

# **FACILITATION**

***-where did we go from there?***

TEXT OF THE SPEECH GIVEN BY  
MR. S. K. KOOKA, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF AIR-INDIA,  
AT THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL PATA CONFERENCE  
AT NEW DELHI ON JANUARY 22, 1966

## ***FACILITATION- Where Did We Go From There?***

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Ladies and Gentlemen, when Bill Conrad of the New Yorker magazine was so kind as to ask me to speak on Facilitation, he added, we'd like you to be honest and critical, blame where blame is due, and praise with equal fervour. Point out the weaknesses by name, and paint, with or without offence to friend or foe our Facilitation world exactly as it goes. Include our PATA-The-Earth and what remains outside. And remember, he added, that Marvin Plake\* and I are solidly behind you, and that's exactly where we'll be, at the first fruit or vegetable moving in your direction, depending on what's in season in January in Delhi!

Your subject heading will be "Facilitation — where did we go from there?" And "there" in your case is Hongkong 1962 when PATA last talked on this subject.

A few years ago we were starry-eyed at the thought of vast plane loads of passengers moving at 600 m.p.h. And today — when you fly 10 miles a minute, it's bad arithmetic to spend the equivalent of 600 miles on the ground, and far worse, to spend 600 miles on arrival at the airport of your destination, answering inane questions asked by weary men in tired uniforms, who don't speak your language, who appear to dislike your face, who

\* *Executive Director of PATA.*



scrutinise your passport and health documents with a curiosity that would kill all the cats of Siam. And why? Because you chose to come ten thousand miles to spend your hard earned money looking at their country.

And remember, that in a few years, the airlines of the world will be operating the stretched jet,—elongated, sub-sonic aircraft uplifting twice and more the number of passengers on today's large Boeings and Douglasses. This is no figment of the imagination. Plane loads of 300 to 500 passengers will have to clear formalities, outgoing, incoming, in the space of 30 minutes. And if the Governments of the world carry on as they are doing today, the prospects are pretty miserable.

One hundred and ninety countries are pledged to cooperate and coordinate at Government level, to honour and obey the provisions and resolutions of Annexure 9 of ICAO, their Facilitation Offspring. Annex 9 is the father and mother of Facilitation. But when you gaze on the happenings in a number of PATA countries, you get the impression that these good folk never got around to getting married! Every IATA airline, and there are a hundred of them, appoints a senior official from the national carrier to liaise with his Government on matters of Facilitation. Some of these officials are healthy, rosy cheeked and full of deep sleep each night. They represent airlines whose Governments are progressive, without suspicion, clued up on the advantages of unobstructed entries, exits and transits.

And sad to say, there are a large number of FAL representatives in the airlines of the world, who bite their nails down to the first knuckle, who hide from the light of day, snarl when visitors enter and take dope at night to sleep. They are what their Governments have made them, in the mistaken belief that outsiders are foreigners, aliens, virus-infested, suspicious characters, who come to sell their gold, their diamonds, their dope, their binoculars, their



transistor radios, their bottles of liquor, to the good people of your country.

Road blocks must therefore be set up at airports, visas issued after the maximum delay and tourists regarded as intruders.

IATA maybe alright and PATA no less so — but how can a foreigner, an alien know what the local problems are! Laissez faire is something you practice in another's country! Your troubles are peculiar to you and unknown to the outside world. And so another nail is dug in the coffin of old Annex 9, in case freedom raises its ugly head.

If you're an African, a Bulgarian, Chinese from the People's Republic, a Czech, an East German, a Hungarian, a Mongolian, a North Korean, a Pole, a Rumanian or a Vietnamese from the democratic Republic of Vietnam, you will not be permitted to transit Bangkok on an aircraft that spends 45 minutes at Maung Dau airport to refuel. If you can prove that no other carrier operates from your station of origin to your destination, without touching Bangkok, you may not be in dire trouble. But you'll be an old man by the time you've made your point.

On the other side of the political curtain, it's significant to note that Eastern European countries and the USSR are only interested in the colour of your money, not in the colour of your political thinking. Your Foreign Exchange is what they want, they couldn't care less about your wife's christian name and the street where she lives. Customs, Immigration and Health check points are simple and civilised. Even the cigarettes and liquor you bring in are duty free. Eastern Europe has done away with the Baggage Declaration form, and this should be a pointer to countries who are proud of their democratic thinking.

