

2 December—Australian commuter train bound for Sydney from Lithgow ran into *Indian Pacific* long-distance train near Sydney, killing 12 people

3 December—Groundbreaking ceremony held for construction of parallel runway (2180 m) at Narita Airport near Tokyo with plans to start use in May 2002 in time for World Cup soccer tournament

4 December—Yamagata Shinkansen service extended 61.5 km to Shinjo, providing fastest direct link with Tokyo in 3 hours 5 minutes

5 December—Bangkok Mass Transit System started service with three-car trains every 2 to 3 minutes on 23.5 km of elevated track

6 December—Test car of Chiba Urban Monorail ran out of control in inspection shed at Inage, Chiba Prefecture in Japan, killing one worker and injuring another

7 December—Light passenger plane of Philippine domestic airline crashed on Luzon Island, killing all 17 passengers and crew

8 December—Airbus Industrie consortium announced investigation into funding for development of super-large Airbus A3XX, accommodating 550 to 800 passengers with aim of entering service from 2005

11 December—Passenger plane of Portuguese Sata Airline crashed on Sao Jorge Island in Azores, killing all 35 passengers and crew

15 December—JR East announced gift of 21 carriages to Philippine National Railways with JR staff to offer technical advice on inspection and maintenance

15 December—JR East started 1-month operation of special 'Eco Train' on Keihin Tohoku Line (Omiya–Ofuna) in Tokyo Metropolitan Area, exhibiting posters and compositions with 'Save the Earth' theme by elementary and junior high school students



President Matsuda of JR East (3rd from right) and Governor Takahashi of Yamagata Prefecture (2nd from right) cutting the tape for the first *Tsubasa* service leaving Shinjo Station on 4 December 1999 (JR East)

16 December—New Korea High Speed Rail KTX (Korea Train Express) to connect Seoul and Pusan (approximately 410 km) in less than 2 hours started test runs. First phase of project aims to complete construction of Seoul–Taegu high-speed line as well as electrification of existing Taegu–Pusan line by April 2004

19 December—Four-car train collided with 10-tonne truck on crossing of JR East Uetsu Line in Niigata Prefecture injuring train driver and five passengers

20 December—JR Central Towers opened at Nagoya Station. Constructed at cost of ¥233.5 billion and consists of 51-storey office building (including head office of JR Central) and 53-storey hotel with total area of 410,000 m², making it largest single building in Japan

21 December—Cuba Airlines DC10 passenger plane from Havana with 18 crew and 296 passengers overran runway and crashed into nearby residential area of Guatemala City Airport killing 26 and injuring at least 50

22 December—Korean Air Boeing 747 cargo plane crashed shortly after taking off from Stansted Airport near London

23 December—Ferry *MV Asia South Korea* (2840 tonnes) with 660 passengers and crew sank off Cebu Island in central Philippines, drowning 9 with 591 survivors

24 December—Indian Airlines A300 Airbus hijacked with 189 passengers and crew. Passengers released on 31 December in exchange for three Muslim extremists imprisoned in India

25 December—Cuba Airlines YAK42 passenger plane bound from Havana to Valencia, Venezuela, crashed approximately 160 km west of Caracas, killing all 22 passengers and crew

28 December—Taiwan High Speed Rail Corporation planning 340-km high-speed transit system connecting Taipei and Gaoxiang announced intention to use Japanese shinkansen technologies for cars and electrical systems, marking first export of shinkansen

2 January—Japanese National Police Agency announced 1999 road death toll of 9005, down 206 from 1998 and lowest number since 1982

4 January—Olso-bound express and local train crashed and overturned in southern Norway killing at least 7 people with 26 missing

5 January—Eurotunnel managing Channel Tunnel connecting Britain and France announced submission of report to both governments into excavation of second undersea tunnel with 9-year excavation to start in 2025 at earliest

6 January—Bomb exploded on express train standing at Old New Delhi Station, India, injuring at least 12 people

10 January—Tama City Monorail (16.0 km) traversing five cities in Tama area of Tokyo fully opened with commencement of services on last section between Tachikawa Kita and Tama Centre (10.6 km)

