CATHAY PACIFIC CABIN CREW UNION DEMANDS 6% PAY RISE, OR WARNS OF POSSIBLE ACTION OVER CHRISTMAS

News / Airlines

Travellers could face a Christmas of misery as Cathay Pacific's cabin crew union said it will consider industrial action that will cause mayhem unless they get a pay rise of 6 percent next year.

The 7,200-member Cathay Pacific Airways Flight Attendants Union, representing about 80 percent of the airline's flight attendants, will meet airline management on Monday to present the demand, plus other matters concerning crew members' welfare.

Union vice-chairman Julian Yau Chi-hung said a 6 percent rise was reasonable, given the airline's healthy financial situation. He said the airline needed to give an increase to offset inflation in the coming year, which is expected to be 3 to 4 percent.

"In the past few years we have always asked for a raise of 7 to 8 percent. This time we want to show sincerity by demanding a raise we consider to be very reasonable," Yau said.

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He said negotiations were expected to last two weeks.

Yau refused to reveal what action the union was considering, or when it would take place. He would only say that the union would give Cathay passengers enough time to adjust their travel plans if the union needed to press ahead with industrial action.

Last year the airline avoided a Christmas slowdown after the union backed down from its initial demand of an 8 percent rise - most employees got 4.5 percent.

In August, the airline announced that half-yearly profits had increased nearly five times year on year.

In addition to the pay increase, the union will also ask the management to pay for cabin crew's travel insurance during their time at outports.

At present, Yau said, the travel insurance that the airline had paid for flight attendants only covered up to when they stepped out of the airport shuttle bus to their hotels, as well as the time they spend inside the hotel.

Yau said if the flight attendants had any accidents in, for example, New York while they were waiting to report for duty again, they were not covered by travel insurance.

The union would also urge the management to allow cabin crew involved in internal disciplinary hearings to ask other colleagues to accompany them as observers during the meetings. Yau said that would ensure fairness.

A Cathay spokesman would only say: "We are in regular communication with the [union] on matters of mutual interest. Meetings have been scheduled for the end of this month and early December."

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