Today, a round-the-world traveller with 19 countries on his itinerary will have to supply answers to 752 questions and fill out 49 pieces of paper!



## **AUSTRALIA**

Australia must be singled out for great advance since Facilitation was last discussed at PATA Hongkong in 1962. It's heartening to realise that the manufacturers of Government stationery in Australia are sensitive men, their antennae picking up the slightest sign of criticism from the outside world.

And so I announce with pleasure that whereas a few years ago, Australia had a king's size Passenger Baggage Declaration form, the authorities have shown commendable good sense in reducing the size of the document by half, and reducing the size of the type by the identical quantum! And to prove their desire to be helpful — the following words are inscribed at the bottom of Page 2. "If space insufficient, continue on back of form".

In that Baggage Declaration form, the search for truth continues. Apart from common-or-garden firearms, the authorities are eager to know whether you're carrying air pistols, spearheaded knives, daggers, coshes, knuckledusters and of course, swordsticks.

The next line warns you, that if you're accompanied by sausages and salami, you'll be in trouble.

The ensuing queries are of a more personal nature, have you in your baggage insects in any stage of development? And how are you fixed for animal hairs! The final line wants to know, if you or any of your family live on a farm, have visited a farm in the last three months, or whether you've visited an abbator or a meat packing joint these 90 days.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

The men who devised New Zealand's baggage declaration form appear to be related to those who thought up Australia's document.

For instance, are you bringing into New Zealand, viruses or bacteria? Mounted fish? Fungi? A used saddle? A horserug?

Are you bringing in any footwear or clothes worn by you in any slaughter house?



Have you any wheeled toys with you? This one is obviously not as innocent as it sounds.

New Zealand also wants to have a list of the countries you've visited during the past three months. And for good measure, the following is inscribed on the front page. "Any person who makes any declaration under the Customs Act which is erroneous in any particular, shall be liable to a penalty of £100 (Section 211, Customs Act 1913).

This is proof, if proof were needed, that New Zealand does not let a single year slip by — without modifying and bringing up to date its Passenger Baggage Declaration form!

#### **The Transit Passenger:**

This human being, who minds his own business, bears the world no ill, a creature of circumstance, all he asks is, to be left in peace during the 45 minute groundstop, when his aircraft, due to reasons beyond his control, has to refuel, disgorge terminating passengers, mail and cargo, and uplift other passengers, mail and cargo.

He is a silent spectator. A bird of passage. He has no time or interest in the joys or vexations of the country he transits. If he can find a comfortable lounge to spend his 45 minutes, a few shops to browse in, maybe an attractive bar, he asks for naught else. In fact, he's prepared to spend his foreign exchange, if the local authorities have the mental wherewithal to realise that he's a customer with no designs on anything you possess.

Then why, in the name of reason, do so many countries in PATA harass, pressure, persecute and vex this lamb of travel, whose only crime is, that he has to spend the better part of an hour on soil not of his choosing.

In several PATA countries he can be arrested and deported because he has no visa, no transit visa for your land. In others, he's dragged out of his plane in the small hours of the morning, flitted, his health certificates perused, his passport scrutinised, as though the officials were reading the meatier portions of Lady Chatterley's Lover.



Why should a transit passenger not have the right to stay on board his aircraft at a transit stop. Why should you, bound for Sydney or Fiji, be forced to leave your aeroplane at Perth for a thorough going-over? And Australia's a long way from being the only country that harasses in this manner. There should be a law that says; suffer the little transit passenger to sit in peace, he does not have the pox, does not covet your wife and is too dog tired to take over your Government!

### **JORDAN**

Our man in Jordan writes to say that in general, Jerusalem airport is one of the fastest one can get into and out of. Customs checking of foreigners and tourists does not exist. Let's take our Facilitation hat off to the good Jordanian officials — may their tribe increase!

### **EGYPT**

Every foreigner in possession of a visa issued by a UAR Embassy/Consulate abroad is subjected to a black-list check on arrival at Cairo international airport.

