

**MINUTES OF THE 20TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING (ECM)
OF SOUTH ASIA FORUM FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REGULATION
(SAFIR)**

Date: 10th March 2021; Wednesday

Virtual Meeting conducted through MS Teams

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Md. Abdul Jalil, Chairperson, South Asia Forum for Infrastructure Regulation (SAFIR) & Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC). List of participants is enclosed at **Annexure-I**.

In his opening remarks and welcome address, Mr. Md. Abdul Jalil, Chairperson, SAFIR and Chairperson of BERC welcomed all dignitaries to the meeting. He welcomed Mr. Janaka Ratnayake, Chairman of PUCSL, Sri Lanka to his first Executive Committee Meeting of SAFIR after taking the charge as Chairman of PUCSL, Sri Lanka. As Chairman, SAFIR, Mr. Jalil expressed his gratitude and commitment to strengthen SAFIR and sought cooperation from all members for the same.

In his address, Mr. Janaka Ratnayake, Chairman of PUCSL, Sri Lanka expressed his pleasure to participate in the meeting for the first time. He acknowledged the value of SAFIR in the objective of strengthening greater cooperation and energy trade among the member countries of the region. He added that he looked forward to a fruitful and rich discussion in the Executive Committee meeting.

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In his address, Mr. Dilli Bahadur Singh, Chairperson, Electricity Regulatory Commission of Nepal expressed his pleasure to interact with other SAFIR Members through virtual meeting.

Deputy Chief, CERC/SAFIR Secretariat informed the EC members that Shri P.K. Pujari, Chairperson CERC is involved in an urgent hearing of appeals in the Commission and may participate post the completion of the hearing.

The Forum thereafter took each of the agenda items for consideration.

Agenda 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 19th Executive Committee Meeting held on 28th August, 2020 through virtual conference.

Dy. Chief (RA), CERC/ SAFIR Secretariat explained the action taken on various points earmarked for SAFIR Secretariat and sought for endorsement of the EC.

Thereafter the minutes of the 19th Executive Committee Meeting were confirmed.

Agenda 2: Accounts Related Matters

- i. Appointment of Tax Consultant for filing the Income Tax Return for the F.Y. 2020-2021.*
- ii. Appointment of Consultant for filing the FCRA Return for the F.Y. 2020-2021.*
- iii. Appointment of GST Consultant for filing the returns for the F.Y. 2021-2022.*

Dy. Chief (RA), CERC/ SAFIR informed the ECM about the common issue which is the engagement of Tax Consultant for performing the activities related to filing of tax related returns, FCRA returns and GST returns. She also requested the permission of ECM for the SAFIR Secretariat to solicit proposals from a few consultants who are capable of taking up these assignments and that SAFIR Sectt would engage the consultant based on lowest cost on a retainership basis.

The proposal was accepted and approved by the EC members

Agenda 3: Proposals received w.r.t. 19th Core Course of SAFIR

The EC was informed that SAFIR Secretariat had sought proposals for conducting the annual SAFIR Core Course. In response, 4 proposals from Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) and CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) were received. The EC was also informed about the comparative statement prepared by SAFIR Secretariat duly comparing the course structure, mode of delivery, number of participants and cost of conducting the course.

The EC members expressed that the Core Course may be conducted in virtual mode due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic situation and restrictions on travel. The EC also enquired about the reputation and pedagogy of the institutes who have submitted their proposals which was duly informed by SAFIR Sectt officials. The EC was also requested that as the Core Course is conducted during a financial year and with FY 2020-21 nearing its end, one institute may be selected and the core course may be conducted at the earliest.

As regards proposals from institutes, the EC noted that CIRC had proposed for in-person course and as such cannot be considered as the EC had decided to conduct the course on an online mode. On the proposal of BIAM, Chairperson SAFIR & BERC remarked that the proposal of BIAM does not have details regarding the topics and course content rendering it unsuitable for analysis by the members of SAFIR. Accordingly, the EC decided not to consider the proposal of BIAM.

The proposals of IICA and IIMA were deliberated in detail by the EC members. It was felt that the course content offered by IIMA was more in line with the requirements of member countries. Adding to the good feedback received by the participants of the previous Core course and coupled with the fact that IIMA is a premier institute in India, the EC members felt that the participants will benefit greatly from the course offered by IIMA, despite the high costs. Chairperson, ERC of Nepal proposed that SAFIR Sectt. may persuade IIM-Ahmedabad to include a minimum of 25 participants in their proposal instead of existing 20 participants, after which the per participant cost should be applicable. Deputy Chief, CERC/SAFIR Sectt. informed the EC that IIM-Ahmedabad shall be contacted and be apprised with the suggestion of ECM.

Thereafter, the members decided that the Core Course be conducted at Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad in online mode at a cost of Rs 13 lakhs (exclusive of taxes), which is well within the approved budget in this regard.

