

Cathay Pacific to transfer aircraft for storage in Australian desert

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 05 August, 2020



Dhaka: Cathay Pacific will be flying one-third of its passenger aircraft for storage in the Australian desert, announced the airline last week.

The move follows the Hong Kong-based carrier's efforts to economise amid the COVID-19 crisis. 12 Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon aircraft will be arriving in Alice Springs starting this week.

As of December 31, 2019, Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon had a combined fleet of 182 aircraft, meaning they are eyeing to store around 60 planes outside of Hong Kong. The aircraft under consideration for desert storage overseas are expected to be for undeterminable durations while the company addresses its operational needs.

"At present, our aircraft are parked at Hong Kong International Airport, primarily in remote bays, taxiways, and other operational areas made available at the airport. We need to park these aircraft while they are not flying in locations beyond Hong

Kong's humid climate," said a spokesperson for Cathay Pacific in a statement.

Also, when the COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong first surfaced, the Hong Kong Airport Authority announced a full waiver of all parking and air bridge fees from March until August. With this now coming to an end, Cathay Pacific is looking not only for a drier but a less expensive place to store its inactive aircraft.

Located in the middle of the Australian Outback's red center, Alice Springs has a subtropical hot desert climate with scorching, dry summers and short, mild winters that are ideal for aircraft storage.

Managed by Asia Pacific Aircraft Storage (APAS) Alice Springs runway is long enough to accommodate any type of aircraft with 44 planes currently stored at the facility.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the desert facility had just 18 aircraft, and now they have 44 with a further 30 expected to arrive before the end of the month.

Last week the Northern Territory Government announced that it would be investing a further USD 2.5 million in the storage facility. This move would allow it to accommodate 100 aircraft by the end of October. This is on top of an earlier grant of USD 713,000 that it awarded to APAS to help the company expand.