



Legal Practice Division

Dear friends,

April is here, and in India it signifies not just the dawn of the new year (based on some of our traditional calendars), but also the beginning of the new financial year for all tax assesseees.

The last financial year ended much better than expected for most businesses in India, and especially for law firms. This positive trend was, of course, short-lived as the second wave of Covid-19 infections surged in India as also across the world. We are back to living life virtually; sadly, tucking away our summer travel plans into the recesses of our memory.

Nonetheless, we can indulge in fun, learning, and catching up with old friends virtually too. The Technology Law Committee plans just that for the summer. Coming your way in early May are our, now famous, Virtual Round Tables (VRT). We hope these will educate and entertain you while keeping you engaged with the activities of your Committee.

The VRT will provide attendees insight into many of the emerging technology and legal trends affecting businesses today. The pandemic has changed the way our clients (and we) operate, the way consumers behave, and the way we live. Are there any trends you would like us to cover? We await inputs of anything you found particularly noteworthy in the recent past.

Our 2020 VRT instalment, held in the early throes of the Covid-19 pandemic, focused on how technology could be used to support the new normal around which we were tiptoeing carefully. Today, those technology advancements, and their sheer speed, are being taken for granted. Topics from digital payments to e-commerce to telehealth are a part of our daily conversations. Technology is not just making life convenient, it is also being used to ensure that we have safe, secure, and healthy workplaces, entertainment venues, and recreational spaces.

The greatest benefits of the VRT is that you don't have to wait for the IBA Annual Conference (which, unfortunately, is not happening this year), or travel, to be part of the experience. What I am, personally, looking forward to is seeing many of you virtually. Since Seoul in 2019, I have not seen many of you. I do hope each one of you reading this mail will be able to participate at the upcoming VRT.

The Technology Law Committee is also working with the IBA and the Council of Europe on Human Rights aspects of Artificial Intelligence (AI). I am enjoying our discussions in general, but specifically on the critical need in eliminating bias in data and machine learning, which is a huge concern not just in e-commerce transactions but also in law enforcement. I am also reading invaluable material that the 'AI for Good' movement has thrown up. I do hope this IBA initiative, which has stakeholders and experts from all over the world, helps law makers and commercial organisations start believing that AI, if used responsibly, has the power to solve hitherto complex global challenges.

Hopefully, we at the Technology Law Committee will be able to keep your minds off the pandemic, even for a bit, and help the summer be a little brighter.
See you all - virtually - at the VRT in early May 2021.

Stay safe and remain happy,

Sajai Singh
Chair, IBA Technology Law Committee

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