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Loss of 300,000 passengers due to stoppage of airline services

THE termination of services to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) by four foreign airline companies last year resulted in the loss of between 200,000 and 300,000 passengers to this country, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Deputy Transport Minister Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib said the four companies -Qantas, Lufthansa, Aeroflot and British Airways - terminated their services due to financial and planning problems.

Another airline, All Nippon Airways, which had also terminated flights to the KLIA earlier, had resumed their services, he said in reply to a question by Dr Tan Seng Giaw (DAP-Kepong).

Tan wanted to know the actual reasons for the termination of services by these companies to the KLIA and whether it was because they were not keen to come to Malaysia.

He denied that the termination of flights to the KLIA by these airlines was due to the poor quality of services at the KLIA.

"I don't agree with your (Dr Tan's) contention that the KLIA management is inefficient because what is obvious is that the number of passengers has increased," he said.

Replying to the original question by Datuk Wira Abu Seman Yusop (BN-Alor Gajah), he said Aeroflot was now contemplating to resume its services to the KLIA.

He said although the four airlines had ceased their services to the KLIA, there were new airlines flying to the airport besides increased services by the existing airlines.

* THE Dewan Rakyat yesterday passed the Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2001 which paves the way for the implementation of the extension of the compulsory retirement age of government employees from 55 at present to 56.

The amendment to the Pensions Act 1980 (Act 227) allows for officers appointed on or after October 1 2001 to serve up to the age of 56 and serving permanent staff to be granted options to extend their service until they reach 56 or to retire at 55.

Winding up the debate on the Bill, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said the one-year extension of service for the public sector staff was only an initial move.

"If the Government finds that the retirement extension policy has a positive effect on the Government's administrative machinery, it is prepared to consider further extending the compulsory retirement age beyond 56," he said.

Adnan said the Government was prepared to give an assurance that the move to extend the compulsory retirement age will not affect the promotion of other officers.

The Dewan Rakyat also passed the Statutory and Local Authorities Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2001.

* MINISTER in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim yesterday tabled the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2001 aimed, among others, at inserting the word "sex" in Article 8 to prevent sexual discrimination.

The Bill was tabled for the first reading in the Dewan Rakyat and is expected to be tabled for second reading and debated on today.

Article 8 of the Federal Constitution states that there shall be no

discrimination against citizens on the grounds of religion, race, ancestry and place of birth except where allowed by the Constitution. The proposed amendment is to add the word "sex" to the grounds.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said recently that the amendment was to ensure that women as citizens in the country receive equal rights as men.

* THE Government has never stopped the Opposition from holding ceramahs as long as they abide by the law, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tengku Datuk Adnan Tengku Mansor said statistics showed that the Opposition was given three times the number of police permits to hold ceramahs than the ruling government parties.

"The Government has been fair in this matter but the Opposition parties have been irresponsible by causing riots, destroying public property and resorting to violence ostensibly to exercise their democratic rights," he said.

He said this when replying to points raised in the adjournment speech by Mat Basir Rahmat (Pas-Parit) on curbs imposed by the Government on the Opposition.

The Dewan will sit again today.

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