Now it's the duty of every country to withhold the issue of a visa to someone who can be injurious to your interests. All one asks is, could this checking not be actioned at the time of the issue of the visa?

The only tourists exempt from this check are those with passports issued by Uncle Sam. The thinking being, that since they arrive in conducted groups of dear, old ladies, loaded with jingle, it's unlikely that there'll be a Miss Mata Hari amongst them!

The citizens of most countries can obtain a transit or tourist visa on arrival at Cairo airport and for this act of wisdom, the Egyptian authorities deserve loud acclaim. But if you're a tourist to Egypt, and Israel is on your itinerary, a separate visa and a separate ticket to Tel Aviv are essential.

It's the same old story all over the world. Politicians are basically poor tourist material. One can forgiveably ask — what does an American have to do to get a visa for Cuba and vice versa? And if any of you would like to visit Saigon and Hanoi on your way home, even the travel firm of McNamara and Rusk won't be able to help you!



## **YUGOSLAVIA**

Yugoslavia's Consulates and Embassies give you a visa within 24 hours. On arrival at Belgrade Airport, you can get a tourist visa for 14 days at the drop of a hat. And what is more, you can bring in all the currency you wish, without declaring it. So much for the iron content of the curtain!

## **HONGKONG**

Hongkong has made tremendous Facilitation strides. PATA of 1962 must have helped. Today, Hongkong has no outward customs for passengers and cargo. Incoming cargo is subjected to a 10% check. Three years ago, Hongkong abolished the passenger manifest for inward and outward clearance.

No visa is required for a 7-day stay if you hold an onward booking. The 48-hour visa-less layover has been increased to 96 hours. Glory be to Hongkong. If Harry Stanley is responsible for this enlightened thinking and great progress — Marvin Plake should kiss him on both cheeks! But if you're a transit passenger and happen to be an Albanian, a Bulgarian, a Czech, East German, Hungarian, Mongolian, North Korean, North Vietnamese, Polish, Rumanian or Chinese from the Peoples' Republic, or a Soviet citizen, or just stateless, Hongkong still demands that you get a transit visa. So maybe, Marvin had better kiss just one of Harry's cheeks!

## **MEXICO**

Our man in Mexico City writes to say there has been great progress all round on Facilitation in his land, with one interesting exception. Sabena is the only carrier operating from Mexico City to Eastern European countries without landing in U.S. territory. And so, every passenger emplaning or deplaning on Sabena at Mexico City is photographed at the airport by the secret police, with names and photograph maintained in a special file. The passengers are enchanted at what they believe to be a special PR job by the airline. On occasion this misfires, as in the case of the married man photographed with his lady friend on a junket to Europe — his good wife out of town visiting her parents. To use my Mexican DSM's picturesque language "he was accompanied, not by the lady of the house, but by the lady of his dreams" And when the photograph appeared in the newspapers the next day, the first lady's language could have been more lady-like!



## **HOLLAND & BELGIUM**

Where Holland and Belgium are concerned, our man writes — so far as Amsterdam is concerned, the same remarks apply for Brussels. No difficulty is caused by police, health and other Government authorities. Baggage is seldom opened when passing through customs. And then he adds — we regret not being able to help you more in this matter! Bless his good fortune to be living and working in such a paradise of Facilitation. PATA countries could take a lesson from Holland and Belgium's forward thinking.

## **THE LEBANON**

We come to the Lebanon. On reading what our man in Beirut had to say, it was difficult not to want to leave at once and stay for keeps in that land of milk and honey. The way Beirut spells Facilitation would make the Oxford dictionary drool at the mouth. It represents the ultimate in laissez faire, laissez passer, laissez everything!

The men who rule the Lebanon must have looked around the world and come to the conclusion that if their country was to benefit from the nonsense, the bone-headed rules, the suffocating regulations that were a part and parcel of the daily life of other countries, the Lebanon should exploit the weaknesses of those Governments, by opening their doors so wide, a herd of elephants could move smoothly in and out.

When narcotics, gold, opium, foreign currency, numbered bank accounts and whatever is your fancy, are shelf items — fast moving at that, Government hasn't the time to manufacture closely woven tape.

