Malaysia Airlines flights left with rows of empty seats as company struggles after disasters

27/08/2014



Malaysia Airlines flights are being left with rows of empty seats as passengers stay away from the beleaguered company in the wake of the MH370 and MH17 disasters.

One picture from a Malaysia Airlines plane earlier this month showed row upon row of vacant seats.

Australian Leanne Marotta said she took the picture on August 14, as the airline struggles to regain passengers' confidence.

Days later, Masterchef winner Wan Ping Coombes tweeted a picture of her and her family in an empty business class section as she flew to Kuala Lumpur with Malaysia Airlines.

The company has suffered two huge disasters over the last six months.

In March, Flight MH370 went missing en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

Despite a major international search operation the passenger jet has never been found, and Malaysia Airlines has been criticised over its handling of the crisis.

Then in July, Flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot out of the sky as it flew over Eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 passengers and crew.

The international investigation into the disaster is also continuing.

Since then, not only have passenger numbers fallen but staff have also been deserting their employer.

186 Malaysia Airlines flight crew quite their positions between January and July - many of them because of family

pressure not to fly after the crashes.

And today it's been reported that a quarter of the airline's 19,500 staff face losing their jobs ahead of a restructuring plan the unprofitable company is expected to announce by the end of this week. Route cuts and a change of leadership are also expected in the plan.

The firm will also announce its second-quarter results, with plunging ticket sales and heavy losses predicted. Earlier this month, the airline suspended its shares.

Nik Huslan, the airline's former chief pilot, said: "MAS is suffering from an image problem and a problem with the staff.

"They have to find someone the staff can respect and rally behind."