

1 December — JR West announced sales of excursion ticket for foreigners visiting Japan—Kansai Area Pass ¥2000 for 1 day and ¥6000 for 4 days on ordinary trains, and Sanyo Area Pass (including Sanyo Shinkansen) for ¥20,000 for 4 days and ¥30,000 for 8 days

3 December — Administrative Reform Conference chaired by Prime Minister Hashimoto announced government to be consolidated into one office and 12 ministries/agencies by 2001. Ministry of Transport to be merged with Ministry of Construction, National Land Agency, Hokkaido Development Agency and other organizations to form National Land and Transport Ministry

3 December — Ground-breaking ceremony for JR East 10-km line running between Nippori Station to Toneri district in Adachi Ward, Tokyo. New line to operate rubber-tyred vehicles on elevated track

4 December — Kyoto Station celebrated completion of solar power generation system generating 100 kW, or 5% of requirements and reducing annual CO₂ emissions by 62 tonnes

6 December — Military *Antonov* 124 transport plane of Russian Air Force crashed near Irkutsk, east Siberia, hitting apartment building and killing 57 including 23 crew members

6 December — 4.4-km Abo Tunnel connecting Gifu and Nagano prefectures opened as part of Cross-Traverse Highway—previous route over Abo Pass closed by heavy snow during winter

10 December — Last part of Sanyo Motorway opened, completing entire 419-km route between Kobe and Yamaguchi and marking completion of 26-year project

10 December — Head-on collision between passenger train and freight train carrying fuel near Hanover, northern Germany, injuring 100

15 December — Tajik Airlines plane crashed in UAE on way from Tajikistan, killing 85, leaving one survivor

16 December — Six JRs started printing English on some tickets in expectation of increase in foreign passengers visiting Nagano Winter Olympic Games

17 December — Commercial flight of Ukraine Airlines, flying from Odessa in southern Ukraine to Thessaloniki in northern Greece, lost near Thessaloniki

18 December — Tokyo Bay Aqualine, 15.1-km trans-Tokyo Bay road connecting Kisarazu City in Chiba with Kawasaki City in Kanagawa opened. Road divided into causeway and bridge on Kisarazu side and submarine tunnel on Kawasaki side, taking 8 years 7 months and approximately ¥1.44 trillion to construct

18 December — *Technoport* 3.7-km subway line started operation between Osakako Station of Osaka Municipal Subway and Nakafuto Station of new tram system

19 December — Shinjuku-Nerima section (9.1 km) of Tokyo Metropolitan No. 12 Subway opened (Photostory p. 64), completing 12.9-km linear-motor metro from Hikarigaoka to Shinjuku

19 December — Boeing 737-300 of Singapore-based SilkAir crashed near Palembang, Sumatra, on way from Jakarta to Singapore, killing all 97 on board

20 December — JR East introduced full double-decker train on Tohoku Shinkansen offering 1634 seats and mainly operating between Tokyo and Nasu Shiobara in Tochigi Prefecture

24 December — MLX01 *Maglev* marked 550 km/h, breaking own world record of 531 km/h for unmanned vehicles established on 12 December

25 December — Bus carrying 26 Japanese tourists collided with truck in Dinar City, Turkey, seriously injuring 11 passengers

25 December — Passenger train slammed into second train at station in eastern Punjab, Pakistan, killing at least 35 people and injuring 100

27 December — Passenger train derailed and slammed into house after crash with car in Andenne, Belgium, killing two and injuring 30

2 January — 1997 road death toll in Japan reached 9640, decrease of 302 over 1996, and second consecutive year below 10,000, according to National Police Agency

4 January — Overcrowded bus burst into flames after being hit by truck and slamming into oil tanker near Jhelum, Pakistan, killing more than 50 people



Multi-storey car park on artificial island at tunnel entrance of Tokyo Bay Aqualine

(Transportation News)

5 January — Overcrowded bus veered off winding road and crashed into slope in eastern Zimbabwe, killing 40 people and injuring 63

6 January — Two passenger trains collided in thick fog in Uttar Pradesh, India, killing 49 people and seriously injuring 16

10 January — 6.2 Richter earthquake struck Hebei, northern China, killing 47

19 January — Four track workers hit and killed by train at Aomori Station, Honshu, while removing snow from railway switches during snow storm

22 January — Groundbreaking ceremony for construction of Shibayama Railway Line as extension of Narita Line of Keisei Electric Railway, to be operated by Shibayama Railways, a local company jointly established by New Tokyo International Airport Authority, Chiba Prefecture, Narita City, Shibayama Town, three domestic airline companies, and Keisei Railway

30 January — Japan National Tourist Organization, announced that number of foreign visitors to Japan totalled 4,226,000 in 1997, up 389,000 (10.1%) over previous year. Number of Japanese going overseas also grew slightly by 111,000 (0.7%) to 16,806,000

30 January — US-Japan air navigation pact settled leaving ANA as first-tier company

2 February — DC-9 passenger aircraft of Cebu Pacific Air crashed on way from Manila to Cagayan de Oro on Mindanao Island killing all 104 on board

3 February — US Military airplane hit cables of aerial cable car in Dolomite Mountains of northeast Italy, killing 20 skiers on board

4 February — Passenger train of Kobe Electric Railway collided with 2-tonne truck stalled on level crossing in Kobe City, injuring 8 passengers

4 February — Major earthquake in north-east Afghanistan near Tajikistan killed at least 4000



Nagano Station Master Mr. M. Osawa greeting Emperor and Empress, accompanied by JR East President Mr M. Matsuda (right). Emperor delivered opening speech on 7 February to start 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Games (JR East)



7 February —Nagano Winter Olympics opened with 3500 athletes and support staff from 72 countries. During 16-day event, 655,000 passengers used Nagano-bound Shinkansen, increase of 203% over same section without shinkansen in previous year. Total of 249,000 passengers also used narrow-gauge Chuo Line (110% over previous year) to visit Olympic site

10 February — Site of former JNR headquarters in front of Tokyo Central Station auctioned by JNR Settlement Corporation to Mitsubishi Estate Co., Ltd. and Nihon Life Insurance Co. for ¥300.8 billion

12 February — Pile up involving 250 vehicles on fog-bound expressway between Padua and Robigo, northern Italy, left 4 dead and at least 50 injured

14 February — Tanker train burst into flames in Yaounde, Cameroon, killing more than 100

16 February — Airbus A300-600R of Taiwan's China Airlines failed on landing at Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek Airport, hitting nearby houses and killing 196 on board and 7 residents on ground

22 February — Violent tornadoes struck middle Florida killing at least 39

25 February — Japan Airlines and American Airlines announced code-sharing agreement to start on 15 routes in October and expanding to more than 100 next summer

Milestones

Yoshikazu Morokuma

Director of Transportation Museum, Tokyo and former President of Nippon Travel Agency Co., Ltd., died on 21 December at age 66. Graduated from Faculty of Law of Toyko University and joined JNR in 1957. After serving as Director of Ferry Services Department, and Bus Services Department, joined Nippon Travel Agency, becoming President in 1992

Shojiro Nanya

President of JR West, appointed Chairman of Kansai Federation of Corporate Executives, succeeding Shinichiro Torii, President of Suntory Ltd.