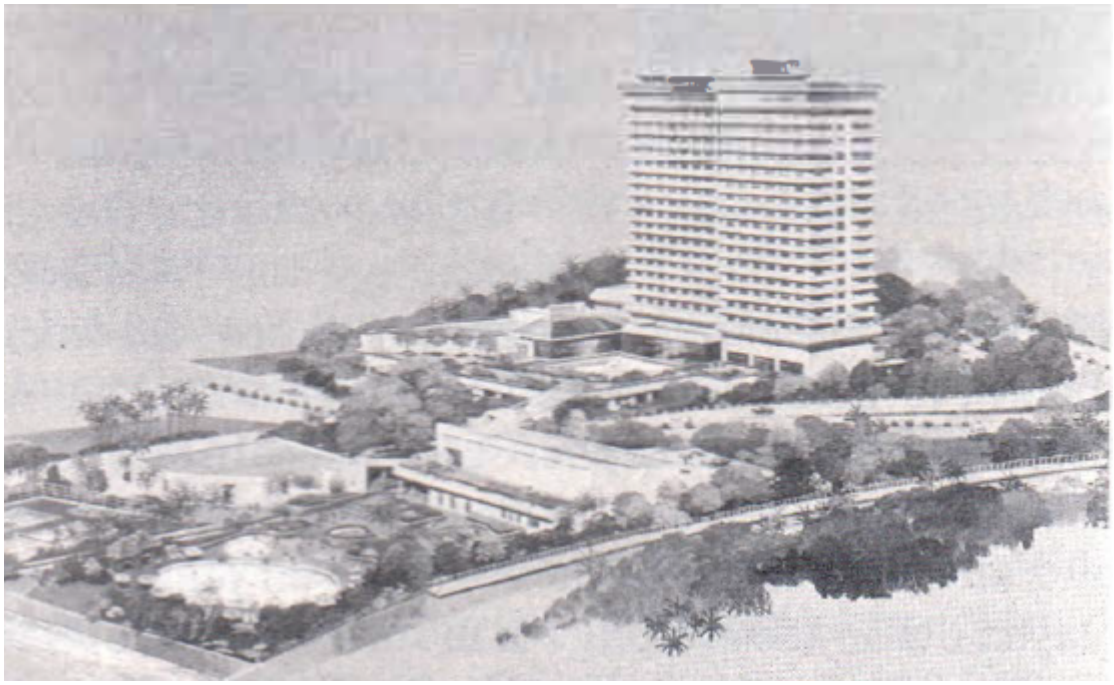
Hilton Hospitality in Colombo

Posted on

Marko Polo



A view of the Hilton International, Colombo, set in its beautifully landscaped gardens.

The fast changing skyline of Colombo now includes another height of luxury. In fact, there is a change in the air in Sri Lanka’s metropolitan city, for this month, Colombo became a Hilton venue. The Hilton International, Colombo, which opened its doors to the public on July 1, right on schedule, is a 387-room extension of the Hilton hallmark of luxury and service, set in seven and a half acres of prime land in the Colombo Fort’s Echelon Square, a place with many associations with the island’s history in the past few centuries. The Hilton’s service area includes an elegant lobby where one feels the welcome hospitality of Sri Lanka in the smiles all round, several excellently situated restaurants with fine decor bringing a sense of variety of fare, a night-spot which captures all the excitement of the mood of the moment, a commodious ballroom in a city known for its spacious style backed by seven

function rooms and six Board rooms, an executive business centre where efficiency and service are the key words, a sports complex and fitness centre which has already become the talk of the active town and, the 387 well appointed guest rooms, which ensure your comfort in the Hilton style of service.

The Colombo Hilton is set in what now remains of the old Colombo Fort. The Echelon Square where it is built was a barracks for British troops during World War II, and Dutch and British soldiers earlier. The guest rooms give an excellent view of the blue waters of the Indian Ocean and the Colombo Harbour on one side, and the vast expanse of Colombo's Beira Lake on the other. With wining and dining in elegance being part of the Hilton tradition worldwide, the Colombo Hilton introduces a gamut of cuisines and wines, to be served in the perhaps most elegant and luxurious settings in the city. Sri Lanka's vast and varied cornucopia of fine fresh produce, especially seafood, fruit and vegetables, will be an essential part of a pleasing and sometimes daring cross-section of quality foods, designed to suit the tastes of a broad mix of both foreign visitors and the many guests from the Sri Lankan community. The culinary team that will turn out the Colombo Hilton's fare is headed by the British Food & Beverage Manager, Robert Claase, and Belgian Executive Chef, Michel Saelen.

