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RM40m grant for AIDS Foundation

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Government has approved a RM40 million grant to the Malaysian AIDS Foundation and its affiliates for HIV/AIDS education and prevention programmes over the next 10 years.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today the grant would be allocated to the council at RM4 million per annum over 10 years.

He said the council had been dedicated and committed in conducting many activities that benefited the Government and the people including effective HIV/AIDS education and prevention programmes.

Chua said there were almost 6,000 new cases of HIV/AIDS last year, with a total 44,000 known cases in Malaysia and hoped the number would decline in the future following increased HIV/AIDS education and prevention.

Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir said the council had requested the grant a few months ago.

"We are very happy that the Government has given consideration to it."

She said the grant would allow the council to extend programmes to rural areas as current efforts were mainly focused in Kuala Lumpur and big towns.

Earlier, the Minister said that the Government had also recently fulfilled its promise to match ringgit-for-ringgit in grants up to a maximum of RM1 million for funds raised by non-governmental organisations which were active in relation to health treatment centres.

He urged NGOs to set up and expand health treatment centres such as haemodialysis treatment centres and hospices particularly in rural areas.

Chua said that NGOs should also work towards self-reliant funding and spread their wings further to more interior and rural areas.

The Minister said the level of NGO services in rural areas was currently not satisfactory.

"NGO activity in rural areas needs to be intensified."

Chua said there were currently 54 NGO-run dialysis centres with 1,542 poor patients receiving a RM50 treatment subsidy from the Ministry.

He said to qualify for this grant, the NGOs involved in the prevention and treatment of diseases must be registered with the Registrar of Societies or under a non-profit company or be tax-exempt and were not receiving aid from any other governmental agencies.

He said the NGOs were also required to have trained technical staff, treat all patients with no discrimination and provide clinical treatment including scheduled follow-up treatment.

"Application forms can be obtained from the ministry's finance division and must be made via the Malaysian AIDS Foundation, Hospis Malaysia Council or similar national bodies which will also manage the funds," Chua said.

He said the ministry would still offer financial assistance to NGOs which were transparent and effective in carrying out their activities to help the community.