

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

LEGAL AID CENTRE SELANGOR & YBGK



Ramesh K. Supramaniam

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Ramesh Lachmanan

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Firstly we wish to express our appreciation to the Selangor Bar Committee (SBC) for giving us the opportunity to be the Co-Chairpersons of Legal Aid Centre Selangor (LACS) for the year 2012 / 2013.

The year under review has been challenging with LACS conducting its regular and core activities for the year together with the implementation of the National Legal Aid Foundation (YBGK). With the commencement of YBGK in April 2012, the staff were required to assist in the YBGK daily duties besides being responsible for their respective work scope in the LACS. The scope of duties under the YBGK requires constant attention, thus it was difficult to manage both the LACS and YBGK duties simultaneously. An additional staff was therefore appointed to assist with both scopes of work. Eventually, with perseverance and encouragement from the Management Panel members as well as the support of the volunteer lawyers given at crucial moments when legal assistance were urgently required, both duties proceeded with minimum disruption.

YBGK is an independent body that funds the provision of legal aid by allocating funds for lawyers carrying out legal aid work. Lawyers are required to be trained before being selected as a YBGK lawyer. YBGK lawyers provide free legal assistance to all Malaysians (irrespective of their financial means) at the police station, the remand hearing and when they are charged in court. Insofar as hearings are concerned, a means

test will be applied and only those who pass the means test will qualify to receive legal assistance from YBGK.

From April 2012 until December 2012, Selangor YBGK volunteer lawyers have assisted 2261 people at the remand stage, interviewed 635 arrested persons at the respective District Police Stations and about 63 cases were assigned to lawyers to handle criminal trials. We have 201 lawyers registered with us, out of which 105 have been trained.

We see the implementation of YBGK a great start to ensure every Malaysian citizen obtain legal representation in criminal matters. However, this initiative can only succeed if more volunteer lawyers join in to make it successful. To this end we have initiated the project to improve the rates payable to YBGK lawyers and hope that these higher rates would attract more lawyers to volunteer.

Nevertheless, LACS is constantly improving itself so that its objectives can be achieved through carefully structured schedules and programs. On this note, LACS will continue to source for more volunteer lawyers to assist in its prime purpose of offering legal representation to accused who cannot afford to engage a lawyer.

LACS remains committed in providing legal representation to the poor and the needy besides fulfilling its obligations towards providing the required legal aid training to chambering pupils under the respective programs in collaboration with LAC KL, Tenaganita, Sisters In Islam, and Consumer Association. Details of the said programs are stated in the attached activity report.

PROGRAMS CONDUCTED BY LAC SELANGOR

Orientation Sessions

This program organized together with Selangor Bar Committee's 'Introductory Sessions' is intended to provide an insight of what is required and expected from chambering pupils during their 14 days of compulsory legal aid duty at LACS and to further introduce the various programs and clinics run by the Center.

A total of four (4) orientation sessions were held for the year 2012. The orientation sessions were conducted by the Chairpersons or the Legal Officer of LACS.

Dock Brief training

The objective of this training program is to introduce dock brief to those chambering pupils scheduled participate in these programs. The said training included methods of interviewing accused in the court room, decorum in court, skills of advocacy and practical aspects of how to conduct mitigation before a Magistrate. Charge sheets of various offences and particulars of accused were given to the pupils and they were asked to prepare and present their mitigation thereafter. The exercise was very useful and the responses from the participants were positive in that they will be more confident and

aware when faced with the actual mitigation process later in court. The said training was presented by Mr. S. Ramesh the Chairperson of LACS.

SIS Forum (Malaysia) (1st April 2012)

LACS was invited to participate at “TELENESIA workshop” organised by Sisters In Islam. The theme was “Women’s Rights in Islamic Law” and was held at Hotel Armada, Petaling Jaya. The workshop among others discussed on the Muslim women’s rights and Syariah court procedures. LACS was invited to discuss on its role and function at the said workshop and in the process able to disseminate knowledge and awareness amongst the participants. The workshop was attended by two of our volunteer lawyers.

Monfort Boys Town (6th May 2012)

In conjunction with Montfort Boys Town (“Monfort”) open house carnival on 6th May 2012, LACS conducted a law awareness program at one of the stalls provided by Montfort. A total of 11 lawyers, chambering pupils and staff assisted on a voluntary basis in advising the public on various matters which included employment, estate/letters of administration/probate/wills, contract, family and criminal. User friendly materials in the form of leaflets and booklets prepared by the Bar Council were distributed to the public and the volunteers were at hand to explain any queries that arose on the said materials.

“Walk About” (23rd June 2012)

LACS organized the “Walk About” in Bandar Kuala Selangor on 23rd June 2012. The aim of this event was to distribute legal information contained in the respective leaflets that covers a broad spectrum ranging from the rights of police detainees, accidents, issues on arrest and bail, family and employment matters including contact information on our Legal Aid Centres. The theme “Walk About” was chosen to illustrate the actual movement of lawyers as they assimilate themselves into the very heart of the general public’s daily routine, an opportunity to walk alongside them, cajole them to speak up and asked questions, perhaps even to the extent of providing solutions to their queries in the short span of time. This event attracted participation of 10 lawyers, chambering pupils and staff.

Outreach Program cum Community Service at Kampung orang asli Sg. Jang, Kerling, Hulu Selangor (13.10.2012)

LACS carried out an outreach program at Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Jang, Kerling Hulu Selangor on 13th October 2012. This village is located in Kerling, at the outskirts of Kuala Kubu Baru. The village consists of 20 families of the Semelai tribe, with approximately 100 people in total. 20 lawyers, pupils and staff volunteered their time for this program. Our volunteers gave legal advice particularly on issues relating to ancestral land, employment matters, right to EPF & SOCSO contribution and issues in relation to incorrect particulars in the IC. Their main concern however was in respect of the status of the land they are occupying. When they first resettled at Sg Jang, they were told that they

were given 10 acres of land for their village. However, since then parcels of the land in which they were occupying have been sold and they are currently only occupying less than 3 acres of land. Our investigation reveals that a further 2 houses have boundary markings done by surveyors which directly go through the said houses. The land is said to have been sold to individuals but the owners have yet to commence any eviction proceedings. We were informed that the villagers have on numerous occasions brought up their plight to JAKAO but were merely given oral assurances not to worry. The villagers have not been informed whether their village has been gazetted as an orang asli settlement. A team of lawyers have been set up to assist them in this matter.

UKM 40th Pesta Konvokesyen (19th October – 23rd October 2012)

In conjunction with UKM's 40th Convocation Carnival, LACS conducted a law awareness program at one of the stalls provided by the university in collaboration with UKM's Legal Aid Centre. The response from the university students and public was encouraging. There were 7 volunteer lawyers, chambering pupils and staff on duty to provide the necessary legal advice.

Seminar/workshop at UKM's Law Faculty (30th November 2012)

UKM's Legal Aid Centre organised a seminar cum workshop for the benefit of its final year law students on ways to operate and manage the said Centre. On this premise, they invited LACS to give a talk on interview of clients and preparation of case brief. Our Chairman Mr. Ramesh Lachmanan attended the said event and spoke on the topic.

The events organized by LACS were a success, and special thanks and appreciation must be accorded to all the volunteer lawyer, pupils and members of Selangor Bar for their support, contribution and assistance.

In conclusion, we would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the LACS staff for their commitment in serving the Centre, as well as to all members of the Committee and Management Panel for their cooperation and assistance.

Report submitted by:

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