

# Ren Ci brings back charity show to close deficit

**BY CHERYL LIM**

HEALTH-CARE charity Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre will hold its charity show next month, after a hiatus of two years.

This comes on the back of a potential deficit of \$10 million at the end of this financial year in March next year, after its former chief executive officer, Ming Yi, was found guilty of misappropriating \$50,000 from the charity in October.

The deficit has been chalked up because of a plunge of about 50 per cent in donations and an increase in operating costs at the same time.

After the Ministry of Health (MOH) began a probe into the

charity's financial irregularities in November 2007, the charity lost its Institution of Public Character (IPC) status - the right to grant tax exemptions for donations.

Ren Ci then pulled the plug on active fund raising, including its charity show, which was first held in 2003.

It only started canvassing for funds again after regaining its IPC status in August last year.

In the financial year that ended in March 2007 - the year its last charity show was held - Ren Ci raised \$16 million.

This drastically dropped to \$6.4 million and \$3.1 million in the next two financial years, respectively, and \$1.12 million so far in this financial year, chief executive officer James Toi said.

Donations have been falling year-on-year because of the economic downturn, which forced many corporate donors to tighten their pursestrings, said Mr Toi.

Expenses have doubled from about \$15 million before the opening of Ren Ci Community Hospital in Irrawady Road in December last year, to \$30 million after that, said Mr Toi.

Every year, Ren Ci is given grants of about \$12 million by MOH, while patients' fees amount to about \$8 million.

It needs to fund the balance using public donations, or it will have to draw on its reserves, which stand at \$22 million.

It hopes to raise the shortfall of \$10 million through its charity show and other platforms, such as charity dinners.

Its last televised show brought in between \$5 million and \$6 million, but it hopes to raise \$4 million from next month's show, said Mr Toi.

Asked why the target for the show next year is below the sum raised in 2007, Ren Ci's spokesman said that the "realistic target" was "taking into considerations factors like the economic situation".

Another change: No stunts in next month's show.

Ren Ci chairman Chua Thian Poh said: "We are responding to public feedback that the stunts cause agony to the performers."

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will be the guest of honour at the event.

[cheryll@sph.com.sg](mailto:cheryll@sph.com.sg)