Lufthansa extends China flight ban as virus toll climbs

3 February 2020

Germany's flagship carrier Lufthansa on Monday said it was suspending all flights to and from mainland China for longer than initially announced, as the death toll from the novel coronavirus climbed past 360.

The Lufthansa group last week said it was halting its China flights until February 9, including those run by subsidiaries Swiss and Austrian Airlines.

In an updated statement, the group said it was now halting flights to and from Beijing and Shanghai until February 29.

The destinations of Nanjing, Shenyang and Qingdao in eastern China will not be served until March 28, it added.

"The safety of passengers and employees is a top priority," Lufthansa said, adding that the decision to prolong the suspension was made "after thoroughly evaluating all currently available information on the coronavirus".

Flights to Hong Kong will take place as planned.

Lufthansa and the two subsidiaries offer 54 weekly connections from Germany, Switzerland and Austria to mainland China, as well as 19 to Hong Kong.

The novel coronavirus first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

It has so far infected more than 17,000 people and killed over 360, making it more deadly than the SARS crisis nearly two decades ago.

The virus has since spread to more than 24 countries despite many governments imposing unprecedented travel bans on people coming from China.

Dozens of global airlines have halted flight services with China to contain the outbreak, including British Airways and Air Canada.

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