

Bali volcanic eruption halts flights

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Jakarta: Airlines in Australia, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, and Singapore canceled flights to and from Bali on Wednesday (13 Nov) after a nearby volcano erupted, sending an ash plume miles into the sky.

Jetstar, Qantas, and Virgin Australia all grounded flights following the eruption of Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki on Flores Island, which released a 9-kilometer (5.6-mile) ash column the day before.

Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, India's IndiGo and Singapore's Scoot also listed flights as cancelled on Wednesday, according to a news agency journalist at Bali's international airport.

"Volcanic ash poses a significant threat to safe operations of the aircraft in the vicinity of volcanic clouds," said AirAsia as it announced several cancellations.

Multiple eruptions from the 1,703-metre (5,587-foot) twin-peaked

volcano in recent weeks have killed nine people, with 31 injured and more than 11,000 evacuated, Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency said Tuesday.

Eruptions can pose serious risks to flights, disgorging fine ash that can damage jet engines and scour a plane's windscreen to the point of invisibility.

Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific also listed its flights as cancelled, rescheduling routes to and from Bali until Thursday.

"Virgin Australia has made some changes to its current flight schedule, due to the impacts of the volcano in Indonesia," the airline said, listing scrapped flights to Sydney and Melbourne.

Jetstar said all flights to and from Bali would be halted until noon on Thursday.

"Due to volcanic ash caused by the Mount Lewotobi eruption in Indonesia, it is currently not safe to operate flights to and from Bali," the company said in an advisory.

Qantas said "a number of flights to and from Denpasar Airport in Bali have been disrupted" due to volcanic ash from Lewotobi.

Malaysia Airlines said it had cancelled six flights Wednesday in a statement on its website.

The airlines said they would monitor the volcano's status and provide updates.

Singapore's Scoot and Malaysia's AirAsia did not immediately respond to an agency request for comment. Singapore Airlines was still listing its flights as running on Wednesday.

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