

Major airline grounds Airbus A350 fleet amid engine troubles

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 04 September, 2024



Singapore: Some of Asia's largest operators of the Airbus SE A350, including Singapore Airlines Ltd., said they would undertake checks of their fleet after Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd.'s mid-flight discovery of an engine component issue in the aircraft type.

Singapore Air said it would inspect all the engines powering its fleet of 64 A350-900 aircraft as a 'precautionary measure,' stressing there was no current impact on its flights. The carrier said it was in contact with Airbus and engine-maker Rolls Royce Holdings Plc about the Trent XWB engine issue.

"The safety of our customers and staff is always our top priority," Singapore Airlines said in a statement Tuesday night.

Air China Ltd. has canceled four domestic flights that were scheduled to

be operated Wednesday using the A350-900, Flightradar24 data shows. The state-run carrier, in which Cathay has a 15.9% stake, planned to undertake general inspections of its fleet of 30 A350-900s, according to local media. The airline declined to comment when contacted Tuesday.

Japan Airlines Co. meanwhile opted to check part of its A350 fleet, focused on its five A350-1000s, after consulting with Cathay. The carrier found no problems in three of the five jets it has inspected so far, while the remaining two will be checked upon returning to Tokyo.

Hong Kong-based Cathay scrubbed a total of 31 flights on Wednesday, and additional cancelations are expected to be announced later for Thursday. The airline had discovered the engine fault in a Zurich-bound flight shortly after midnight Monday, forcing the aircraft to return to its base without incident.

Cathay had earlier completed inspections of its A350 engines, finding 15 aircraft requiring replacement parts, and three managing to be fixed. The carrier said Tuesday it expects its fleet of A350s to resume flying in full by Saturday. Bloomberg News earlier reported the carrier was inspecting deformed and degraded fuel lines in the engines.

Shares in Cathay fell as much as 3.3 per cent Wednesday, marking the biggest intraday fall since June 14.

The majority of airlines globally operating the A350, of which over 600 are in service, have not taken any specific action, preferring to wait for guidance from Airbus, Rolls Royce or their respective regulators.

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