

SriLankan Aviation College marks Airline's Legacy through 'Skyline Stories'



L-R: Captain Shavantha Pedris, SriLankan Airlines, Jayani C. Senanayake, Marketing and Business Development Manager, SriLankan Aviation College, SriLankan Airlines, who moderated the session, Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama, SriLankan Airlines during the session.

SriLankan Aviation College marked the 47th anniversary of SriLankan Airlines with a special anniversary edition of its aviation talk series, The Skyline Stories, celebrating the enduring legacy of the pioneering aviators who helped shape the National Carrier and the next generation carrying that legacy forward. The sixth episode of the series paid tribute to the pioneering years of Air Lanka, established in 1979, and traced the journey of the National Carrier to its present identity as SriLankan Airlines, while exploring how the values, experiences, and influence of its early aviators continue to resonate in Sri Lankan aviation today.

The session featured Captain Shavantha Pedris and Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama, whose fathers, Captain Ranjit Pedris and Captain Nihal Jayawickrama, were among the pioneering flight crew of Air Lanka during its formative years. Their participation created a unique bridge between the generation that helped establish the National Carrier and the aviation professionals carrying that legacy forward today, while also reflecting the important role the airline has played in the development of Sri Lanka's tourism and aviation industry over the past 47 years.

Captain Shavantha Pedris said, "Growing up, everything around me seemed connected to aviation because of my father. He inspired me from a young age and always encouraged me to aim higher. The journey to where I am today has not always been easy, and there have been many challenges along the way. Each experience has shaped who I am and strengthened my passion for aviation. Now, I feel it is my turn to give back to the industry that has given me so much."

The Anniversary Edition celebrated the pioneering generation that helped build Air Lanka while recognizing that a legacy is not simply something inherited and that each succeeding generation must find its own path and make its own contribution.

Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama added, "Aviation was always part of our family life, so becoming a pilot felt like a natural possibility. But having a parent who has already achieved so much in the industry also comes with expectations. Over time, I realized that the goal is not simply to follow someone else's journey, but to learn from it and build your own. Every career has its own challenges, and it is how you respond to them that shapes you as a professional."

These experiences are at the heart of The Skyline Stories, also an exclusive aviation talk series created for students of SriLankan Aviation College to bridge the gap between aviation education and the realities of building a career in the industry. The program gives students the opportunity to learn directly from leading aviators and aviation professionals about career choices, opportunities, challenges, setbacks, achievements, and life lessons that are not always found in textbooks or classrooms.

Reflecting on the impact of the session, a student in the audience said, “Hearing directly from two pilots who literally grew up around Air Lanka was incredibly inspiring. It felt good to step away from the typical learning environment and understand what it takes to build real resilience and shape a career on your own terms. It gave us a clear vision of what it takes to succeed in this dynamic field.”



Senior First Officer Nuwan Jayawickrama with his father, Nihal Jayawickrama.
Captain Shavantha Pedris with his father, Captain Ranjit Pedris.

Another student added, “Learning about the founding days of our beloved airline, we hope to be part of someday, and how it evolved over the years was so refreshing.

It gave us a much deeper appreciation for the legacy the national carrier has built.

Connecting with the early history of Sri Lankan aviation made the entire session truly unforgettable.”

As the training arm of Sri Lanka’s National Carrier, SriLankan Aviation College is uniquely positioned to provide its students with direct access to the people and experiences that have shaped the country’s aviation industry. Through The Skyline Stories, the College seeks to prepare students not only with the technical and academic knowledge required for aviation careers, but also with a realistic understanding of the opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges that await them. The Anniversary Edition celebrated the pioneering generation that helped build Air Lanka while recognizing that a legacy is not simply something inherited and that each succeeding generation must find its own path and make its own contribution.