Modern facilities at Colombo International Airport

Posted on



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. Many new facilities have been provided at the airport for the convenience of the increasing passenger traffic handled here daily.

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

Speaking of the new facilities intended to make travelling a pleasure for passengers, Mr 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 for people needing help. And some services are provided to promote the tourist industry. All our efforts are centered on the comfort of the passenger.

To whom can a child or sick person tum to for assistance in . unfamiliar surroundings, with innumerable formalities to attend to? To Passenger Assistance Service provided by Airport Services Assistants -a set of hostesses well-trained in public relations, courteous and ready to lend a helping hand. If necessary, the passenger will be met on arrival at the airport and conducted and assisted through Immigration, the 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 maybe even a business counterpart requires to meet a passenger in transit through Colombo to discuss a business problem. This need not 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 enroute on 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) can 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 which 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 privacy for feeding babies or hot water for cleaning them. The Child Care Unit provides all this and the services of the Airport Assistants at no extra cost.

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 to passengers in need of a rest. These provide small units with 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 allows a clear view of the runway. The meals are provided by Air Lanka Catering Services which won the award for the best airline caterer in 1985.

A Coffee Bar is available, and for those who prefer something stronger, there is a bar serving liquor which has an elegant cane decor giving a truly Sri Lankan touch.

The Lotus Lounge is exclusively for the first-class passengers of airline other than Air Lanka who have their own special lounge. Here passengers relax with softly piped music, a well- ed bar and television. The plush, carpeted ivory furnished room has matching walls and potted plan for a dash of colour and chromium-plated coffee table harmonising with the lighting fixtures on the walls shedding subdued light. Two charming Airport Services are in attendance here.

For the convenience and pleasurable shopping of passengers there are two amply stocked duty free shopping areas offering an attractive assortment of brands of liquors, cigarettes, confectioneries, cosmetics, electrical goods, watches, cameras, stationary, handicrafts and Sri Lanka’s gems. The whole gamut of goods, found in the duty free shops on arrival before Customs and in the Transit area is tantalizing enough to satisfy the most discerning shoppers.

The Airport Taxi Services are run systematically by the Airport Management who engage the services of taxis which are available at any time of day or night. In the case of lost baggage or complaints a taxi can be located easily.

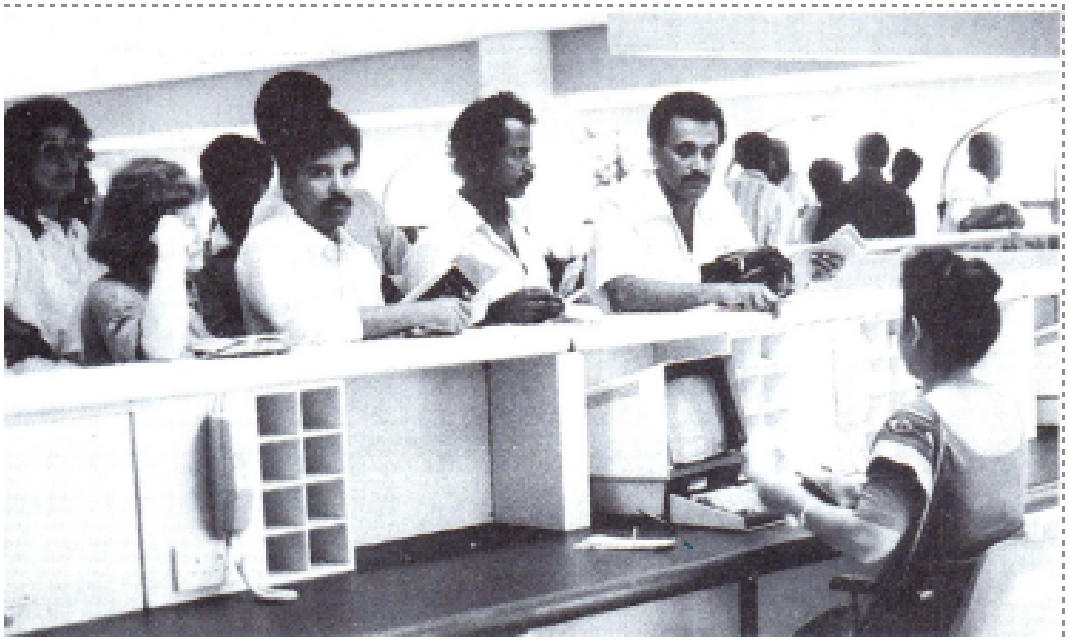
International Direct Dialing is provided by Colag Communications, a leading private communications company. Tour or travel services, hotel bookings and banking transactions can also be handled at the airport.

The public viewing gallery, built with a clear view of arriving and departing aircraft is complete with restaurant and toilet facilities.

All in all, these new facilities help in making the pauses and delays of air travel less tedious and give welcome introduction to the smiling hospitality of Sri Lanka.



Mr John de Saram, the Airport Manager.



Travellers queue up for clearance before departure. (Suresh de Silva)