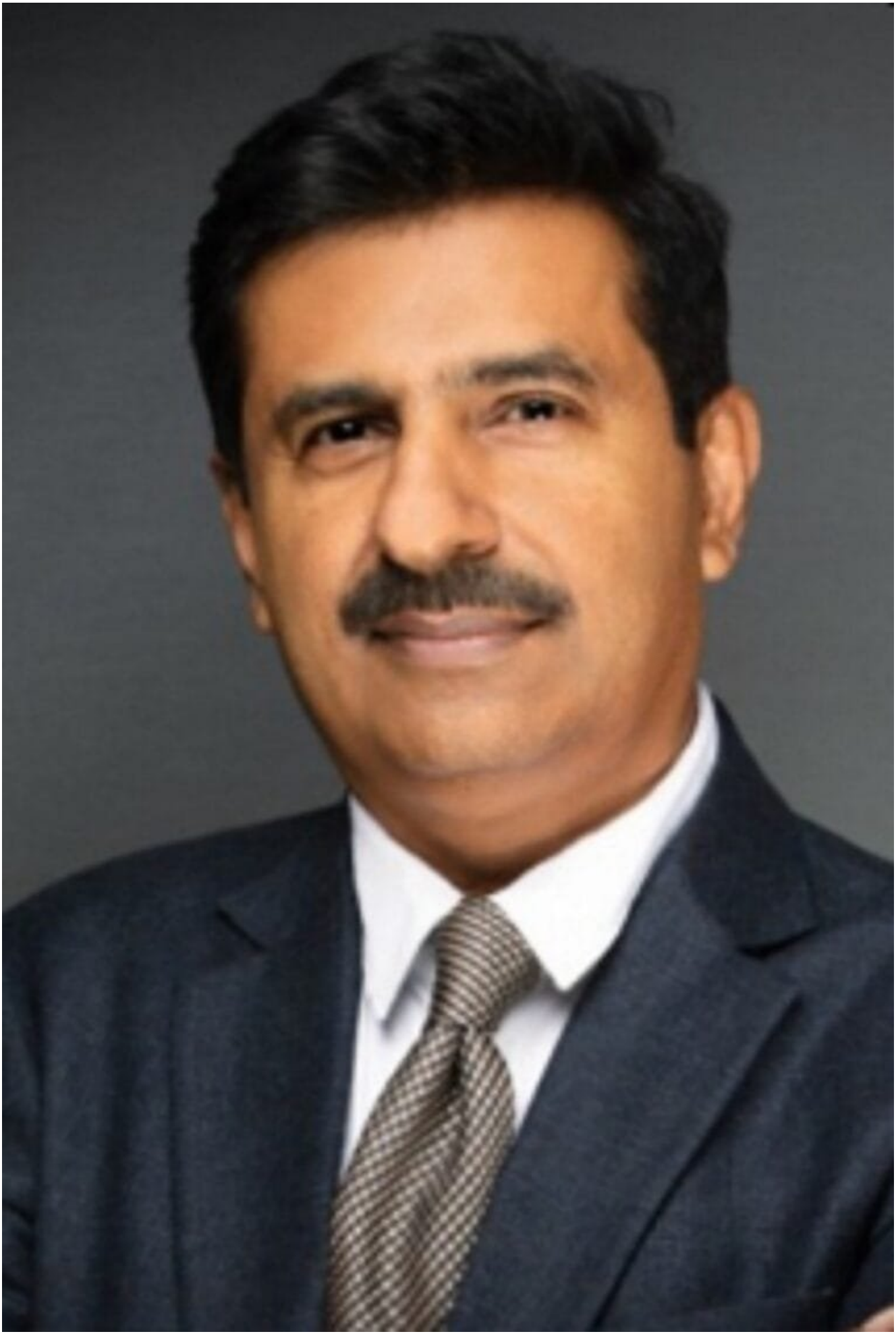
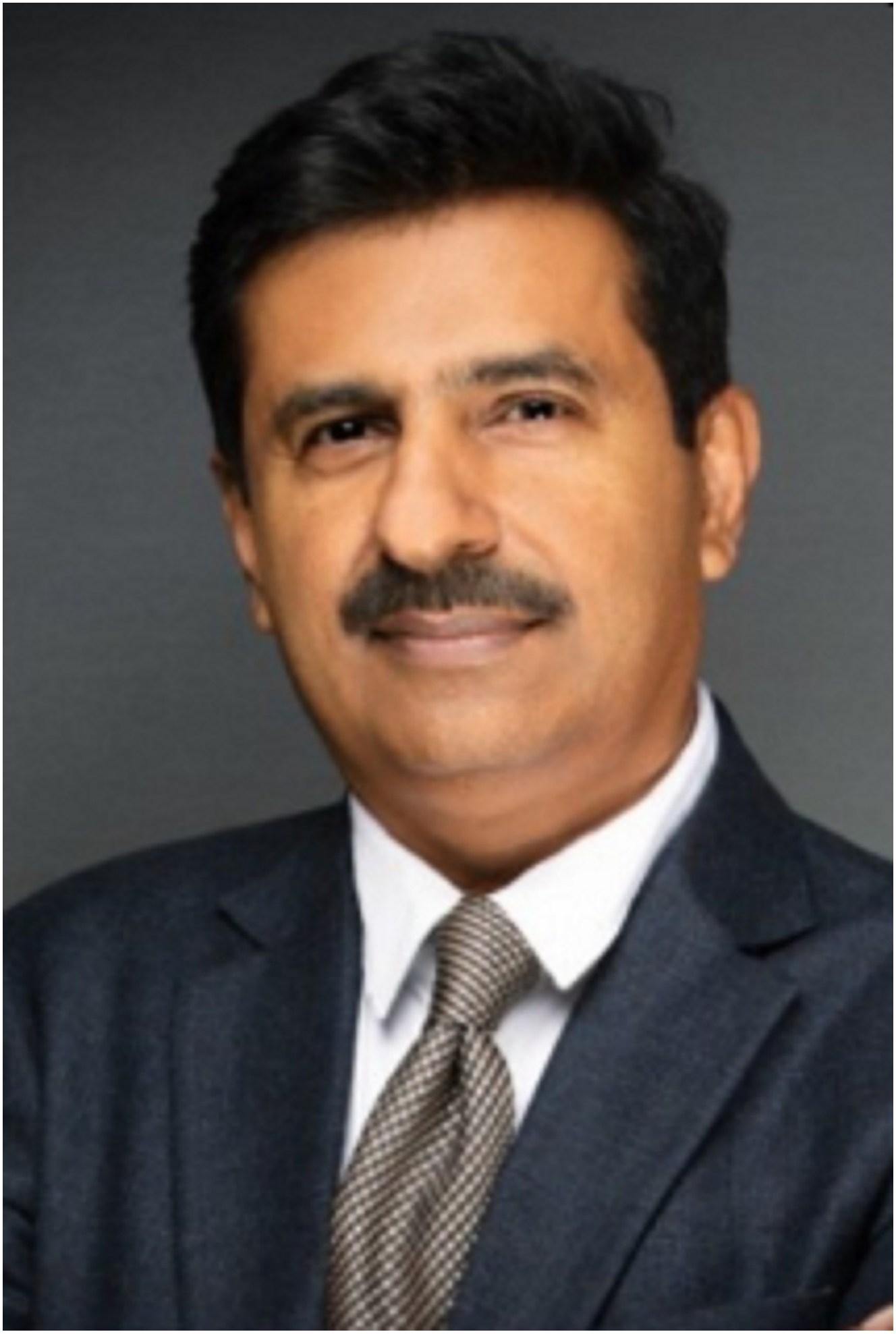
# On International Women’s Day, Jaideep Mirchandani, Group Chairman Sky One, Highlights Women’s Role in Meeting India’s 20,000-Pilot Target

