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`Gaining access to funds can be a problem'

JOHOR BARU, Sat. - The allocation of RM41 million to non-governmental organisations as proposed in the 2001 Budget yesterday was greeted with mixed feelings by the Malaysian AIDS Council.

Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said while the monetary aid would help the work of NGOs at grassroots level, gaining access to the fund was still a problem.

"We are still unclear on how to go about accessing the fund even though it has been allocated for us," she said.

The 2001 Budget tabled in Parliament yesterday also proposed RM10 million to be set aside to subsidise haemodialysis treatment for kidney patients, under the health segment.

Marina expressed hope that a similar subsidy be directly channelled to AIDS treatment.

She added, this was because only one per cent of the 34,000 people infected with HIV/AIDS in the country could afford treatment.

"I think it would be great if the Government could further subsidise the anti-retrovirus treatment for HIV/AIDS.

(END)