AIRLINE PILOTS' GUILD OF SRI LANKA

From Course to Catalyst Positive Safety Culture in Sri Lanka

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Captain Suchithe Malawikankanamge, President of the Airline Pilots' Guild of Sri Lanka (ALPGSL), presented Sri Lanka's experience in advancing Positive Safety Culture at the 80th Annual Conference of the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA). The presentation traced how a workshop in Jakarta led to a Guild-funded course in Colombo and examined what it takes to build trust in safety reporting. Positive Safety Culture was the theme of the Istanbul conference.

From Jakarta to Colombo

The initiative began after Captain Malawikankanamge attended an IFALPA Positive Safety Culture workshop in Jakarta in 2022. The experience highlighted the value of giving regulators, operators and pilots a setting in which to discuss how safety concerns are raised and how reports are handled in practice.

On 23 and 24 October 2025, the Guild funded a two-day workshop at the Civil Aviation Authority auditorium in Colombo. The workshop brought together 23 participants from the regulator, airlines and the pilot community. The Guild covered the cost of local participation to help bring those groups into the same room.

What the workshop revealed

As the discussions progressed, participants became more willing to listen to how others experienced the reporting process. The Istanbul presentation highlighted strong engagement from the regulator and more limited progress in translating the workshop discussions into changes at operator level. It also identified an opportunity for future workshops to include human resources, given its role when a safety matter intersects with employment or disciplinary processes.

One challenge raised in Istanbul was how an organisation handles a report submitted in good faith. If the process is unclear or the response centres on an administrative error, pilots may become less willing to report the next occurrence. How an organisation responds to an individual report can shape whether it hears about similar hazards in the future.

The lesson for pilot associations

The Sri Lankan experience showed how a pilot association can convene people who see different parts of the safety system. The work that follows is to carry those discussions into everyday decisions about how reports are received, assessed and acted on.

For the Guild, the practical measure of progress is what happens after someone speaks up. A reporting process earns trust when people understand what will happen to their report and see the safety concern addressed.

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