Beirut has a hundred banks, Lebanese, American, Communist-Chinese and Russian. There are no restrictions of any kind. No one asks you if you have horse feathers in your briefcase, and what you used for your mother-in-law's demise. No one inscribes in letters of blood in a special booklet, the amount of foreign exchange you brought in or spent in that country.

No one asks if you have more than two bottles of liquor, where you bought your camera, how much you paid for your watch and make you swear to take them out with you.



No one's going to make you wish you'd never left home, when with a sigh of realisation, you inscribe for the hundredth time the date of your birth, with a brief description of the identification marks on your lower abdomen.

Viva the Lebanon. You may be a small country, but you're big in wisdom, and what you're doing today, every country will have to do in the years to come.

Four weeks ago, a passenger arrived at Beirut airport with a passport which had expired six months ago, leave alone no visa. The Immigration Officer had one look at her obsolete document and said with a smile — next passenger please. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is what God meant Facilitations to be!

### LONDON

Dear old London town. They have a black book, yes, but if smuggling isn't your livelihood, how civilised can the treatment be. One health form they'd like you to have. To tell you what to do in case the generous English sunshine is out when you call.

The only thing the U.K. authorities are allergic to, are emigrants. With all the emigration out of England, one can understand their distrust of anyone wilfully desiring to reverse the process!

When Christopher Wren of The Aeroplane, heard that I'd be talking on Facilitation, he sent me the following story:

A small boy standing next to his father, besides the Customs Officer, and when the suitcase was being searched, the little boy said "they're getting warm Daddy"!

Then, there's the true story of the American woman standing at a Customs counter, in a country where Facilitation was a dirty word. Any firearms she was asked? yep, was the reply. Cigarettes?, yep, cigars?, yep, liquor?, yep, narcotics?, yep, obscene literature?, yep, ostrich feathers?, yep.

The Customs Inspector smiled victoriously and proceeded to frisk her suitcases with rare intent.

At the end of 20 minutes, he turned round to her and said, I find none of the items mentioned by you! How come? And the lady



drawled out, well Officer, the last time I told you I had nothing to declare, you never believed me!

## **INDIA**

We've come a long way since we used to work a flit pump over a plane load of passengers to prove how happy we were to welcome them.

We used to ask you where you spent your last nine nights. We're broader in our thinking now, your broad is your affair. But your last nine days on earth and in the sky, you've got to tell us. And the reason is straightforward. Our Department of Health, having eradicated all known diseases in our country, are naturally anxious that Yellow Fever does not become an indigenous product.

You'll be delighted to learn that our Ministry of Health have now ordained that the validity period of your Yellow Fever certificate has been increased from six years to ten. The country's leading numerologists were consulted before this act of Facilitation was agreed upon!

So if you've visited, during the last nine days, Aden, East, West or South Africa, South America, or any country in the Yellow Fever belt, and you have no Yellow Fever certificate, you dear passenger, will be crazy to tell the truth, on that innocent little piece of paper your hostess will give you before landing in India.

Think of all the exotic names that gave you a kick when you were at school. And dutifully enter, that yesterday you spent at Ullan Bator, the day before at Samarkand. The day before it was Tierra del Fuego, the day before Tristan Da Cunha and so on. And with this elementary precaution, you'll never see the inside of an Indian isolation hospital. After all one ever called you George Washington!

## **TERMINAL BUILDINGS**

You may have your Eiffel Tower, your Sydney Bridge your Pyramids, your Tower of London, your new tall buildings on Park Avenue — who cares! We have our terminal buildings at Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras airports!

Some of the airport terminals of the world are marble palaces, they're becoming more gorgeous every minute. So big and vast



and opulent are they, that no transit passenger can make a connection without a 50 minute time lag — so much for progress!

Other terminal buildings don't look like the Queen of Sheba, but they're functional. Our architects of the Central Public Works Department have achieved a most sensitive balance, ours are neither palaces nor functional!

It is said that the Emperor Shah Jehan, who was responsible for the Taj Mahal at Agra, ordered the architect to be brought to him, on completion of that immortal masterpiece. And when the master craftsman stood before his sire, trembling with pleasurable anticipation at what his reward would be, the great Mogul commanded — out with his eyes, that there be no counterpart on earth!

