

Activities of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (For the year 2020)

1. Virtual Meetings of the SAARC CCI Presidium

In view of the emerging challenges created by the outbreak of COVID-19 global pandemic, the Presidium of SAARC CCI decided to hold a series of Online Meetings of Vice Presidents from the respective countries in the SAARC region. The main objective of the series of meetings was to formulate a strategic way forward plan to effectively organize and implement salient events and programmes of SAARC CCI adapting for the new realities in the post COVID-19 global situation. Therefore, the virtual meetings had special emphasis on analyzing the impact of COVID-19 global pandemic situation on the economy of South Asia, effectively organising the SAARC CCI Presidency Handover Takeover ceremony, 79th Executive Committee (EC) Meeting, 23rd General Assembly (GA) Meeting, and 80th EC Meeting on a virtual platform. The SAARC CCI has hitherto been organized three Virtual Meetings of SAARC CCI Presidium.

First Virtual Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium

The First Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium was held online on May 3, 2020 under the chair of Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI. The meeting was attended by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI, Mr. Khairuddin Mayel Ahmadi, Vice President (Afghanistan) SAARC CCI, Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President (India) SAARC CCI, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President (Nepal) SAARC CCI, Dr. M. Rohitha Silva, Vice President (Sri Lanka) SAARC CCI, and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Butt, Acting Secretary General SAARC CCI.

During the meeting, President SAARC CCI Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe presented an overview of the COVID-19 outbreak in the South Asian region and the emerging economic realities in the region. Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Sr. Vice President FPCCI and Vice Presidents of the respective countries in the SAARC region outlined the COVID-19 situations faced by their countries. The Presidium of SAARC CCI decided to support the governments to overcome difficult economic situations generated by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The completion of the SAARC CCI Headquarters Building project was discussed in detail during the meeting. It was discussed various ways to expedite the completion of constructions with a solid strategic plan to overcome the budget shortage of the project. The strategic plan of the project was that the SAARC CCI Headquarters Building would be the flagship house of the business community in South Asia and be the hub of economic activities in the region.

Second Virtual Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium

The President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, chaired the second Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium online on May 23, 2020. The meeting was attended by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI, Mr. Khairuddin Mayel Ahmadi, Vice President (Afghanistan) SAARC CCI, Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President (India) SAARC CCI, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President (Nepal) SAARC CCI, Dr. M. Rohitha Silva and Vice President (Sri Lanka) SAARC CCI.

The SAARC CCI presidium, during the meeting, stressed upon the economic stimulus packages proposed by the governments in SAARC countries in order to support the people and business

sector struggling in the difficult period of post COVID-19 situation. They discussed on the recommendations of national chambers presented to the governments in terms of the strategies to sustain the economy of the SAARC countries in the new normal conditions. They emphasized more on the micro, small and medium scale enterprises during the discussions.

Furthermore, the Presidium discussed new programmes and initiatives which can be focused by SAARC CCI in order to support the business sector in the region. In this regard, they thoroughly appreciated the SAARC CCI initiative of free webinar series for young entrepreneurs and startups in South Asian countries. They further discussed on how to successfully organize the upcoming EC and GA meetings together with the SAARC CCI Presidency Handover Takeover ceremony online at the earliest possible time.

Third Virtual Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium

The Third Meeting of the SAARC CCI Presidium was held online on June 6, 2020 and it was chaired by Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI. The meeting was attended by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI, Mr. Mahbubul Alam, Vice President (Bangladesh) SAARC CCI, Dasho Ugen Tsechup Dorji, upcoming Senior Vice President and Former President SAARC CCI, Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President (India) SAARC CCI, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President (Nepal) SAARC CCI, Dr. M. Rohitha Silva and Vice President (Sri Lanka) SAARC CCI.

The meeting discussed in the detail the successful holding of 79th Executive Committee and 24th General Assembly meeting alongwith the SAARC CCI Presidency Handover Takeover ceremony online at the end of June 2020. They decided to hold these important SAARC CCI events online because of the practical impossibility of physically holding these forums in a SAARC CCI country given the ongoing global pandemic situation of COVID-19.

