

The Travel Bug



Mr. John de Saram, Manager International Airport, Katunayake. (Left) Hostesses greeting passengers on arrival with copies of Explore Sri Lanka. Photo Harsha Malvenna

Colombo's International Airport at Katunayake is fast keeping pace with the new passenger demands for convenience, speed and safety in a special facilities development programme which is fast nearing completion.

Many new facilities have already been provided at the airport for the convenience of the increasing passenger traffic handled here daily. One of the more striking improvements are the Airport Service Assistants a set of well trained hostesses ready with a cheerful smile and a helping hand.

Mr. John de Saram the energetic Manager of the Airport, enthusiastic about the new facilities available sees to the administration and operation of the Airport, and with the constant support of his twelve deputies he oversees all functions connected with terminal operations, air-side operations, land-side operations, passenger services, airlines co-ordination, visitor facilitation, airport revenue, staff-welfare, landscaping, administration procedures, and VIP movements.

Speaking of the new facilities intended to make travelling a pleasure to the passengers, de Saram said: "Now we can offer many facilities of international level to our passengers. In

certain instances the Sri Lanka passengers need assistance, especially as according to our culture and life style these people are not completely independent and self supported. Some of these facilities are provided for people needing help. And some services are provided to promote the tourist industry. All our efforts are centred on the comfort of the passenger.”

To whom can a child or sick person turn to for assistance in unfamiliar surroundings, with innumerable formalities to amend to. The Passenger Assistance Service is provided by Airport Services Assistants - young girls trained in Public relations, courteous and ready to lend a helping hand.

The passenger if necessary will be met on arrival at the airport and conducted and assisted through Immigration, Baggage Counter, Customs clearance, and Security checks by these modern ‘ministering angels’. This service can be booked at the Airport Service Counter for Rs. 25/-. According to Mr. de Saram this service is more an aspect of facilitation than a source of revenue. The restricted transit area, once you are through customs, is a ‘point of no return’. Often the need arises for a late visitor to exchange a few words with a checked in passenger or may be even a business counterpart requires to meet a passenger in transit through Colombo to discuss a business problem. This need not to be a dilemma for anyone with the introduction of the Passenger Meeting Service which provides two cubicles for such meetings ensuring privacy and security. This service is available for Rs. 100/-.

Often travellers do not need to carry their luggage with them for a short stay - or when they are en route a shopping trip and want to leave their goods at the Airport till they return from the city after a quick visit. Luggage will be stowed after a security check for Rs. 25/- per 24 hours or part thereof per piece at the airport’s new Left Luggage Service.

Bonded luggage or baggage unchecked by customs (after a short security check of course) could be left for Rs. 100/- per piece for 24 hours.

Medical emergencies are always unexpected. The Medical Centre provides ambulance services and services of doctors from the nearby Air Force Hospital at Katunayake, at a moment’s notice. In the case of an emergency cropping up on a flight the pilot signals the Airport who in turn sends the SOS to the Medical Centre who will then be ready to tackle the crisis immediately on arrival of the aircraft.

Passengers in transit often need basic conveniences such as the need for hot water, privacy for feeding babies or for cleaning them. The Child Care Unit provides all this and the services of the Airport Assistants for no extra cost.

Mod-cons highlight facilities at the Airport

Shower Rooms are available for freshening up and for a quick wash and change one needs so badly on a long tiring journey. One dollar is charged, to shower off the grime and dust of travel. Day Rooms are another boon available for passengers in need of a rest. These units provide small units comfortable beds and toilets for US \$ 10 per day - single and US \$ 12 double.

The Airport Restaurant provides good meals in a quiet restful atmosphere. Stained glass windows lend it privacy and a wide expanse of glass on one side a clear view of the runway. The meals are provided by Air Lanka Catering Services who won the award for the best airline caterer in 1985. A Coffee Bar is available and for those who prefer something stronger - a liquor bar with an elegant cane decor giving a truly Sri Lankan touch.

The Airport Taxi Services are run systematically by the Airport Management who engage the services of the Taxis which are available at any time of day or night. In the case of lost baggage or complaints, the taxi can be located easily. The Lotus Lounge is exclusively for the first class passengers of Airlines other than Air Lanka who have their own special lounge. Here the passengers relax to soft piped music, a well stocked bar and Television.

Restaurant and Toilet facilities. All in all the new facilities provided help in making the pauses and delays of air travel less tedious and a welcome introduction to the smiling hospitality of Sri Lanka.

The plush carpeted ivory furnished room has matching walls and potted plants for a dash of colour, and chromium plated coffee tables, harmonising with the lighting fixtures on the walls shedding subdued light. Two charming Airport Services Assistants are in attendance here.

International Direct Dialling is provided by Colag Communications, a leading private communications company. Tour or travel services, hotel bookings, and bank facilities can also be attended to at the Airport.

The Public Viewing Gallery built with a clear view of the arriving and departing aircraft is complete with Restaurant and Toilet facilities.

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The spacious lotus lounge at the Katunayake International. Airport-Harsha Malvenna.



Checking in is made easy with the many service counters available