



August 17, 2010

AIBE Press Release #6: Points to Note

Through measures of connect, the Bar Council of India (“BCI”) has become aware of various issues and requests made by graduating students across India. The main issue raised has been with respect to timing and loss of opportunity because freshly enrolled advocates cannot practice till they clear the AIBE in December 2010. As mentioned earlier, the timing of the AIBE was fixed keeping in mind various issues including date of graduation at law schools across the country, time taken for enrolment at various SBCs as well as time for preparation and creation of access for law graduates across India. The current issues are specific to this academic year and will be addressed moving forward through a combination of the following measures, which will bring about increased efficiency and standardisation of practices:

- The BCI is currently preparing a plan to create a national database of all practising lawyers, law schools, law students and other stakeholders to put in place efficient processes to ensure that reforms carry long-term perspective. Such a database would also allow the Bar Council of India and the State Bar Councils (“SBCs”) to create a common platform for provision of tools and resources to lawyers, law students and law schools across India as well as track items such as the AIBE and enrolment of advocates. The BCI is simultaneously undertaking a technology upgradation programme, which includes creation of a technology platform connecting all SBCs and the BCI to increase efficiency and productivity;
- This database will be able to track every single law college/law student/advocate in India, verify required data and highlight any inconsistencies or issues. Advocates who do not meet the necessary requirements to practice law in India would be prohibited from doing so and the BCI will co-ordinate with every SBC to identify such issues and take stern action against any lawyers who are flouting the norms for practice of law in India. This action will also extend to cover recently enrolled lawyers who are not complying with the requirement of clearing the AIBE before practising law in India. Fresh graduates and recently enrolled advocates should follow the FAQs on the BCI website and ensure that they are not flouting the rules laid down by the BCI with respect to the AIBE and the practice of law in India; and
- The BCI has also begun the process of legal education reform and as a first step, a discussion paper on Legal Education Reform in India (with clear timelines) has been uploaded on the BCI website. As a part of this reform process, law schools across India will be required to provide quarterly reports on various areas which will ensure better tracking, compliance and awareness of issues being faced by law schools across India. Law colleges/ Universities should note that all registrations for the AIBE are being tracked and any law college that is registered with the BCI and whose graduating students do not undertake the AIBE will be liable to be derecognised.

Definition of Academic Year

There have also been various queries with respect to the definition of 'Academic Year'. Law schools and law students are requested to note the following definition:



August 17, 2010

“Academic Year shall mean the period of the year during which students attend a law school, commencing with the first classes or lectures for a particular year of the 3-year or 5-year L.I.B. programme (as applicable), and culminating with the last of such classes or lectures and applicable year or term end examinations. Law students graduating in the Academic Year 2009-2010, therefore, would mean those students who have completed their final year of study (third year in the case of 3-year L.I.B. programmes, and fifth year in the case of 5-year L.I.B. programmes) in the calendar year 2010, and, being eligible to appear for their final year examinations, have successfully passed such examinations.”

In the event graduating students have any issues with respect to declaration or result etc. please contact the Directorate of Legal Education, Bar Council of India on dle@barcouncilofindia.org.

A transparent and constructive AIBE: In the interest of the entire legal profession

While announcing the AIBE, the Bar Council of India was clear that this would be an examination conducted in the interests of the legal profession as a whole. It is a step in much needed broader ranging reform and it needs to be understood that this is a step that involves a multitude of students facing different challenges, economic situations and professional choices.

That having been said, the intention of the Bar Council of India is to be completely transparent and constructive about the AIBE. In this regard the Bar Council of India has taken/is taking various steps including the following:

- Details of the AIBE in English and Hindi posted on BCI website;
- Over 50 FAQs (frequently asked questions) in English and Hindi have been posted on BCI website;
- Helpline numbers have been established for clarification of queries in English and Hindi. Details of the same are available on the BCI website;
- Over 725 queries have already been answered through email (barexam@barcouncilofindia.org);
- A video on how to fill the OMR Application form has been posted on the BCI website and instruction sheets (in English and Hindi) are available for collection along with each OMR Application form;
- The BCI has visited the various State Bar Councils and run an orientation programme and handed over required materials on the AIBE;
- The AIBE also seeks to be disabled friendly and all disabled candidates are requested to contact the BCI at barexam@barcouncilofindia.org (or any of the helpline numbers) so that adequate preparation can be made to assist such candidates during the AIBE;
- The BCI is also aware that there are certain issues with respect to enrolment and non-handing over of forms for the AIBE. In order to provide further



August 17, 2010

avenues for registration, the BCI is also currently putting in place an online registration process to further simplify the process of application for the AIBE – the online registration process will be available from September 1, 2010 onwards and will be accessible on the BCI website. The online registration process will allow candidates to view their registration details, track their preparatory materials and ensure transparency in the registration process; and

- The BCI has commenced processing of application forms that have been sent across for the AIBE and dispatch of the Preparatory Materials will begin in August, 2010. Further, on August 16, 2010, mock question papers as well as a downloadable copy of the Preparatory Materials for the AIBE have also be posted on the BCI website.

The BCI also requests all fresh law graduates and newly enrolled advocates to routinely check the BCI website (www.barcouncilofindia.org) for updates and news on the AIBE, and to approach the BCI with any queries or clarifications required.

Warm regards,

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Chairman