

**Address by Chairperson during I<sup>st</sup> Webinar of Cartel Working  
Group (CWG) under NICE**

**[17<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 (Monday)]**

Good Afternoon everyone!

1. I am happy to address this distinguished gathering of academicians from India`s top Universities and Colleges under the umbrella of NICE or Network of Indian Competition Experts (NICE).
  
2. In the past decade through our advocacy efforts, we have made significant progress to reach out to the farthest corner of the country to inculcate a competition culture. However, in the ten years of the enforcement of Competition Law, the Commission has noted that there is still limited expertise on this subject in Indian academic and research communities. Hence, a need was felt to build domain knowledge through the network of Indian competition experts which can be useful to CCI in its advocacy & enforcement efforts.
  
3. You are all aware of the debilitating impact of ‘Cartels’ on the economy and the need of competition law to curb it. Curbing cartels and creating competitive environment in the country is our top priority. In order to achieve this mandate it is significant to understand the types of cartels that may operate in an economy and their impact in long and short run.

4. CCI's general approach so far has been to deter them through penalties. But increasingly, we are making use of the lesser penalty provisions to encourage enterprises to cooperate in uncovering the cartels. Recently there has been a surge in leniency applications involving cartels and the kind of evidence revealed by leniency applicants has given impetus to further refine our leniency regime to make it more attractive.
  
5. The Commission has dealt with a large number of bid rigging cases in the past couple of years. Bid rigging cartels in public procurement deprive the public entities and ultimately the society, of the benefit of the best deals in terms of price, quality and innovation of the goods and services purchased. The range of sectors touched by public procurement is as wide as the needs of a government to properly function and deliver services to its citizens which include construction of schools, purchase of hospital supplies, construction of public infrastructure, transportation etc. Thus, efficacious and efficient management of public procurement is a non-negotiable priority for any government in order to act in the best interest of its citizens in terms of price, quality and service delivery. CCI has worked proactively in this area by enhancing advocacy activities and publishing awareness literature.

6. In this context the NICE CWG has a very important role to play. The NICE CWG has the opportunity to explore various facets of Cartel and new emerging innovative ways of entering into cartels. In this scenario it is imperative for any competition authority to find even newer ways to not only unearth and investigate cartels but also be aware of socio-economic impact of regulatory intervention keeping in mind the present challenging times due to Covid 19.
7. The idea behind organising this NICE (CWG) is precisely to familiarise ourselves with new research as also to present before the academia the emerging issues and questions that the competition authorities are grappling with.
8. I understand that it is a preliminary webinar today. I believe partner institutions will showcase their relevant research and expertise before the Commission through, lecture, presentations so that the new learnings will help the Commission to deal with newer situations. This platform will be useful to all partner academicians/institutions for facilitating collaboration in the area of cartel research. With these words, I welcome all eminent academicians and members present in this 1st webinar of Cartel Working Group under Network of Indian Competition Experts. I wish you all the very best in your endeavours! Thank you very much!