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**Circular No 161/2026
Dated 20 May 2026**

To Members of the Malaysian Bar

Update on the Legal Aid and Public Defence Act 2026 and Transition of YBGK

We refer to [Circular No 244/2024](#) dated 16 Aug 2024 titled “Function and Role of YBGK to be Absorbed by JBG”, in which Members were informed that a new Act was being developed to facilitate the transition of the functions and role of Yayasan Bantuan Guaman Kebangsaan (“YBGK”) to the Legal Aid Department (Jabatan Bantuan Guaman, “JBG”).

The new Act — the Legal Aid and Public Defence Act 2026 — received Royal Assent on 3 Feb 2026 and is expected to come into force this year.

The Act introduces a new framework for the delivery of legal aid and public defence services under JBG, including changes to the overall structure and administration of such services. The Act also provides for the appointment of a chief public defender for the purpose of overseeing and managing public defence services under the new framework.

There will be two categories of panel lawyers under the new Act:

- (1) JBG panel lawyers; and
- (2) Public defence panel lawyers.

Work carried out by panel lawyers under the new framework will be remunerated, although the applicable rates and payment structure have yet to be finalised and announced.

We note that JBG has commenced a series of nationwide briefings to introduce the new Act, including the framework for the management and appointment of panel lawyers, as well as the implementation of the legal aid and public defence system. These briefings are intended to assist Members in understanding the new framework and its implementation, and to encourage Members to participate as panel lawyers under the new Act. Members are advised to follow the relevant registration procedures prescribed by JBG for inclusion in the relevant panel lawyers’ categories.

We encourage Members to attend YBGK Training Parts I, II and III as and when such training sessions are organised by the branches of the Bar Council Legal Aid Centre (“BC LAC”), to better equip themselves for criminal defence work under the new Act. For further information on upcoming training sessions, Members may contact their respective BC LAC branches [here](#).

We will continue to engage with JBG and YBGK Headquarters to support a smooth transition, with a view to ensuring continuity in the delivery of legal aid and public defence services.



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Members who have feedback or questions regarding the implementation of the new framework are invited to submit them [here](#). The committee will organise a hybrid forum to further prepare Members for the transition to the new legal aid system.

Further updates will be shared with Members as more information becomes available.

Thank you.

Roshalizawati Muhammad and Collin Arvind Andrew
Co-Chairpersons
Bar Council National Legal Aid and YBGK Committee