Working with them to provide a range of taste and excellence are Japanese, Sri Lankan and Malaysian chefs, masters in their own rights. The magnificent SERENDIB Ballroom is the largest pillar-less hall in Colombo, and already the venue for many a colourful wedding in the Sri Lankan tradition. Incidentally, Serendib is one of the many names by which Sri Lanka was called through history, and from it came the word Serendipity – the facility of making happy discoveries. A happy discovery indeed, the Hilton's Serendib Ballroom turns out to be, with its ultimate in banqueting facilities in a city used to the lavish in entertainment. Able to accommo-date up to 1000 guests in the main hall, it is indeed a grand ballroom in the old manner, but with the best of modern facilities and appointments.

A celebrated fare awaits one at the GABLES Restaurant, which houses its own Wine Bar and serves the finest of the world's vintages. Elegantly furnished in soft, tasteful decor, the Gables provides the ultimate in fine dining in the city, keeping in step with the tradition of intimate hospitality distinctive of the Hilton. The Gables features both creative and classical French cuisine, an open grill concept, with superb buffet selection, in addition to a sumptuous a la carte menu. Adjacent to the Gables Restaurant, the REFLECTIONS Bar cocktail lounge continues old-world themes in glass panels and mirrored windows, reflecting a unique atmosphere of

elegance in soft pastel shades. The Reflections is ideal for pre-dinner cocktails and after dinner liqueurs. The soft piano music played live in the evenings is in tune with the special charm of Reflections.

In contrast is the LOTUS TERRACE, specially designed for informal dining. The popular-priced Lotus provides a la carte menus in Western fare. as well as the best of Indian, Moghul, Chinese and Sri Lankan specialities. The daily luncheon and dinner buffets have varying culinary themes, and the Lotus boasts of a special menu for children. The outdoor terrace setting of the Lotus takes to full advantage the beautifully landscaped gardens of the Hilton, with the many tropical flowers and ferns, making dining and wining under the stars a special delight. The decor here is traditionally Sri Lankan with furnishings to match. The motifs, colours and ornaments have the touch of authentic SriLanka. Seating 130 indoors and 80 outdoors. the Lotus with its rich Eastern fare and fine service will soon be known as the spice of the Hilton. The Colombo Hilton gives plenty of attention to the Japanese visitor. This attention, which adds to the colour and varied fare of the Hilton, is best seen in the GINZA HOHSEN, an authentic Japanese speciality restaurant laid out in traditional Japanese decor in a setting over looking a beautiful Japanese garden.

The Sayonara mood of the Ginza is accentuated by its many special features which include the Sushi Bar, Shobu-shobu, Sukiyaki, Teppanyaki and Tempura counters, and other renowned Japanese culinary specialities prepared by the Hilton’s in-house Japanese chef. It also features three Tatami rooms for private dining. Japanese guests, I learn, also enjoy the comforts of home in the special facilities available for them. The Sakura features special amenities such as slippers, Yukatas Japanese reading material in the rooms, and authentic Japanese breakfasts complete with green tea. In addition, a Japanese speaking executive will welcome guests on arrival and be at their service.

