

UP, UP & BEYOND

Milestone – Dr. Shefali Juneja

Dr. Shefali Juneja, Advisor and Honorary Patron of WAI, recently attended her first meeting as the Head of Secretariat of the International COSPAS-SARSAT Programme at its 39th Joint Committee meeting in Abu Dhabi.

Her leadership at this critical forum dedicated to satellite-based search and rescue operations marks a significant milestone.

Warm congratulations to Dr. Juneja as she takes on this important role!





A One of its Kind Merger

by

Ms. Madhu Shroff

Asst. General Manager, Air India

My recent achievement was conceptualising, strategizing, detailing and project managing the Operational Merger of Air India Express Connect (erstwhile AirAsia India) into Air India Express on 1st Oct 2024. The same was applied for Vistara's merger into Air India (though that involved additional elements as Vistara was also operating internationally).

The project involved conceiving the initial ask from the DGCA seeking guidance and support for the merger, identifying challenges, building the project plan, timelines and adherence - not only to fulfil the DGCA/other regulatory requirements, but also to align internal processes/systems/communications.

The DGCA, with great prudence & diligence, charted out the workplan/solutions and made the airline work through the documentation, processes, training, Safety Risk Assessment (SRA), Management of Change (MoC) & audits in great detail with no compromise on compliances or safety, yet ensuring that the timeline of merger and convenience to passengers are not affected. BCAS and other agencies too played their part in creating solutions to support the merger.

The airline teams really worked hard and the progress was closely monitored by both AIX MD and AI CEO.

The merger was commended as it was seamless, transferring all aircraft in one go, without any grounding or affecting passenger convenience/experience.

This merger was also one of its kind as earlier airline mergers in India did not involve merging of 2 AOCs (earlier, the merging airlines operated as 2 brands - with one airline being the subsidiary of the other) which has more regulatory and internal complexities. Further, the earlier mergers were in the distant past, with little relevance to the existing enhanced regulatory & digitized environment of the DGCA.

It was indeed a privilege for me to handle this unique project!



A New Chapter in Aviation

Ms. Payal Satish

Vice President –

Strategy & Business Development, Sarla Aviation

I'm thrilled to share that I have joined Sarla Aviation as Vice President – Strategy & Business Development. Sarla Aviation is building the future of Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) in India, with a focus on sustainable STOL and VTOL aircraft designed for regional and last-mile connectivity.

This new role marks the next step in my journey to reimagine how India moves. After working to launch BLADE India and helping introduce by-the-seat helicopter services for short-haul mobility, I'm now excited to help shape the next era of aviation – one that's cleaner, faster, and more accessible.

To all the women in aviation: we are on the cusp of transformation, and there's never been a more important time for us to lead, innovate, and build.

Looking forward to connecting, collaborating, and co-creating the future of flight.

Accolades

Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani

Flight Operations Inspector, DGCA



Young Achiever Award – 2024

Conferred by: Institute of Scholars (INSC) – ISO 9001:2015 certified, registered under the Ministry of MSME & Corporate Affairs, Government of India

Awarded in: February 2025

Recognition for: Research paper titled **Artificial Intelligence for Air Safety**, presented at the 17th European, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems (EMCIS 2020), held in Dubai and organized by Brunel University, UK. This paper focused on AI integration in air safety frameworks and its potential impact on operational risk management.



Young Researcher Award – 2024

Conferred by: Institute of Scholars (INSC)

Awarded in: February 2025

Recognition for: Research titled "A Data-Driven Approach for Customer Relationship Management for Airlines Using IoT & AI," presented at the IFIP WG8.6 Working Conference organized by the Indian Institute of Management, Tiruchirapalli. The research explored next-generation customer strategies in aviation using emerging technologies.



First Young Woman Pilot Empanelled as Independent Director by MCA

Empanelled on: May 27, 2025

I am deeply honored to have been officially empanelled as an Independent Director by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, making me the first young woman pilot in India to be granted this position. This milestone reflects a significant confluence of aviation expertise and corporate governance, and reinforces the growing presence of domain professionals in national-level board leadership.

These recognitions not only mark personal professional growth but also reflect the increasing contributions of women in technical, research, and leadership dimensions of the aviation industry. I hope this will inspire others in our community to continue pushing boundaries.