

Bar Council hopes 40% of its members will provide free legal aid
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Bar hopes at least 40% of its members would provide free legal aid to those who are arrested or held in remand.

Its president Lim Chee Wee said it was possible to achieve the international benchmark, matching that of Taiwan where about 40% of its members perform pro-bono legal aid.

"This is in line with the formation of the National Legal Aid Foundation (NLAF) last year.

"Under the NLAF, the Government will offer financial support to lawyers to represent those arrested, in remand or on bail for free," he said when launching the Law and Practice on Arrest and Remand book during the Bar's 66th annual general meeting here Saturday.

Lim said he hoped the percentage of unrepresented people in court can be reduced to almost zero with the NLAF scheme, which he hoped will be announced this month or the next.

In Nov 2009, a question in Parliament revealed that accused persons were unrepresented in 84,376 out of 108,528 criminal trials in magistrates courts in 2008.

A total of 4,726 juveniles were unrepresented in their criminal trials in the same year.

The main objective of the NLAF is to provide legal representation to all who are arrested or held in remand.

Lim said the Bar Council has trained 500 volunteers to be enlisted under the NLAF so far.

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