2. Statutory Meetings of SAARC-CCI



The 79th Executive Committee and 24th General Assembly Meetings Along with the SAARC CCI Presidency Handing Over/ Taking over Session were held on June 30, 2020 virtually. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe President SAARC-CCI and attended by Members from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan. During the meeting, the participants reviewed the activities of SAARC-CCI Councils and Committees and discussed financial and administrative arrangements.





Mian Anjum Nisar, President, FPCCI handed over Presidency of SAARC CCI to Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, CEO, Guard Group, on behalf of outgoing President Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, in a virtual meeting in FPCCI Capital, Office in Islamabad, Pakistan. Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik has taken over the Presidency of SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the term 2020-2022 and Haji Ghulam Ali has taken over the charge of Vice Presidency from Pakistan along with other countries.



Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Newly Elected President of SAARC-CCI virtually addressed the 80th Executive Committee Meeting of SAARC-CCI

3. SAARC-CCI Launched a Webinar Series for Startups in South Asia

SAARC CCI has embarked upon a webinar series for startups and young entrepreneurs in the SAARC countries to help them overcome deep challenges, effectively face the economic shocks, recover from failures and improve their startups in the new economic realities of the post corona epoch. Since May 2020, SAARC CCI has organized 4 webinars for the benefit of startups. The webinar series is organized in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF). The brief overview of the Webinar is given below;

- **Webinar for Startups “Sales for Startups”**

The first webinar was held online on May 18, 2020 covering the topic “Sales for Startups”. The renowned Indian mentor, Mr. Subramanian Chandramouli, who is an International Sales Trainer and Author, conducted the online sessions of the first webinar for startups.

The salient aspects of sales and marketing, consumer behaviour, effective sales methods in difficult situations, potential changes in consumer behaviour in post pandemic situation, and the sales and marketing funnel focusing on targets, leads, opportunities and customers are thoroughly explained and discussed during the sessions which were highly interactive with the audience. Approximately 45 young entrepreneurs and startups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka actively participated in the webinar.

- **Webinar for Startups “Power of Follow-up”**

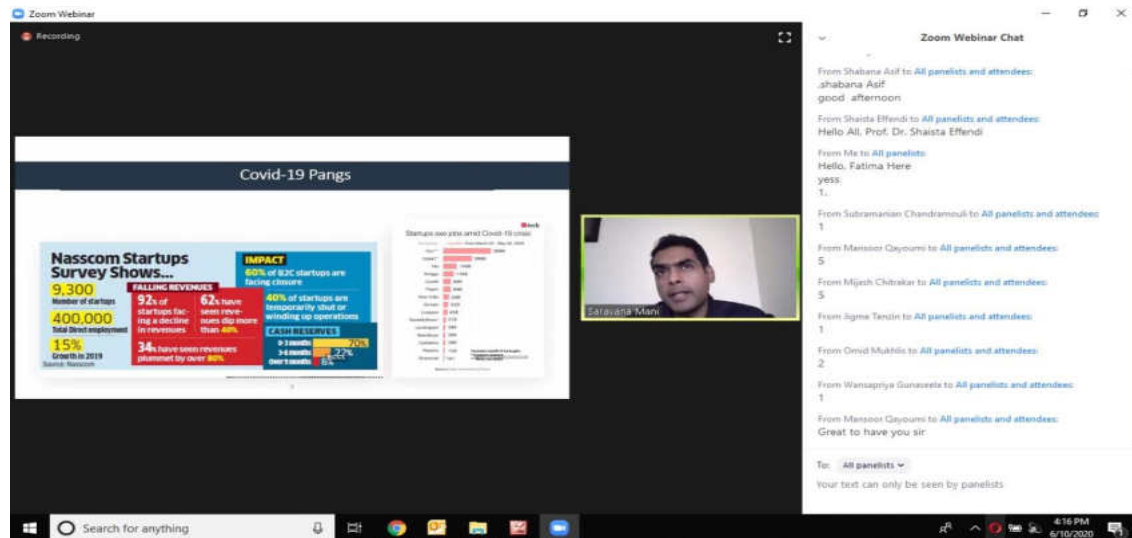
The second webinar of the series themed “Power of Follow-up” was held online. The eminent Indian mentor, Mr. Subramanian Chandramouli, who is an International Sales Trainer and Author, conducted the online sessions of the second webinar for startups.



