ALPHA TANGO SPECIAL

SCAA

Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority | e-Newsletter

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Golden Jubilee

4th July 1971

seychelles international airport

Message from the CEO

I feel privileged to be writing this message to you all as we celebrate such an important historical milestone in the civil aviation development of our country.

This golden jubilee reminisces half a century of determination, perseverance and hard work, all thanks to a team of former DCA and current SCAA employees who throughout the years have paved the way to today's accomplishments.

We have to acknowledge that the BOAC has been a catalyst that spurred the tourism industry, and the aviation industry has since then become a stronghold for such an important sector, supporting some of the key pillars of our economy such as tourism, trade and fisheries.

Seychelles has over the years managed to expand its network, now reaching over 80 countries worldwide. With further development in the sector along with the lucrative reputation built in tourism, the route has become one that is alluring to many international carriers.

Such development in the air transport industry is very positive for Seychelles. In the pre-COVID-19 years, notably from 2015 to 2019, the country saw an average increase arrival of 10%, a significant milestone for one of the world's smallest countries.

Fifty years later, the aviation sector boasts a strong workforce fuelled with expertise and professionalism in the delivery of its services including those that require technical proficiency.

Moving into the years ahead, with recovery from COVID-19, the number of passenger arrivals is expected to further increase, henceforth, investment in airport infrastructure is pivotal to allow for sustainable handling of forecasted volume and profile of traffic at SIA and to meet capacity requirements of current and prospective airport users.

Nonetheless, the past 50 years, have offered us with so much opportunities to be proud of and we remain hopeful that in spite of the pandemic we will strive to bring this industry forward with renewed determination.

Mr. Garry Albert
Chief Executive Officer

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Airport Commemorates Golden Anniversary Milestone.

In spite of challenging times for the aviation industry with the ongoing pandemic, the airport community is today commemorating the 50th anniversary since the first commercial jet, the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) touched down at the Seychelles International Airport.

This historical event is a milestone not only to civil aviation but also to the socio-economic development of the country as it heralded the start of the archipelago's tourism industry which up to 2019 contributed around 65.8% to its GDP. Though the celebrations will not be as spectacular with a pandemic to overcome, the Seychelles Civil Aviation Authority (SCAA) is commemorating this milestone with several low-key activities in the forthcoming months, at both the Seychelles International and Domestic Airports on Mahé and Praslin.

Special treats at the airports

The Seychelles International Airport which has been decorated to mark the National Day, has remained with the same flair for the golden anniversary. Travellers and airport users at the Praslin domestic airport are to enjoy some live entertainment today at the Praslin domestic airport.

The event will extend throughout the airport outlets with exciting promotions and special gifts at some retail shops as well as delicious food and beverages specially selected for the occasion.

To further encourage clients to make the most of these promotions customers who spends more than SR150 at The Coffee Club, Seybar and Payanke Lounge, will get free parking after they have produced an official receipt received from the outlets, that have been stamped with the outlet official stamp or the SCAA stamp. The receipt should be attached to a valid pay parking ticket. The parking promotion which has started on Thursday July 1st will end tomorrow, Monday July 5th at 8am. However, promotion is not applicable for parking card users and for long term parking over 4hrs.

Additionally, the disembarking passengers on the first international and domestic flights each day of the week starting from today through to 11th of July 2021 will be rewarded with a specially crafted souvenir token.

Honouring our people

As customary SCAA will also recognize, its people - its most valued asset in its Long Service Award Ceremony, in the same week to extend its appreciation to the long serving staff marking their 10 to 40 years of service with the organization.

Consolidating our new vision

SCAA is to also virtually launch its new vision to staff: 'A leading organization bringing excellence to your aviation experience', through a special video.

Commenting on this new vision the organization's CEO, Mr. Garry Albert said 'I wanted an opportunity to better communicate our new vision and renew our commitment to excel in all that we do, I believe that there is no better time than when we are celebrating 50 years of hard work and dedication, and at a time where the organization is embracing new challenges and goals so that we grow and become a leader in the industry."

