

# RM10m for legal aid foundation

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday announced an allocation of RM10 million to the National Legal Aid Foundation to assist those who cannot afford legal services.

Anwar said since the beginning of the foundation's operations in 2012, this model has seen hundreds of thousands of persons being represented in criminal proceedings.

"With my limited experience, not that limited in Sungai Buloh, I've seen hundreds of prisoners being given the chance to defend themselves together with a reasonably fair trial.

"Therefore I am persuaded by credentials to announce another RM10 million for this purpose," he said in his keynote address at the International Malaysia Law Conference.

The prime minister said access to justice has been greatly enhanced, with the foundation being the largest provider of legal aid in the country, Bernama reported.

The government also acknowledged the role of the Malaysian Bar in this initiative.

Meanwhile, Anwar said it was time to review the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 in a bid to expand protection and the avenues for

> Service has facilitated access to counsel for hundreds of thousands in financially burdened group: PM



Anwar answering a question during the conference yesterday. *.BERNAMAPIC*

disclosures to appropriate agencies without fear of punishment.

He said history has shown that it was corruption and bribery that constituted one of the primary

causes for the collapse of the Roman Empire and subsequent empires as well.

He added that it was not just the existence of corruption but the

scale and long-term global effects that should concern everyone.

"Much has been said about my so-called preoccupation with the issue of corruption and that not a

day goes by without me shouting myself hoarse about waging war on corruption.

"While we have no empire as such, nevertheless our nation's history is marred by abuse of power and corruption no less.

"This scourge has permeated the fabric of our society, stymied our progress and national aspirations and undermined our foundations of good governance."

He said the abolition of the mandatory death penalty does not imply a possible increase in crime rates in the future.

"Death sentence still exists, just that it will not be automatically handed down in court, it must be decided by a judge. I believe that is fairer," he said.

On April 3, the Dewan Rakyat passed Act 846 (Abolition of the Mandatory Death Penalty Act), which aims to abolish the mandatory death penalty to vary the sentence relating to imprisonment for natural life and whipping and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Under the Act, the court now has the discretion to impose the death penalty or imprisonment of not less than 30 years but not exceeding 40 years, and if the death sentence is not imposed, whippings of not less than 12 strokes will also be handed down.