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**COLUMNIST**

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# He's reaching for sky

**P.J. HARSTON**



Viraf Kapadia came to Canada -- via India, England and Saudi Arabia -- in 1989, and it's from here he hopes to revolutionize in-flight airplane data analysis.

Through his company, Star Navigations Systems Group, Kapadia has launched his dream project, the world's first in-flight safety monitoring system (ISMS).

Kapadia told me yesterday his monitoring system picks up data from various points on an aircraft, analyses the data, checks it for variations from the manufacturer's preset norms and constantly trend monitors the information, sending reports to the pilot and to the ground.

"It's quite simply a revolutionary product for the aviation industry and for the safety of all of those who travel by plane," he said. "And it has the ability to provide tremendous savings to airline operators, through fuel and fleet management."

An accountant by training, Kapadia came up with his idea in the late 1980s, when he was working for a sheik in Saudi Arabia. He was trying to track information from the sheik's planes, but hand-written reports kept getting lost or the information they contained was inaccurate.

"I thought, 'Why should we have to rely on people?' " he said. "What if all the information came to us through a computer, proactively?"

It wasn't until after years of badgering engineering, consultant and business friends that he saw his dream come to fruition. In 2000, his company went

friends that he saw his dream come to fruition. In 2000, his company went public and now his product -- which has been patented, tested and certified in various countries -- is being picked up by airlines in the Middle East and India. He hopes soon to make inroads in North America.

"I'm talking to everyone. I go to all of the big airshows and I know that there is a big need for this system," he said.

The difference between his system and the current "black box" system is that the box gives information after something bad has happened. Kapadia's ISMS tells the pilot and the ground what is going on in real time and can help prevent things from going wrong in the first place.

And he's not stopping with that product. He's also working on an in-flight medical monitoring module and has an agreement in process with Sunnybrook Air Ambulance. This system, which compliments the ISMS, monitors any airborne patients and sends data back to the ground.

He's also working on a system that would send video from the cockpit or body of the plane back to earth and a system that monitors the environment of a plane and checks for things such as viruses and infectious diseases.

When he's not dreaming up new air safety solutions, Kapadia can sometimes be found looking after his investments, including property in nearby Woodstock.

For more information on his company and its products, go to [www.star-navigation.com](http://www.star-navigation.com).

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