



India trade body to create skill gaming framework

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The All India Gaming Federation (AIGF) has announced it is developing a self-regulatory opt-in scheme for the burgeoning skill gaming industry in India.

The regulatory charter, ready for industry feedback and stakeholder consultation, is aimed at pre-empting the development of a complex patchwork of state-by-state regulation by creating a centralised model, AIGF chief executive Roland Landers told the audience at the Sports Betting & Gaming India conference in Goa last week.

The framework also includes draft provisions to protect players, safeguard the industry's image and reputation, demonstrate responsibility standards, pre-empt future over- or ineffective regulation and serve as an existing blueprint for legislators.

Landers was speaking on a panel at the event alongside Susan O'Leary of Alderney eGambling and Gowree Gokhale from law firm Nishith Desai Associates.

O'Leary told the audience that there is a worldwide lack of uniformity or clarity between jurisdictions on what is and what isn't a game of skill, and that new formats and technology developments were increasingly blurring the line between skill and chance. Further that skill levels, particular among younger generations, were increasing in importance and prevalence.

The Alderney eGambling chief said this was correspondingly impacting on the potential harm levels of these products, recently confirmed by the WHO's inclusion of gaming disorders on its list of mental health conditions for 2018.

AIGF, working with Gowree who advises the federation, said that the growing need to focus on player protection had led them to conclude a framework regulation of games of skill is needed, even though these products are not considered as gambling in India and therefore requiring regulation.

Apart from creating this voluntary code of conduct, a panel of experts, consisting of a data scientist, high court judge, police/enforcement agent, a psychologist and an economist, will be assembled to advise on the shape of the regulatory scheme and future innovation.

Sports betting is also on the roadmap in India, pending the report of the Law Commission of India, due to be released shortly.

The Law Commission is currently studying sports betting with a view recommending whether or not to regulate. According to lawyers speaking at the conference, legal interpretations of current court rulings related to horse race betting could mean sports betting coming under the definition of games of skill.

Reporting by Ewa Bakun