Digitising the Middle East: A Transforming Landscape

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The TMT edition of Law Update focuses on how our clients' businesses are transforming and how technology is enabling that transformation. Our clients across the Middle East, both public and private sector, established and start-up, are placing technology at the core of their organisations as they adopt innovative new business models and practices. Many of these technologies are disrupting traditional industries and challenging such industries to innovate and change. This edition looks at the key technologies supporting digital transformation. It considers the regional Middle East subsea cable landscape that provides connectivity and capacity to manage the increasing data traffic generated by the growth of digital business and focuses on the growth of Middle East internet exchange points where data traffic interconnect and moves between networks. It looks at the Middle East's progression towards 5G mobile networks and some of the key issues relating to widespread Middle East 5G adoption. It delves into the world of Middle East big data with the focus on practical issues around the importation of technology into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support the growth of the Saudi cloud computing market and the wider Saudi technology sector.

We also look at some of the industries being disrupted by new technology: from the financial services sector to real estate and assess contracting in the rapidly changing Middle East digital advertising (Adtech) space.

With technological change comes regulation. The key to effectively managing technological change is understanding and navigating the regulatory landscape. As technology moves quickly, so can regulation. The Middle East region is no exception. We focus in this TMT edition on some key areas of new regulation: anti-spam regulations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the new UAE Internet of Things ('IoT') policy. The UAE is not the only Middle East country to be focusing on regulating the IoT space, with similar initiatives progressing in Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As the proliferation of smart devices (physical devices connected to the internet) continues, whether as part of smart city or smart home developments, in connected cars or otherwise, the management of these devices and the data they generate becomes increasingly important and government plays a key role in balancing the pace of innovation with the need for regulatory oversight.

Lastly, we focus on managing technology disputes. Technology can be rapidly adopted, procured and installed. It is expensive and critical to business success. Effectively managing issues relating to technology is central to ensuring business continuity and protecting investments. We look at the key strategies for managing such risk.