10 January—Crossair SAAB 340 passenger plane crashed near Kloten International Airport in Switzerland killing 10 people

12 January—Long-distance bus crashed in southern Brazil killing 42 people and injuring 44

19 January—Nagoya Subway Line No. 4 extension opened between Osone and Sunadabashi (1.4 km)

19 January—Keio Teito Electric Railway started installing 'eco-chair' manufactured by recycling used plastic passes and plastic food trays

27 January—Council for Transport Policy of Ministry of Transport concluded new rail expansion master plan for Tokyo Metropolitan Area as guideline for planning railway construction in Tokyo Metropolitan Area until 2015. Council designated 18 new lines (233 km) including new underground line between Tokyo and Mitaka, extension of JR Keiyo Line, and third-sector new-town commuter Hokusō-Kaihatsu Railway Line for joint operation by Toei (Tokyo Metropolitan Government subway), Keisei Electric Railway, and Keihin Electric Express Railway.

28 January—Japan National Tourist Organization announced new record of 4,439,000 foreigners visiting Japan in 1999 (8.1% increase over previous year)

30 January—Kenya Airways' A310 airbus with 179 passengers and crew crashed into Atlantic after taking off from Abidjan International Airport in Ivory Coast. Seven passengers rescued and six found dead with remaining passengers missing

31 January—Alaska Airlines' MD80 passenger plane with 70 passengers and crew bound for San Francisco from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, crashed into Pacific Ocean approximately 140 km from Los Angeles International Airport with no survivors

1 February—Revised Civil Aeronautics Law came into force with complete liberalization of Japanese domestic air fares and abolition of demand and supply restrictions previously limiting entry and withdrawal from air routes

6 February—International express train of 10 cars from Amsterdam bound for Basle, derailed in suburbs of Cologne in western Germany, killing at least 9 of some 300 passengers

10 February—All 178 passengers and crew of Boeing 727 passenger plane of Afghanistan airline hijacked after taking off from Kabul released at Stansted Airport in London when 22 hijackers surrendered

10 February—Bomb exploded in express train in Jam Kashmir, northern India, killing 5 people and injuring at least 7

16 February—First female shinkansen driver debuted on Tokaido Shinkansen

16 February—JR Railway Technical Research Institute (RTRI) exhibited guidance system for visually handicapped people that transfers information from IC chips buried in textured paving blocks on station platforms to walking sticks where processed into sound. RTRI aims to put system to practical use as soon as possible to promote barrier-free stations

22 February—First Iranian subway service started in Tehran between Imam Khomeini Station in city centre via 9 stations to new Tehran station in west of city

28 February—MD87 passenger plane of Japan Air System (JAS) carrying 99 passengers and crew from Kita Kyushu accidentally landed at new runway B (2500 m) under construction at Haneda Airport in Tokyo but no injuries or damage reported

29 February—Operation of old-fashioned Ginza Excursion Bus closed after Tokyo's Chuo Ward local government decided to withdraw bus due to declining passenger numbers

29 February—The Boeing Company and General Electric Company announced joint development of new B777-200X passenger plane capable of flying 10,100 miles (16,250 km) or distance between New York and Kuala Lumpur and exceeding 9765-mile range of Airbus A340-500

MILESTONES

Isamu Tanaka

Former Vice President of Tokyu Corporation and former President of Toa Domestic Airlines died of heart failure at age 95 on 12 February. He joined Meguro-Kamata Railway (now Tokyu Corporation) after graduating in 1926 from Tokyo Institute of Technology. He became President of Toa Domestic Airlines (now JAS) in 1973, and endeavoured to reconstruct its management. He also served simultaneously as a board member for Izukyu Corporation, Tokyu Land Corporation, Tokyu Department Store Co., Ltd., Tokyu Construction Co., Ltd., etc.

New Website for Railway Poetry Lovers

Railroad Earth, a quarterly booklet of poetry written by and for international rail workers, has been started in the UK by ex-railwayman and magazine editor Alan Mumford. For details, visit the web page at <http://communities.msn.co.uk/RailroadEarth>.