Areas such as effective follow-up processes with customers, investors and other stakeholders; networking with investors, partners, and customers; productivity and time management challenges; managing marketing metrics and the sales pipeline; customer acquisition, retention, and support; and maintaining professional relationships are discussed during the live sessions of

the webinar. Along with question and answer sessions, the webinar was highly interactive with the attendees from South Asian countries. In general, approximately 50 young entrepreneurs and startups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka enthusiastically took part in the live webinar.

- **Webinar for Startups “Reasons Why Startups Fail: How to Avoid Failure and Thrive in COVID-19”**

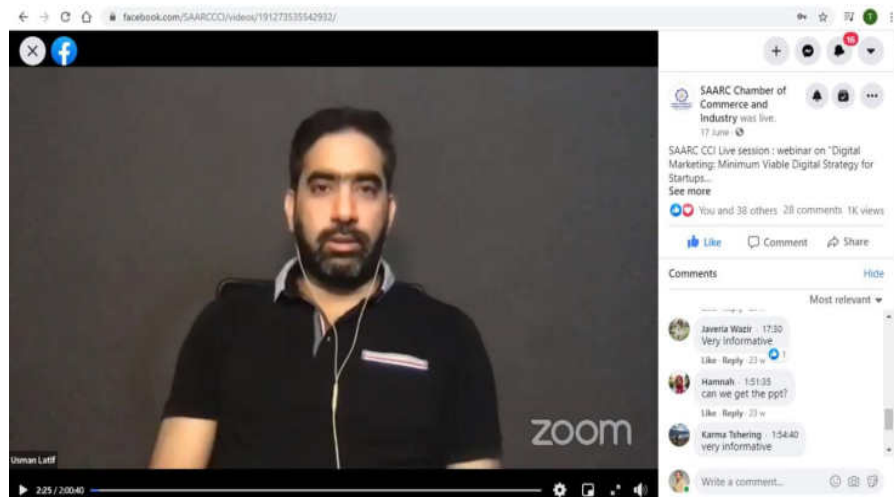


Focusing on the important topic “Reasons Why Startups Fail: How to Avoid Failure and Thrive in COVID-19”, the third webinar of the series was held online on June 10, 2020. The prominent Indian mentor, Mr. Saravana Mani, Global Head of Innovation Kmart Group Australia, conducted the online sessions of the third webinar for startups.

During the sessions, it was explained and discussed the significant areas such as newest findings of Nasscom Startups Survey focusing on the context of COVID-19 crisis; angle networks and re-skill; factors such as lack of demand for products, deficiency of necessary skills in the business, ignoring and not avoiding cash burn, reluctance to get feedback and criticism on prototypes, weak team and poor leadership, inability to raise capital, poor marketing strategies, and ignorance of consumer needs. This highly interactive webinar, mingled with effective question and answer sessions, was attended by about 80 young entrepreneurs and startups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the SAAR region.

- **Webinar for Startups “Digital Marketing: Minimum Viable Digital Strategy for Startups”**

The fourth successful webinar of the series, focusing on “Digital Marketing: Minimum Viable Digital Strategy for Startups”, was held online. The renowned Pakistani mentor, Mr. Usman Latif, who is an International Consultant and Trainer, conducted the live sessions of fourth webinar for startups.



