 above MMS.

This will correspondingly be increased to \$39,500, from \$37,000.

Any Medisave contribution in excess of the prevailing MCC will be transferred to the member's Special Account if he is below age 55.

It will be transferred to his Retirement Account if he is above age 55 and has a minimum sum shortfall.

## E-BALLOT FOR NDP TICKETS NOW OPEN

Singapore citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents can apply for this year's National Day Parade (NDP) tickets over the next 10 days. They can do so over the telephone, through SMS, SAM, AXS stations and via [www.ndp.org.sg](http://www.ndp.org.sg). Those who do not have access to the Internet can also apply through the NDP website via CitizenConnect Centres.

Tickets will be allocated through an electronic ballot which will be carried out after the application process.

Applicants can choose to apply for tickets to the Preview on July 31, or the

NDP on Aug 9.

They can apply for either two, four or six tickets.

The fewer the number of tickets applied for, the better the chance of getting them.

There is no limit to the number of applications that each NRIC holder can submit.

However, only the latest application will be entered for the e-ballooting on May 26.

Successful applicants will be notified between June 8 and 17 through their contact numbers provided.

They can then collect their tickets at HDB Hub Basement 1, Bedok Room from June 19 to 28.

## A FIRE GARDEN



Members from French fire alchemists Compagnie Carabosse lighting up the fire installations during this year's Singapore Arts Festival opening act, Invitation to Dream — A Fire Garden Installation. This is the first open fire light-up of the Esplanade Park and Empress Place Precinct. The festival opening combines street art with creative fire displays to connect audiences with an enchanting and glowing wonderland. The show will be from 7.30pm to 10.30pm and will end on May 16. WEE TECK HIAN

# Convict's last chance to escape death ...

President to hear clemency plea; lawyer takes issue with minister's remarks

TEO XUANWEI

[xuanwei@mediacorp.com.sg](mailto:xuanwei@mediacorp.com.sg)

**SINGAPORE** — His first clemency plea was unsuccessful and now convicted drug mule Yong Vui Kong's last chance to escape death lies in the President's hands, after the highest court in the land dismissed his appeal.

The 22-year-old Malaysian's argument that the mandatory death penalty is unconstitutional is also the last time the courts will hear such challenges, the Court of Appeal said.

All the plausible arguments on this issue have been raised, considered and rejected, Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong said on Friday.

But Yong's lawyer, Mr M Ravi, told reporters he plans to file for a judicial review before the Court of Appeal over Law Minister K Shanmugam's remarks relating to his client's case during a residents' dialogue session last Sunday in Joo Chiat.

The resident had asked if Yong's case would affect Singapore's laws on the mandatory death penalty.

Mr Shanmugam replied: "Yong Vui Kong (who was sentenced to hang for trafficking in 47g of heroin) is young. But if we say, 'We let you go', what's the signal we're sending?"

"We're sending a signal to all drug barons out there: Just make

sure you choose a victim who's young or a mother of a young child and use them as the people to carry drugs into Singapore."

With the sympathy generated after these people are caught, he added, there will be "a whole unstoppable stream of people coming through as long as we say we won't enforce our laws".

As Yong's case was subjudice, or still under judgment, Mr Ravi said his client's fate had been "poisoned" with "biasedness".

In reply to media queries, the Ministry of Law said: "The Government has made clear its policy and philosophy on having the mandatory death penalty for a number of offences, such as drug trafficking.

"Minister Shanmugam, in response to a specific question ... reiterated the policy and philosophy behind the death penalty and why Singapore adopted a tough stance."

In their 71-page grounds of decision, Appeal Judges Andrew Phang, V K Rajah and CJ Chan disagreed with Mr Ravi that the mandatory death penalty — which does not allow judges to consider mitigating factors — ran counter to the Constitution.

CJ Chan noted that the Constitution does not expressly prohibit inhuman punishment, whether or not the mandatory death penalty

qualifies as such.

Further, given the Government's rejection in 1969 of a constitutional commission's recommendation to prohibit inhuman punishment, it would not be "legitimate" for the court to "legislate new rights into the Singapore Constitution under the guise of interpreting existing constitutional provisions", he said.

CJ Chan said the judges accepted former Attorney-General Walter Woon's argument that there were enough countries — 31 by his count — which still carried the mandatory death penalty for drug-related offences.

Even if Singapore's laws should align to international legal obligations as far as possible, "there were inherent limits on the extent to which the Singapore courts could refer to international human rights norms for this purpose", said CJ Chan.

The power to craft the scale of punishment for various offences ultimately still lies with lawmakers and not the Judiciary, he added.

Yong's two brothers were listening in the packed courtroom.

Older brother Yun Leong, 24, told reporters he was very disappointed with the decision. Their mother will continue to be kept in the dark about his brother's fate, he added.