And gentlemen, our Department of Civil Aviation, having heard this story, naturally requisitioned the services of a blind man to execute our terminal buildings!

#### **KUWAIT**

Normally in Kuwait, Customs do not examine outgoing baggage. However, whenever there is a large case of theft, Customs insist on opening every single piece of baggage. Thank the Lord, the Great Train Robbery of England didn't take place in Kuwait!

Passengers arriving in Kuwait from Yellow Fever, Cholera and Small Pox areas are examined very closely. The Health Authorities hand out extensive health forms, which are very time-consuming. The passengers are then supposed to go with the form to the nearest clinic or hospital for examination.

The strange part is, that after labouriously filling in the health forms, no one bothers to go to any clinic or hospital. The duly-completed health form is thrown away the minute the passenger leaves the airport precincts, but the filling of the forms is a must!

#### **NAIROBI**

Our man in Kenya was cryptic in his reply "I have not come across any ridiculous rules and regulations which would be of interest to you". Full marks to Mr. Kenyatta!

#### **SWITZERLAND**

My Geneva Office eulogised the fine progress of facilitation in that beautiful land. To use their words "A telling contrast could be



made between the simplicity and ease with which even dogs and cats may be brought into Switzerland, as against the involved formalities which human beings have to go through before they can enter certain countries".

This good man must have tried to take a dog into England!

In Switzerland — you don't even have to hand over your baggage check before you receive your baggage. And to make matters worse, there are no cases of passengers walking away with someone else's baggage! What a country to live in!

### **KARACHI**

The Commissioner of Income Tax has ruled that if any foreigner leaves the country without settling his income tax dues, the airline carrying him will have to pay a penalty, plus the said tax due from him. Amongst carriers penalized, the national carrier has paid out Rs. 56,000 in fines!

For obvious reasons my figure relates to the period prior to August 1965. They may have improved since then!

### **FRANCE**

My Paris Manager writes to say "I am glad to confirm that in France, as in most European countries, the Government is very alive to the importance of encouraging tourism. Consequently, passengers do not have to suffer any annoyances or irritations when they enter France".

Beautiful, meaningful words. Vive la France and Vive la Liberte!

### **SINGAPORE**

Transit passengers at the airport are not permitted to phone a friend from the transit lounge. But passengers transiting Singapore on board a ship are taken around the city on a sightseeing trip with permission to phone all and sundry.

Yet another instance of the transit pax, lamenting as Cain did, "and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth". But in this



case, the transit passenger never took the blood of his brother or that of an Emigration official — grave as the provocation may be!

In Singapore, transit passengers are not permitted to remain on board, they're forced to carry all their hand baggage from the aircraft to the Transit lounge and back again. The authorities explain that in the recent unsettled times, this hand baggage rule has been introduced to prevent passengers from blowing up the aircraft or the terminal building, by the use of time bombs.

**BAHRAIN** wrote to say

"It would have given me the greatest pleasure to provide you with some interesting or unusual data concerning facilitation problems at Bahrain. Unfortunately, perhaps due to the excessive heat and humidity there is nothing original or unusual to write about".

**JAPAN**

In the lovely land of Nippon, facilitation smells like a rose. Clear, enlightened thinking, with great progress through the years. No problems.

**BOMBAY**

My man in that city helpfully replied that I was as aware of the problems as he was, and he hoped in conclusion, that the proximity of **Parliament** to this Conference Hall would not inhibit me!

**U.S.A.**

You have to travel to and in the United States, to appreciate the importance of your baggage being underweight. Men and women in the dusk of their lives, babes just out of arms, and confirmed cripples can be seen in that promised land, lifting their heavy suitcases with the resignation of a sherpa.

And then for consolation, each and every item of your baggage is opened and delved into by Customs Officers who smile once a year on Thanksgiving Day.

We're told there's a law in the USA which makes this search a mandatory one. There must be another law which says that a sky cap (a baggage handler to the uninitiated) cannot be expected to carry the white man's burden for ever!



## HEALTH

Certain countries are convinced, with restricted justification that in a large area of PATA, disease blossoms more vigorously than it need. I have found Health Officers in very **refaned** air countries flinch when I mention my station of origin. If you're from a suspect part of the world, they hungrily ask to examine your health documents and hand them back to you — clueless as to the contents.