Despite the special mentions, it is worth noting that all staff including the airport stakeholders and members of the public have played an important role in this journey, and that it will be important that we all celebrate together as the aviation family!

We hope to continue to experience more aircraft landings for another 50 more years, and to materialize our dreams and vision for a bigger and better airport for Seychelles.

Golden Jubilee

4th July 1971

Retired airport's staff and onlookers reminisce about the memorable landing...

The historical landing of the first commercial flight to the Seychelles' archipelago back on Sunday July 4th, 1971 was a proud moment for a small country with a population of about 54,000 people. The pristine tropical islands in the Indian Ocean was almost beyond reach to tourists until this memorable day. It was believed that over 10,000 people gathered at the airport to see the first landing which opened up the archipelago to the rest of the world.

British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) Super VC10 – wide bodied aircraft, touched down at the Seychelles International Airport on the main island of Mahé at 2:10pm local time. The roaring sound of this jet on approach fascinated the islanders back then, who were not yet used to having wide bodied aircraft landings on their shores.

This event took place while Seychelles was still under the British. The Seychelles International Airport construction project was also in its final stage - all of these developments kickstarted the tourism industry, which until today remains the main pillar of the island's economy.

The first passenger to get off the plane as the door was pushed open was our own Sir James Mancham and also onboard were Mr & Mrs Clatwynd and Mr & Mrs G.H. Lee who were all board members of BOAC.

Airport's staff who were present to witness the landing have retired but we got the chance to contact some of them to get an account of this day.

SCAA's former Chief Fire Officer Mr Marc Brutus was 23 years old in 1971 and he was on duty on that busy day, amongst a group of young airport fire fighters who were working for the then Directorate of Civil Aviation (DCA).

"Before joining DCA I was a police officer and joining the airport's firefighter had brought lots of opportunities with the construction of the airport in Seychelles," Mr Brutus said.

"I recalled the landing of BOAC was a momentous event, we were all preparing for this special arrival and I had previously attended a six months training in the United Kingdom as part of the preparations in terms of safety."

There had been other small aircraft that had landed in Seychelles prior to this, he said, but it was on an unpaved airfield. There was also the RAF Gan Hercules which landed on the runway earlier that year, but the BOAC brought much more excitement.

"In the afternoon the control tower was packed with senior staff who did not want to miss this landing and VIPs were also present. Outside the airport's fences locals had flocked to the airport to get some sightings of this special event - it was great indeed, an exciting day for all of us staff as all eyes were on the airport."

A ceremony was held where the Air Seychelles VIP is situated today but I did not attend it, Mr Brutus said.

"From our side we were so busy, as provisions had not been made for the unloading of the aircraft and with the only forklift that we had we organised two groups of firefighters to load and unload the plane. The workload was strenuous but we were determined and the plane took off at around 5pm," he explained.

Unfortunately, Mr Brutus could not recall the number of passengers on the aircraft but it had from 200-250 seats.

Mrs Jessie Marie nee Mathiot was 22 years old when BOAC made its maiden trip to Seychelles and she was pregnant with her twins.

"I had taken a housekeeping job at the airport after leaving nursing as it was the only post available at that time but I did only two weeks in the job before joining the first team of telephonist at DCA."

However, it was the housekeeping job that presented her with the opportunity to step inside the BOAC on that day.

Mrs Marie was amongst a handful who had been chosen to clean the aircraft after all the passengers and crew have disembarked.

"I felt so privileged and proud to have been able to see inside this plane with its lovely interior, an experience which is still with me until today and I remember my uniform, it was a blue mini dress with a tie - quite a thing back then," she laughed. For Mrs Marie it was 'big deal' to be part of such a milestone in the country's development.

Outside behind the airport's fences a great number of families had gathered to witness the arrival. Since the runway was close to the perimeter fence they had a perfect view of the aircraft.

Mr Marc Marguerite, one of the onlookers shares his story about that day.

