

More people fly, my mantra is 'value for money'

He is said to be the youngest managing director of any airline in the world. Mr Thiagarajan, MD of Paramount Airways, making waves in south India, is just 31 years old and is a qualified pilot himself. Connecting almost all the major cities in south, including Bangalore, Paramount Airways offers business class features for economy class fare. "That is the USP of my airline," the tall, young man said during his visit to Bangalore on Friday to receive the 'Young Achiever Award' at the Public Relations Society of India annual convention.

Thiagarajan hails from an illustrious industrial family based in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. He is the grandson of Karumuthu Thiagarajan, a philanthropist, who was also the founder of the then Bank of Madura and several educational and charitable institutions.

M Thiagarajan is a Business Management graduate but dons several hats; he is also the MD of Paramount Mills (P) Ltd, a textile house manufacturing and exporting highly specialised industrial and home fabrics. He



launched Paramount Airways in September 2005.

He loves to fly the Cessna, plays golf during his leisure time and loves to spend time with his family.

In an interview to *G Ulaganathan* of the *Deccan Herald*, **M Thiagarajan** unveils his vision, dreams and mission.

How did you get into the airline business when your family business is something different – textiles, banking, so on.

I love flying and I am a qualified pilot. When I was in college I joined a pilot training academy and learnt flying. So far, I have put in about 400 to 500 hours of solo flying.



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M Thiagarajan, MD, Paramount Airways.

I was always interested in the aviation industry but we did not jump into this business all of a sudden. We did extensive research for

over six years, studied the business models of low cost airlines, budget airlines and various other airlines all over the world.

I personally spent a lot of time travelling and observing how other airlines operate.

When did you launch your airlines and how has your flight been so far?

I launched it exactly 10 months ago with a single aircraft and 10 flights a day. We basically covered the Chennai-Coimbatore-Madurai routes. Now we have expanded and fly to almost all the southern cities. We have five aircraft and operate about 1500 flights a month.

What is your business model, especially since most of the private airlines are not doing as well as expected?

My mantra is "Value for money." With more and more middle class people flying, we want to give them a unique experience while flying.

There is no economy class in our aircraft. There are just about 74 seats and no middle seats. We also offer 16 different types of meals on board—right from Jain food to Continental to Coastal Indian food to ... You name it, we

have it.

We also have exclusive lounges in all the airports and all our passengers can come and relax there while having snacks and drinks.

What are the problems you face in airports in the south?

Bangalore is too congested, and parking space is a major problem. In Kochi, there is only one runway and parallel taxiing is not possible. Visakhapatnam is totally inoperational in rainy season. Hyderabad is somewhat better.

We want to operate our flights to smaller airports like Bellary, Mangalore in Karnataka. Our planes – *Embraer* – are small, 74 to 80 seater planes and can land and take off in smaller airstrips.

If the Government of Karnataka wants, I am willing to operate my flights to these towns.

We will be adding 15 more aircraft in phases. So far, there have been no complaints of any sort from our passengers.

We would like to maintain that clean record, touch wood!