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In June 2024, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued an advisory on ‘Gender Equality in the Civil Aviation Sector,’ urging industry stakeholders to increase the representation of women in various roles to 25 per cent by 2025. The advisory emphasises the need to promote greater female participation in the aviation workforce and implement leadership and mentorship programmes for women. It also recommends return-to-work policies for women resuming their careers and specialised training programmes for cabin crew to expand their skill sets.



**Jaideep Mirchandani, Group Chairman Sky One**

In line with this push for gender equality, pilot recruitment has emerged as one of the most pressing areas of demand in the aviation industry. Earlier this month, while launching the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for Pilots, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said that India will need approximately 20,000 pilots shortly to support the sector's rapid growth.

Taking a cue from the Minister's words, industry experts highlight that since pilots are the backbone of civil aviation, encouraging more women to enter the profession will not only help meet the growing demand but also accelerate progress toward the DGCAs goal of achieving 25 pc female representation in the sector.

*Recently, we have seen reports of the Ministry of Civil Aviation informing Parliament that one in every seven pilots employed by six major airlines in India is a woman, which is a highly positive development. According to official data, women make up 15 per cent of India's pilot workforce, compared to the global average of just 5 to 6 per cent. So, attracting more women to the profession will be a major step toward achieving gender parity in the aviation sector*," says **Jaideep Mirchandani, Group Chairman of Sky One**.

He adds that increasing the number of women pilots can help reduce reliance on foreign pilots and strengthen the domestic talent pool. A well-structured action plan should be implemented to encourage more women to pursue careers in aviation, beginning with early awareness programmes. Educating young girls about aviation and its diverse career prospects along with opportunities to interact with successful professionals can spark their interest and fuel their aspirations," says Mr Mirchandani.

He says that collaborative efforts between organisations like

Women in Aviation International, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and leading women aviation professionals can play a major role in increasing awareness. *Scholarships, government schemes and educational loans specifically designed for girls can help them overcome the financial challenges associated with pilot training, particularly in the case of low-income families*," adds **Mr Mirchandani**.

He also underscored the importance of airlines adopting gender-neutral recruitment policies to ensure women have equal opportunities. *Equally important is retaining existing women pilots through supportive schemes, inclusive leave policies and strict enforcement of zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment*," concludes **Mr Mirchandani**.

