

Special JAL Doll Festival flight urges girls to spread their wings

Kyodo News

Japan Airlines Corp. marked the Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival) Tuesday with a special flight staffed mostly by women to demonstrate the range of career opportunities at JAL.

Flight 1605, a Boeing 767 from Tokyo's Haneda airport to Hiroshima, took off with a 36-strong crew, of whom only the captain was male. JAL doesn't have any female captains yet.



Working hard: Female mechanics at Japan Airlines gather for a meeting Tuesday before preparations for a special Hina Matsuri flight at Haneda airport in Tokyo. KYODO PHOTO

"I'm delighted to make such a flight with female staff," said copilot Madoka Tachikawa, 31. "Someday, I would love to take part as captain."

The only other man involved with the flight was the mechanic who gave the flight its final go-ahead.

In decades gone by, most positions available to women at JAL were for cabin attendants or gate staff. The airline began hiring female mechanics in the late 1980s.

Women are gradually making their way into cargo loading, navigating and, more recently, flight operations. The JAL group has hired eight female copilots since the first in 1997.

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