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Wear your tudung, no problem, says Penang hotel body

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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang chapter of a national hotel association has chosen to support Muslim women who choose to wear the tudung (hijab) at work, saying they can wear the hijab if they wish.

Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) Penang chapter chairman Khoo Boo Lim said no hotels in the state barred their staff from wearing the hijab and would continue to support diversity in the workplace.

“On behalf of the Penang MAH chapter, I would like to stress that there is no such policy barring women working in hotels from wearing the tudung.

“We share the concerns of Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng that Muslim women should be allowed to wear the tudung and should be judged strictly on their performance.”

Khoo's comment comes after a report claiming that international chain hotels do not allow Muslim women staff to wear the hijab, especially when they are involved in front desk-related duties.

This follows a report by the Union Network International-Malaysia Labour Centre, which had received complaints from Muslim women working in the hospitality industry in Malaysia.

The report was highlighted by The Star Online, which later carried a comment by MAH president Samuel Cheah Swee Hee, who regarded this policy as being "not discriminatory".

He explained it was normal for international hotel chains to have requirements for uniforms at all their branches.

He said those who wanted to wear the hijab can work in less frontline roles and "in the backhouse" or hotels that allowed them to do so.

"This policy is practised in international hotel chains that use the same global standard operating procedure on uniforms in all their hotels globally.

"The problem is everyone wants to join the 5-star global hotel brand, but they do not want to follow the uniform policy that is their worldwide standard," he was reported as saying by The Star Online.

Meanwhile, Khoo said he was contacted by the chief minister over the report. The CM was "dismayed" by what he regarded as a discriminatory policy and abuse of basic human rights of Muslim women.

"The Penang chief minister also considers such a ban as being discriminatory because it has nothing to do with a person's work performance.

“I would like to thank the Penang chief minister for his concerns and to also stress that Penang hotels are open and welcome Muslim women working in our hotels here who want to wear the tudung,” Khoo said