

Move Over Pam Ann – Here Come the Ladyboys

By Curt Singleton

Freshly-minted Thai regional airline PC Air won't make its first flight for several months yet, but is on the fast track as the first airline to employ the 'third sex' to promote equal opportunities for transsexuals. In the first week of its recruitment, the new airline appointed three transsexuals as air hostesses – commonly known in Thailand as 'Ladyboys' or 'the third sex' – with plans to hire more. More than 100 transsexuals applied for the first round, but, perhaps the highest profile ladyboy hired so far is Miss Tiffany Universe 2007 winner, Thanyarat Jirapatpakorn.

Thailand has the largest number of transsexuals (called katoey in Thai) in the world. Many katoey do not undergo sex change operations, either because of the expense or the possible medical complications. Instead, they dress as women, often taking birth control pills to reduce facial hair and grow breasts. Although being transsexual is hardly a must for the position, Chan indicated that all job applicants need to be able to speak several languages and provide good customer service. Proof of sexual reassignment is not a criterion for the job.

This is a first for the global airline industry. Peter Chan, the new boss of the airline, is enthusiastic about this groundbreaking move because of the opportunities it would afford transsexuals. Chan declared this is a pioneering move in promoting equality; and it's a move the airline believes will be copied by other carriers in the future.

PC Air intends to make its inaugural flight sometime in March, but has yet to make its routing and schedule public. The transsexual flight attendants will wear special gold-coloured 'third sex' name badges to help with their identification.

