



12–14 August 2020
Pullman Kuala Lumpur Bangsar



To Members of the Malaysian Bar and pupils in chambers

IMLC 2020 Welcome Note | Equipping Our Lawyers with a Vision for Growth

*We are made wise not by recollection of our past,
but by the responsibility for our future.*

George Bernard Shaw
Irish playwright and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1925)

- ◆ Where do you think our lawyers stand, in terms of adapting to changes such as digitalisation, specialisation, artificial intelligence (“AI”), use of technology, and even innovation?
- ◆ Would our lawyers survive if thrown into the deep end of unknown frontiers?
- ◆ Would our lawyers survive in the face of stiff competition from within and, most of all, abroad?
- ◆ Are small firms ably equipped to face a new, demanding and rapidly paced future?
- ◆ Are our lawyers and law firms tapping into new mushrooming markets out there? Or are we still cocooned and afraid to peer out into what we perceive as the “unknown”?

The Malaysian Bar is once again organising its signature biennial conference — the International Malaysia Law Conference (“IMLC”) 2020. This fifth edition carries the theme **“Navigating the Present, Exploring the Future”**.

You may say this echoes IMLC 2018’s “Raising the Bar: Innovate. Integrate. Emulate”, but know that the Malaysian Bar takes very seriously the issues of innovation, AI and technology, digitalisation, specialisation, and networking with whole new markets out there. Unless our lawyers and law firms take the bull by its horns and seize opportunities readily available, we will lag behind even further. The legal industry, like any other, faces challenges. But take heart — challenges that we overcome set the path for better opportunities.

According to an article by Thomson Reuters Legal Executive Institute and UK research firm Acritas entitled “State of the Legal Market in China 2019 Report: What Can the West Learn?” dated 7 Mar 2019,¹ the Chinese market is evolving much more rapidly than Western markets. Gone is the erroneous perception that the Chinese business model for success is dependent on copying innovations and methods from Western countries. The Chinese legal market’s relative youth is largely attributable to this meteoric rise, as the market is less hindered by the traditional legal industry intransigence that has slowed large-scale change in the legal markets in the West. And Chinese law firms have been shown to be more likely to try different methods and strategies, and to adapt the legal technologies needed to make alternative approaches possible. Our colleagues who have gone on legal market visits to China will surely attest to this.

ASEAN too, is not far behind in terms of adopting new technologies. An article on *The ASEAN Post* entitled “AI and big data in the legal profession”² dated 14 Mar 2019 expounds on the use of AI to complement human labour, eg performing monotonous legal work such as proofreading, research, preliminary document review or due diligence, and even contract preparation and management. Some firms in Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia have begun adopting AI in managing some of these tasks.

Navigating the Present, Exploring the Future

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Undoubtedly, Malaysian law firms — be they big or small, partnerships or sole proprietorships — sorely need to improvise and adapt to cater to the tremendous changes that are happening. If those changes are unavoidable, then they will inevitably need to be adopted. Lawyers must act urgently so that the legal industry can go forward and be competitive.

While it is absurd to replace human labour with technology just on the grounds of affordability, lawyers should welcome the use of technology and leverage it to the maximum, to increase productivity and enhance time-efficiency in operating their law firms. According to the article “AI and big data in the legal profession” in February 2018, AI contract review platform LawGeex beat 20 US-trained top corporate lawyers at identifying risks in Non-Disclosure Agreements (“NDAs”), one of the most common legal agreements used in business, taking only 26 seconds to complete, compared to an average of 92 minutes for the lawyers.³

Next, breaking down the fields of practice will become a trend. The legal industry will be compelled to recognise lawyers focusing on very specific areas of practice, compared to the common and accepted way of practising law. For example, clients will, in time, require a lawyer dedicated to particular innovative project developments rather than just a “conveyancing lawyer”. As the business world changes, so will the demand towards legal specialisation.

In the legal industry in Malaysia, numerous opportunities have been left unexplored because some areas of law are not fully practised.

Conclusion

A competitive legal environment has created an increasingly borderless situation. Limits have been torn down or are being stretched, and digitalisation, including e-filing, is now the norm. Communication is instantaneous and seamless, and diverse business sectors are now moving from being local-centric to global-centric.

The Malaysian Bar — and its individual Members — cannot afford to remain stagnant; instead, we are called upon to be competitive and to compete on the international platform. Where others have seized opportunities, we must do even better.

In addition, our Malaysian lawyers must also spearhead the entry into new fields of law, confidently. That is what IMLC 2020 seeks to do — spark interest and initiatives for cross-border legal work.

With all this in mind and much more, IMLC 2020 is poised to address the concerns and hurdles legal practitioners face, with the determination to equip them for a rewarding future and to provide a vision for robust growth. We want our lawyers to be inspired and empowered, steadfast yet versatile, resolute and unafraid, and at the ready to embrace the transformations in the evolving legal landscape. It is you who stands to gain!

Thank you.



Mohamad Ezri b Abdul Wahab and Desmond Ho Chee Cheong
Co-Chairpersons
IMLC 2020 Organising Committee



Programme

Keep watching our space for constant updates on topics and speakers.

¹ “State of the Legal Market in China 2019 Report: What Can the West Learn?”, Legal Executive Institute, 7 Mar 2019, available here: <http://www.legalexecutiveinstitute.com/state-of-the-legal-market-china-2019/>.

² “AI and big data in the legal profession”, Jason Thomas, *The ASEAN Post*, available here: <https://theaseanpost.com/article/ai-and-big-data-legal-profession>.

³ *Ibid.*

Info: bit.ly/IMLC2020 Call: 03-2050 2120 / 2127
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An initiative of Bar Council Malaysia

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Category	IMLC 2020 Registration Fee			Gala Dinner 13 Aug 2020 (RM)
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<input type="checkbox"/> Member of the Malaysian Bar	<input type="checkbox"/> 750	<input type="checkbox"/> 1,500	<input type="checkbox"/> 2,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 250
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*Group discounts are available when multiple individuals from the same law firm or organisation register simultaneously: 5% (3 to 5 persons); 7% (6 to 10 persons); and 10% (more than 10 persons).

**Persons who accompany delegates are entitled to attend only the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Raja Aziz Addruse Memorial Lecture, and Social Events (except the Gala Dinner).

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Vegetarian meals are available upon request. Advance notice is required.

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Payment must be made in advance of the conference. Payment can be made by cheque, bank draft, direct deposit or Internet banking, or credit card. Cheques and bank drafts should be made payable to "Malaysian Bar Law Conference".

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- (3) If you have made a booking for accommodation, you are responsible for cancelling the booking. Bar Council Malaysia takes no responsibility for any financial penalties you may incur.
- (4) The IMLC 2020 Organising Committee reserves the right to modify the programme without prior notice, and shall accept no liability for any loss or inconvenience as a result of any amendment.
- (5) You hereby expressly consent that the personal information that you provide to the IMLC 2020 Organising Committee, whether now or in the future, may be used, recorded, stored, disclosed or otherwise processed by or on behalf of the IMLC 2020 Organising Committee for the purposes of facilitation and organisation of this conference, research and audit, maintenance of a delegate database for the promotion of this conference, and such ancillary services as may be relevant.