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## Bali health authorities probe report of HIV from tattoo parlour

JAKARTA: Health authorities in Bali are probing a claim that an Australian tourist has contracted HIV through an unclean needle when being tattooed at a tattoo parlour in Kuta.

They promised to take action against the parlour and have sent a team to investigate the allegation, local media reported Monday.

The head of the Badung district health agency, Gede Putra Suteja, said there was a strong possibility the tourist could have contracted the virus while getting a tattoo, as the use of shared needles was a common form of transmission.

An owner of a tattoo parlour in Kuta, Kadek, meanwhile said he was always careful to sterilise his equipment after each

use.

"It could have been that this tourist got HIV through unsafe sex in Bali and not from getting a tattoo," he said.

Australian authorities recently said that a patient diagnosed with HIV likely caught the virus while having a tattoo done in Bali and recommended that people who had been tattooed there recently should consider being tested for HIV and other blood-borne viruses.

Meanwhile, in an effort to stem the rising number of people infected with HIV/Aids in Bali, authorities on the island are planning to establish more voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) clinics.

Head of Bali Health Agency Nyoman Sutedja said there were 26 VCT clinics in

Bali but in future each of the 57 sub-districts on the island would have at least one VCT clinic.

By opening more VCT clinics, they hope that the people will become more aware of the risk of being infected with HIV/Aids and have themselves checked at the clinics.

According to the Indonesian Aids Prevention Commission, the number of reported HIV/Aids cases in Bali soared last year, with one in four prostitutes reported to be HIV-positive and the number of those infected jumping almost 19 per cent compared to the previous year.

There were 5,222 cases of HIV/Aids in Bali last year, with nearly half of them from Denpasar. - Bernama