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Agenda 4: Proposals received wrt conducting a Study in SAFIR

The EC was informed that SAFIR Secretariat had sought proposals for engaging a consultant to conducting a study under the aegis of SAFIR. In response, 2 proposals from Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) were received. The EC was also informed about a comparative statement prepared by SAFIR Secretariat duly comparing the topic of the study, its objectives, timelines, and cost of conducting study.

The EC members felt that the study to be conducted under the aegis of SAFIR should be on a topic which shall benefit all the member countries and that the study is to be conducted at an appropriate time frame and at a reasonable cost. Accordingly, they noted that the topic of study proposed by IICA i.e. *"Regulatory Practices for Innovation: Cross Learnings from Infrastructure Sectors"* is best suited for the assignment as it is relevant to all countries and with the broader theme of Infrastructure sector.

Thereafter, the members decided to award the study on *"Regulatory Practices for Innovation: Cross Learnings from Infrastructure Sectors"* as proposed by Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) at a cost of Rs 5 lakhs (all inclusive).

Agenda 5: Next Chairperson of SAFIR

The Chairperson of SAFIR is selected on rotation basis for 2 years (among the member countries represented in the ECM of SAFIR). The Committee was informed that the current Chairperson of SAFIR who is the Chairman of BERC, Bangladesh would be completing the term of 2 years as Chairperson of SAFIR.

The next turn is of Nepal and Bhutan. However, since Nepal has not been formally inducted as a member and not paid the membership fee, technically it may not be feasible to appoint representative of Nepal as the Chairman of SAFIR. Therefore, Mr. Samdrup K. Thinley, CEO, Bhutan Electricity Authority, Bhutan was selected unanimously as the next Chairperson of SAFIR. In compliance with Clause 2.2 of the Rules and Regulations included in the Memorandum of Association of SAFIR, this proposal also needs to be placed before Steering Committee in next Steering Committee Meeting for confirmation. The same was agreed to, by the EC.

Agenda 6: Status update on

- a. Infrastructure Conference
- b. Next meeting of ECM

a. The EC members were appraised that SAFIR with support from IRADe, USAID and SARI/EI would host the next Infrastructure Conference on a virtual mode on 15th -16th March, 2021. The theme of the conference is “Sustainable Energy Infrastructure Development and Role of Cross Border Energy Trade in South Asia: Challenges, Opportunities and way forward”. The ECM appreciated the proposal.

b. With regard to conducting the next ECM, Mr. Janaka Ratnayake, Chairman of PUCSL, Sri Lanka proposed to host the ECM/SCM in Sri Lanka in December 2021. The proposal was appreciated by the EC members. However, as the ECM & SCM is to be conducted in April 2021 in which the budget of SAFIR would be presented, it was decided to conduct the next ECM and SCM on a virtual mode in April 2021. The EC placed on record the gesture of Chairperson, PUCSL, Sri Lanka and offered to conduct a physical meeting in Sri Lanka whenever the situation to enable travel improves.

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At the end of the meeting, outgoing Chairperson Mr. Md. Abdul Jalil, Chairperson, SAFIR/ BERC thanked all ECM members for their participation in the meeting. He thanked his team from BERC for their support in organizing and making all arrangements for the meeting. Mr. Jalil appreciated and conveyed his pleasure in handing over the Chairmanship after his tenure to Mr. Thinley, CEO, Bhutan Electricity Authority and wished him all the best. Mr. Jalil further thanked all the members for their valuable suggestions and active participation during his tenure. Mr. Jalil also appreciated the efforts of CERC/ SAFIR Secretariat officials for their contribution and arrangements in conducting the activities of SAFIR. He wished good health and safety for all participants.

The EC formally placed on record its appreciation to Mr. Md. Abdul Jalil, Chairperson BERC for steering SAFIR during his tenure as Chairperson, SAFIR and welcomed Mr. Samdrup K. Thinley as new Chairperson of SAFIR.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.


Md. Abdul Jalil
Chairman, SAFIR and
Chairman, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, Bangladesh

**List of participants in 20th Executive Committee Meeting (virtual) held on
10th March 2021 via MS Teams**

1. **Mr. Md. Abdul Jalil**
Chairman, SAFIR and
Chairman, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, Bangladesh
2. **Mr. Samdrup K. Thinley**
CEO, Bhutan Electricity Authority
Bhutan
3. **Mr. Janaka Ratnayake**
Chairperson
Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
4. **Mr. Dilli Bahadur Singh**
Chairperson
Electricity Regulatory Commission of Nepal, Nepal
5. **Dr. Sushanta K. Chatterjee**
Chief (Regulatory Affairs),
Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) & SAFIR Secretariat, India
6. **Ms. Rashmi Somasekharan Nair**
Deputy Chief (Regulatory Affairs)
Central Electricity Regulatory Commission & SAFIR Secretariat, India
7. **Mr. Md. Firoz Zaman**
Deputy Director (Consumer Affairs),
Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, Bangladesh
8. **Mr. Sanjeev Tinjan**
Assistant Chief (Regulatory Affairs),
Central Electricity Regulatory Commission & SAFIR Secretariat, India
9. **Mr. Ankit Gupta**
Research Officer
Forum of Regulators & SAFIR Secretariat, India