

5 December — JR West introduced popular game software character livery on *Hikari* trains of Sanyo Shinkansen

8 December — JR East, JR West, and JR Hokkaido revised train operations. JR East added one return trip to *Komachi* on Akita Shinkansen and changed most carriages on Tohoku Shinkansen to E2 series (max. speed 275 km/h), reducing time between Tokyo and Akita by 13 minutes to 4 hours and 8 minutes, and time between Tokyo and Morioka by 9 minutes to 2 hours and 34 minutes. JR Hokkaido increased number of trips by *Super Ozora* super express between Sapporo and Kushiro from 3 to 4 each day, and number of trips by *Super Hokuto* between Sapporo and Hakodate from 6 to 7 each day. JR West shifted *Hakutaka* operation on Hokuriku Line and Hokuetsu Kyuko Line from daytime to mornings and evenings

8 December — JR East announced start of steam-locomotive operations on 111-km Banetsu West Line between Niitsu and Aizu (Niigata and Fukushima prefectures) on 29 April 1999. Steam locomotive No. 180 preserved in elementary-school yard in Niigata City to be restored and used for operation

10 December — Keisei Electric Railway announced start of articulated bus service between Makuhari Business Centre (Chiba City) and Makuhari Hongo Station (Keisei Chiba Line, JR East Sobu Line) in response to increase in number of passengers. Although articulated buses used once before in 1985 to carry tourists at International Science Expo '85 in Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture, this is first time approval granted for general bus services

11 December — Airbus 310 of Thai Airways International crashed in south Thailand, killing 101 persons and injuring 45

16 December — JR East agreed to build new station at Honjo City on Joetsu Shinkansen to be opened in April 2004. New station to be located between Kumagaya and Takasaki, and Joetsu City to provide station land for free to JR East. Construction cost of ¥12.5 billion to be borne by local community

17 December — Teito Rapid Transit Authority (Eidan Subway) filed request with Ministry of Transport for approval to construct Subway No. 13 (8.9 km) between Ikebukuro and Shibuya in Tokyo. Construction costing ¥240 billion scheduled to begin in fiscal 1998 with operations to start in 2007. Line to run parallel and inside JR East Yamanote Line and to connect with Tobu Tojo Line and Seibu Ikebukuro Line

28 December — Domestic annual passengers using Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) topped 50 million for first time. In terms of number of domestic passengers, Haneda now ranks fourth after Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport, O'Hare International Airport (Chicago), and Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport

4 January — National Police Agency announced Japanese road deaths in 1998 dropped for third consecutive year by 429 people to 9211

4 January — Bus exploded in Linghai City, Liaoning Province in northeast China, killing 19 of 40 passengers

11 January — Ibara Railway opened as third-sector railway operating 23 trips each day on 41.1-km single track between Soja, Okayama Prefecture, and Kannabe, Hiroshima Prefecture

12 January — Korean-registered cargo ship (4160 tonnes) capsized 30-km north of Shirase Lighthouse on Goto Islands, Nagasaki Prefecture, drowning six out of 13 crew

13 January — Company employee commuting between JR East Takasaki Station and Shinjuku Station charged ¥15 million for fare cheating by using two commuter tickets for 4 years. Also ordered to pay fine of ¥20,000 by Tokyo Summary Court

13 January — US KC-135 air tanker carrying 18,000 liters of aviation fuel crashed in western Germany near Dutch border, killing all 4 crew members

19 January — German ICE high-speed train from Düsseldorf bound for Berlin derailed in northern Germany but no casualties

20 January — Continental Airlines' Boeing 747 with 327 passengers and 18 crew bound from Narita to Honolulu caught in air turbulence over Pacific Ocean, injuring 18 passengers and 4 crew

21 January — US F16 fighter from Misawa Air Base in Aomori Prefecture, crashed and exploded in forest Iwate Prefecture. Exploding munitions caused difficulties extinguishing fire and burned about 1000 m² of forest. Pilot ejected safely

26 January — Russian-built helicopter crashed after takeoff from resort in Maldives Islands killing five tourists

2 February — JR East announced ¥4-billion 5-year plan starting April 1999 to introduce safety measures such as new ATS system and door sensors to prevent problems and accidents

4 February — JR Central agreed to pay additional ¥20.7 billion to help meet debt obligations of former JNR and revised earnings projections for FY 1998 downwards

4 February — Chuo Ward of Tokyo announced closure of *Ginbura* Bus running 6.4 km between Ginza and Nihonbashi via Tokyo Station by end of fiscal 1999 due to lack of profitability. Bus took name from pre-war Japanese slang expression 'ginbura' meaning leisurely stroll through Ginza. Service started in March 1992 to promote business and tourism in area

11 February — Tokyo Metropolitan Government announced full-scale introduction from April 1999 of ninety 12" liquid crystal panels to display Japan's first animated commercials in subway tunnels

11 February — After running aground, Japanese-owned freighter, *New Carissa* (44,527 tonnes) blown up by US Coast Guard to prevent 1.52 million liters of fuel oil leaking into sea

11 February — Sixteen passengers and four crew saved from burning cruise ship in Tokyo Bay by five patrol boats

21 February — Five JR East track workers hit and killed by train in freight yard

24 February — JR East dropped plan to sue government over additional payments of debts left by JNR and agreed to pay designated share of ¥70 billion by end of FY 1998

24 February — Tupolev 154 belonging to China's Southwest Airlines crashed in Zhejiang Province, killing all 50 passengers and 11 crew as well as two farmers on ground

MILESTONES

Yasumoto Takagi

Advisor and former President of JAL, died 9 January, aged 86. After graduating from Faculty of Law at University of Tokyo in 1940, joined JAL in 1951 and became President in June 1980. However, stepped down as President in December 1985 to take responsibility for JAL crash on Mt Osutaka in Gunma Prefecture that killed 520 people

Minoru Toyoda

Assumed post of President of Japan Railway Construction Public Corporation on 12 January. After graduating from Faculty of Law at University of Tokyo in 1962, joined Ministry of Transport. Held senior posts in Maritime Safety Agency and Transport Policy Bureau. Became Permanent Vice-Minister of Transport in June 1995. After retirement in July 1997, took office of President of Maritime Industries Research Institute

Corrections to *JRTR* 19

The top photograph in Fig. 4 on p. 53 should have been credited to RTRI, and the lower photograph to JORSA.

The two photographs on p. 59 credited to H. Kaneko should have been credited to R. Hirota.