"Seychellois were looking forward for the arrival of the BOAC as it was the first time that a passenger jet of that size was to land on our island and I also did not want to miss it," said Mr Marguerite who was 28 years old at that time.

He brought his wife with him and their 3 months old son.

We stood outside the fence but the aircraft was quite close so we could see well and even hear the words of Mr Mancham when he disembarked.

Mr Marguerite also joined aviation in 1974 as an aircraft mechanic.

Whereas Mr Vincent Jasmin was a young 20-year-old Seychellois mechanic

working with BOAC in 1971.

A rather reserved man, he did not share much about this day but he said he was very happy to see the first commercial jet landing in Seychelles.

For Mr Michael Jack, this was a long time ago;

"I recall the first Minister Sir Mancham was on that special fliaht." he said.

"I was working with Aviation Seychelles, on part time, as an A-Level student at that time, doing my work attachment before going to a course in aircraft engineering abroad."

At 17 years old, for me this was a great achievement for our country and I recall some technicians went on training in Hong-Kong to be able to handle the aircraft, Mr Jack said.

That day surely went down in history, in the BBC archive in London footage of this event is well kept, in Seychelles some artists have immortalized this event in songs, as since that day, the small island archipelago made the giant leap to connect to the rest of the world, since then we have never looked back. To date the biggest passenger jet that has ever landed at our airport is Emirates 777 and now we also have Aeroflot. Whereas the biggest aircraft to touch down was Antonov.

Congratulations on celebrating 35 to 40 years with SCAA!

Mrs Marjorie Belle, congratulations on your 40 years career milestone!

Planning to remain in the post until her retirement age, Mrs Belle describes SCAA as 'a great organisation' but admits that one requires patience and determination to work in the aviation industry.

At 17 year old she left a child-minding job to join the then Directorate for Civil Aviation as a housekeeper. Today 40 years on, she is happy to have made the decision and though at one point she wanted to quit, but her passion for the industry gave her the strength to carry on. She has witnessed some historical occurrences during her times at the airport including the mercenary attack.

We take the opportunity to wish Mrs Belle all the best with SCAA and also a happy belated birthday which she celebrated yesterday.

Mr Michael Legaie, congratulations on your service anniversary!

"Though I have been with the organization for many years, I still have a lot to learn from my colleagues and this is what keeps me going," said Mr Lagaie who forms part of the Maintenance team as a painter. However, he started off as a labourer in September 1981 at the young age of 22.

Talking about how his working environment has changed over those years, he explained that compared to the olden days, today machineries facilitate their work. "Apart from this, the pandemic has had some impact on our work schedule but we are coping."

He encourages the youths within SCAA to continue to take their work seriously and hopefully they will also be able to celebrate many years of service.

Mrs Peggy Esparon, celebrating 35th anniversary with the organization – Félicitation!

Having seen the organization grow over the years from DCA to SCAA, with more employees, including the extension of the organizational structure, Mrs Esparon noted that the culture has also evolved.

"Though i find the working environment challenging nowadays I am glad to be celebrating my work anniversary and I remain committed to my job."

Mrs Esparon joined DCA in 1986, as an Air Traffic Control Assistant up to 1990. She then moved to other positions from briefing officer, to AIS superintendent and up to 2016 she has been in terminal operations until her promotion as a Deputy Manager of Terminal Services to date.

The job keeps her on her feet, literally and it has also helped her to be patient and tolerant.

Her wish is for the organization to make use of her knowledge and experience as she feels that she has a lot to give. She advises the younger staff to make the most of all opportunities that are given to them and to aim high.

Ongoing promotions at the Seychelles International Airport

EVERY MONDAY TO THURSDAY IN JULY
SALAD OF YOUR CHOICE
(Greek Salad, Smoked Fish Salad or Chicken Caesar Salad)
FRUIT CUP
GLASS OF FRESH FRUIT JUICE
COMBO
SCR 175
Seybar
DEALS

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