An infected area can be the whole of the Middle or Far East, as far as they're concerned.

In Australia, a passenger was recently refused entry because she did not have a valid vaccination certificate. She had to fly on to New Zealand where she was accepted. Another passenger with the same missing vaccination certificate arrived at Sydney. She was offered the choice of immediate deportation or 14 days quarantine. She was in no hurry, so she settled for the quarantine, upon which the airline was promptly fined \$ 400 — not Hongkong either!

Australia and New Zealand lie awake nights wondering when foot and mouth is going to hit them. They can hardly wait! And if you're from a foot and mouth infected area, there's every likelihood of you being flitted from stem to stern, plus all your wardrobe. At the end of which, dear lady, your Dior gown will look as though it's been chewing its own cud!

These two countries are as sensitive to foot and mouth as mine is to Yellow Fever. The World Health Organisation experts, after prolonged and extensive studies, do not recommend disinfecting passengers and aircraft on the ground after arrival. But the wilderness is full of voices.

## BLACK LISTS

Since it is human to err, every country in the world has a Black Book maintained by the police, with the Customs Department producing their own editions. This is understandable.

The rub lies when your name is shared by another who has strayed from the straight and narrow.

To those about to be born, ponder well, before you permit yourself to be named Crippen, Pontecorvo, Luciano, Dillinger or Trotsky.



A black book is a black book, and if your name is infamous, you'll be in trouble. And you'll protest in vain. Mistaken identity is not something that gives the Police and Customs sleepless nights. And gaffes are perpetrated more than frequently in any part of the world, including mine!

### CONCLUSION

Europe has been discovered. The same cannot be said of the World of PATA. Our gospel has yet to be preached to the millions who know us not — who have still to discover us. It therefore behoves each one of us, to welcome the visitor to our shores without let or hindrance. The niggardly, the cheeseparing, the petty abrasions from small minded, ignorant officialdom must be our converts.

The so called, old world, has learnt to be tolerant where tourism is concerned, because experience has taught them that there's no future in looking a gift horse in the mouth. Shouldn't we learn from them?

PATA asks, where do we go from here? We go to conquer new markets, to bring the tourists of the world to see the glorious vistas of our countryside. PATA has so much to offer the tourist which he can find nowhere else. We have to tell the world about ourselves, tell them we are a big, free, democratic area of the earth, where the tourist will find hotels that are the finest anywhere, where old world charm and courtesy still exist, a world that is not a blase, cynical, clip-joint, a world without frontiers and the curse of the helmeted, jackbooted, police, customs and immigration official.

IATA's facilitation slogan, deep with reconciled despair, says "Tomorrow it must be easier" Poignant words, describing what is happening today in so many countries of the world.

A number of Governments have abolished visas for a selected number of countries. May this fine practice prosper and grow. May the day dawn when that frightening document, the passport, loses its fangs and becomes an innocent passport card, which you don't have to hug to your bosom and hide under your pillow at night, in case it's stolen, in case your trip around the world is an agonising vigil at your Embassy. The passport card in lieu of a passport is a resolution of the U.N. Conference on Tourism and Travel of 1963. IATA is working on this.



May reason prevail with Governments, and the lesson brought home, that tourists are not smugglers, that customs clearance should be, at best, on a sampling basis. Don't they realise that the professional smuggler is their quarry, not plane loads of innocents who spend billions of dollars on their travels in countries other than their own.

Where then is the logic of collecting from the tourist a miserable amount of boodle by the levying of unimportant customs duty, plus the agony of yet another inquisition, yet another opening, searching and closing of suitcases every 2 and 3 days on a voyage around the world.

The Government of every PATA country should blaze a trail to burn red tape, liberate subjects from the tyranny of the visa, replace the passport with the passport card, abolish meaningless health documents except when you originate from an infected area, in which case, spell out that area.

May every PATA country pin a label on each and every tourist with the words — his presence is precious to us and to the economy of our country, so let him pass in peace and do him honour.

Then ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow it **will** be easier! And we shall go from here to reap the golden benefits of the rich harvest that is Tourism, that is PATA, that is your bread and butter and mine!