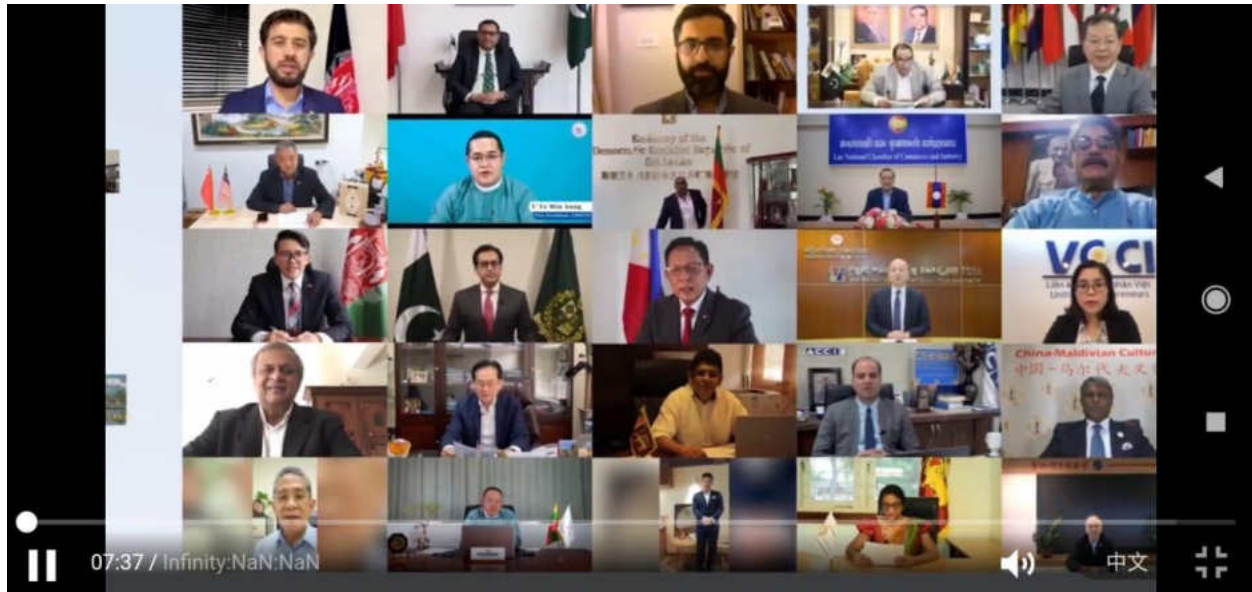
Areas such as the most effective digital marketing strategies; use of audio, video and pictures in digital marketing platforms; search engine optimization; pay-per-click marketing; webinar production, content marketing (blogging and article writing); downloadable content offerings (e-books, whitepapers, webinars); email marketing; and social media marketing were thoroughly discussed and explained during the live sessions of the webinar. The online training was highly creative and interactive with effective question and answer sessions along with idea sharing sessions. It was remarkable that the fourth webinar was attended by approximately 100 young entrepreneurs and startups from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the South Asian region.

• China – South & Southeast Asia Business Leaders Cloud Conference



Address by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, President SAARC CCI during online China (Sichuan) South & South East Business Leaders Online Conference

Traditionally, China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) Sichuan Council annually organized the China – South & Southeast Asia Business Leaders' Summit every year in September in collaboration with SAARC CCI and ASEAN for the promotion of economic activities between China and South & Southeast Asian countries. However due to COVID – 19, the physical conference was not possible this year where FPCCI has been actively participating for many years.



Regardless, the Sichuan Provincial Government organized a virtual summit under the title China – South & Southeast Asia Business Leaders Cloud Conference on 25th September 2020 via Zoom. Under the theme “Push Forward Standards Connectivity & Deepen Cooperation on Trade & Investment”, the summit invited prominent speakers from SAARC and ASEAN region to present economic revival of global economies during the turbulent times. The conference was addressed by President SAARC CCI Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik and also included a recorded video speech by Mian Anjum Nisar, President FPCCI.

Pictorial Glimpses



SAARC CCI Delegation led by President SAARC CCI, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik and Vice President SAARC CCI Haji Ghulam Ali call on meeting with Honorable Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi



Meeting of SAARC CCI President Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President SAARC CCI Haji Ghulam Ali and Executive Committee Members with Honorable Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi.



President SAARC CCI, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik and Vice President SAARC CCI Haji Ghulam Ali paid a courtesy call on H.E. Ms. Sewa Lamsal Adhikari, Ambassador of Nepal in Pakistan along with Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed & SAARC CCI Senior Members



Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik President SAARC CCI and Haji Ghulam Ali Vice President SAARC CCI along with Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed paid a courtesy call on H.E. Major General (Retd) Muhammad Saad Khattak, the High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka



Group Picture of Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik President SAARC CCI and Haji Ghulam Ali Vice President SAARC CCI with H.E Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama, High Commissioner of the Sri Lanka to Pakistan



Mian Anjum Nisar President FPCCI and President SAARC CCI, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik presenting a token of appreciation to Hon'ble Chief Guest, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on the occasion of Book Launch Ceremony "Realizing the Full Potential of Pakistan - Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement: A Critical Analysis Based on the Trade Complementarity Index".