

News Release

ComBank conducts webinar to help women entrepreneurs navigate the ‘new normal’

The Commercial Bank of Ceylon in collaboration with the Women’s Chamber of Industry and Commerce (WCIC), recently conducted a webinar exclusively for women entrepreneurs to help them adapt to the requisites of the ‘new normal’ after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinar was part of the Bank’s ongoing efforts to further empower women in business, and an extension of its knowledge-sharing and educational sessions designed for this period of social distancing. The Bank has been consistently offering Entrepreneur Skills Development Programmes to enable its SME and Micro customer segments to remain competitive and this webinar was focused on offering pandemic-specific advice to women entrepreneurs in these segments, the Bank said.

Topics covered in the webinar included ‘Managing your money,’ ‘Making your supply chain resilient,’ ‘COVID-19 is just another hurdle’ and ‘self-confidence is all you need.’ The webinar also discussed directions on how to get financial assistance from the Bank, information on the release of loan funds and subsequent monitoring involved to ensure beneficial utilisation of these funds and information on how to make the best use of the COVID-19 loan schemes launched by the Bank for both the SME and Micro business sectors. The Bank also briefed participants on the reduced lending rates offered by the Bank in response to the adverse effects of the pandemic on businesses.

This live webinar which included a question and answer session was delivered through Zoom. A video of the forum is currently hosted on the Commercial Bank website, Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Commenting on the webinar, Commercial Bank Deputy General Manager – Personal Banking Ms Sandra Walgama said: “Commercial Bank has always been committed to the principle of equal opportunity in its dealings with customers, but we recognise that there are still challenges that are specific to women entrepreneurs, and the Bank continues to address this issue as a priority. The unprecedented economic

and social challenges created by the pandemic make webinars of this nature a need of the hour to create awareness of the Bank's pandemic-related support programmes, build business acumen specifically needed for tough times, and to reassure our female customers of our continued commitment to them."

The resource persons for the webinar included Ms Anoji De Silva - Management Consultant; Ms Gayani de Alwis - the Founding Chairperson of Women in Logistics & Transport (WiLAT) Sri Lanka and Immediate Past Chairperson of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT); Ms Tusitha Kumarakulasingam - Business & Marketing Consultant and Transformation Catalyst; Ms Nayana Karunaratne - Renowned Hairdresser, Beautician and Trainer; and Mr Vinod Pillai - SME Officer, Development Credit Department of Commercial Bank. The Moderator was Ms Kamalini Ellawala - the Bank's Senior Manager - Women Banking.

Participants received both financial and non-financial advice from qualified, prominent figures in the industry and had the opportunity to interact live with Bank officials, further strengthening the relationship between the Bank and this customer segment.

Commercial Bank recently entered into an agreement with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to carry out a 'Gender Advisory Project' to further improve its focus on the needs of female customers. This is positioned as a 360-degree approach to focus on both financial and non-financial aspects, including training to further improve the quality of the interaction between bank staff and this customer segment.

The first Sri Lankan Bank to be listed among the Top 1000 Banks of the World and the only Sri Lankan bank to be so listed for 10 years consecutively, Commercial Bank is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The Bank, which won more than 50 international and local awards in 2019, operates a network of 268 branches and 873 ATMs in Sri Lanka.

Commercial Bank's overseas operations encompass Bangladesh, where the Bank operates 19 outlets; Myanmar, where it has a Representative Office in Yangon and a Microfinance company in Nay Pyi Taw; and the Maldives, where the Bank has a fully-fledged Tier I Bank with a majority stake.

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Photo caption

The resource persons and the Moderator at the Commercial Bank Webinar.