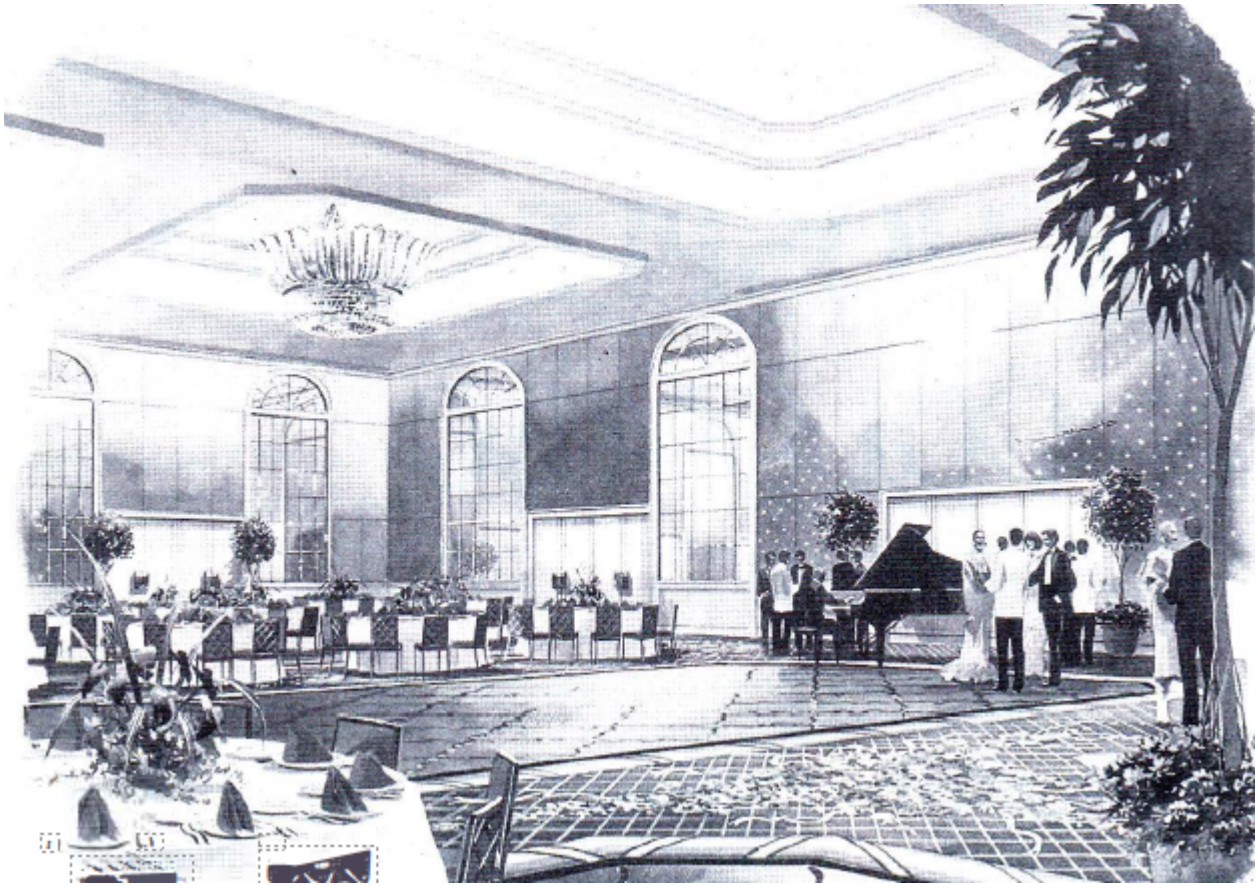
There is also the THORANA, a water-front Lobby Bar which opens to the landscaped gardens and Lotus pond creating an ambience of its own in a serene, relaxing atmosphere, enhanced by the sounds of light classical music of an evening. Hilton has not forgotten those who seek good entertainment at night. The BLUE ELEPHANT, at the lower ground floor, is the night pulse of Colombo for in-house guests and members. In a setting and decor reminiscent of the colonial age, Blue Elephant brings you the fun of dancing to good live bands in its central dance floor, in lighting which may dazzle but not disturb. There are many good floor shows on the cards at the Blue Elephant.

The poolside TREE BAR offers delectable snacks, tangy and stimulating cocktails, and long cool tropical thirst quenchers, including fresh King Coconut water, served in a relaxed, quiet and exclusive atmosphere. Among the many special attractions of the Colombo Hilton is its Sports and Fitness Centre. a well appointed and landscaped facility set away from the hotel but linked to it with an overhead pedestrian bridge over Colombo's Lotus Road. This is the larges Sports and Fitness Centre in Colombo. and is under the direction of the Clark Hatch Physical Fitness Centres of the U.S.A.

The main attractions of the one and a half acre centre are the polylawn turf tennis courts complete with floodlighting, a spacious swimming pool, and a kiddies' wading pool set amidst a colourful garden. Complete facilities include sauna, jacuzzi and massage, and a gymnasium. All equipment meets the demands of the Clark Hatch Total Conditioning Concept. Programmes will be led by the resident programme director. In fact Hilton introduces the "Total Fitness" concept to Sri Lanka, bringing the experience of Clark Hatch Physical Fitness Centres of USA, operating in 30 centres in 13 countries. The busy businessmen and athletes in Colombo have already found the advantages of Hilton's Sports & Fitness Centre, as can be seen from the steadily increasing membership. Indoor games at the Sports Centre include Table Tennis, Darts, Back-gammon, Drafts and Chess. In all, the Hilton International adds a new dimension to hospitality and entertainment in Colombo which already has such international names as the Galadari Meridien, Ramada Renaissance, Lanka Oberoi, Intercontinental, Taj Samudra and Holiday Inn. But there is little doubt that the Hilton brings a class of its own to the scene in Colombo, which is bound to be a proud address in the city for a long time to come.



The LOTUS TERRACE which brings the feel of tropical flowers and ferns, and traditional Sri Lankan decor.



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