

## Review gender bias policies on cabin crew, groups tell MAS

BY SUSAN TAM

**PETALING JAYA:** After facing the challenges of pregnancy and childbirth, former Malaysia Airlines stewardess Dollie Tan, 43, didn't think she could handle the pressure of having to lose weight before she could fly again.

This mother of one who had served MAS for 24 years claimed she was told to take time off work to lose weight, just so she could wear her uniform again – otherwise her services could be terminated.

Tan weighed 66kg before she was pregnant, but after her maternity leave, her weight went up to 71kg. She realised that in the one- to two-month time frame given to her, she could not shed enough weight to fit into her uniform.

“So instead of facing complications, I decided to leave the airline,” she said yesterday.

Tan, who resigned last November, was part of a group comprising 20 former and current MAS air stewardesses calling for a review of the airline's policies, and for equal terms to be given to both female cabin crew and ground staff.

“We are calling on the MAS management to stop these practices against the female cabin crew to show that the national carrier is in tune with the Government's policy of eliminating gender bias,” she said.

Tan said this was the right time to raise this issue as the Prime Minister had made a call for discriminatory laws to be reviewed at the opening of the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women last week.

Tan said she had expected maternity benefits similar to those given to female ground staff, but was surprised to learn that the cabin crew were subjected to different regulations.

“An air stewardess who gets pregnant is compelled to take unpaid leave, without a transfer to a ground position, from the third month of pregnancy until she delivers,” she said.

Tan's group, which is working with the Joint Action Group of Violence Against Women made up of six women's organisations, intends to submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister; Women, Family and Community Development Ministry; Transport Ministry



and Human Resources Ministry soon.

The memorandum calls for the retirement age of female cabin crew to be raised from 40 and 45 years to 55 years.

Tan said the management should also remove the two-children policy for air stewardesses to comply with Section 37 of the Employment Act 1955.

In a statement, MAS said a comprehensive review to further improve terms and conditions of employment had been undertaken last year.

“We will take cognisance of the Putrajaya Declaration and Programme of Action on the Advancement of Women in Member Countries of NAM.

“MAS is always sensitive to the advancement and the need for gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality,” it added.

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