

1 February—Space Shuttle *Columbia* broke up on re-entry, killing all 7 crew

13 February—B-747-200 of Japan Asia Airways made emergency landing at Naha Airport after 50-cm hole found in fuselage during flight 400 km north of Naha

17 February—Congestion Tax (£5 or about ¥1000) levied on all traffic entering City of London

18 February—Arsonist set fire to subway train in Daegu, Korea, leaving at least 196 dead

25 February—JR Kyushu announced opening of southern section (Shin Yatsushiro–Nishi Kagoshima, 127.6 km) of Kyushu Shinkansen (Hakata–Nishi Kagoshima, 250 km) in March 2004

25 February—Kinki Nippon Railway Co., Ltd. (Kintetsu) announced plan to securitize and sell Abenobashi Terminal Building in Osaka for ¥65 billion with goal of reducing loans (¥1.7 trillion on consolidated basis)

1 March—Problems with Flight Data Processing (FDP) system at Tokyo Air Traffic Control Center of Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport's (MLIT) caused cancellations of 203 domestic flights and delays to 1443, inconveniencing 270,000 people

1 March—Train belonging Alishan Forest Railway (73.0 km) derailed off bridge at Alishan in central Taiwan, killing 17 people and injuring about 150

6 March—Air Algérie B-737 crashed on takeoff at Tamanrasset Airport, killing 103 passengers and crew with one survivor

6 March—MLIT approved transfer of Kinki Nippon Railway's Hokusei Line (20.4 km, 762-mm gauge) to Sangi Railway from 1 April

14 March—All Nippon Airways (ANA) Group announced total passengers carried on domestic and international flights in 49-year business history passed 1 billion

15 March—JR West announced start of electrification of Obama Line (84.3 km) and future through operations of Kyoto–Higashi Maizuru express

19 March—Coalition forces launched invasion of Iraq

19 March—Tokyo's Teito Rapid Transit Authority (TRTA) subway opened 6-km extension to Hanzomon Line between Suitengu-mae and Oshiage, allowing through operation on Tobu Railway's Isezaki and Nikko lines and creating 100-km link from northern Kanto through central Tokyo

19 March—JR Central announced opening on 1 October 2003 of Shinagawa Station (shinkansen) under construction between Tokyo and Shin Yokohama stations on Tokaido Shinkansen with service stops mainly by fastest *Nozomi* trains

19 March—JR East started 9 days of high-speed (360 km/h) tests between Urasa and Niigata on Joetsu Shinkansen using latest Series E-1000 trains

19 March—ANA announced plans to establish airline business think-tank (provisionally named All Nippon Airways Institute) with spin off from main group in April 2004

20 March—JR Kyushu announced *Tsubame* name for shinkansen trains running between Shin Yatsushiro and Kagoshima Chuo

21 March—Crashed computer controlling ANA's domestic routes caused cancellation of 150 flights and delays to about 300, affecting about 102,000 people travelling through Tokyo International Airport (Haneda)

21 March—Hawaiian Airlines filed for protection under US Federal Bankruptcy Code, citing falling demand and rocketing fuel prices due to war in Iraq as well as increases in aviation insurance

22 March—International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced possible losses of US\$10 billion by world's airlines as result of war in Iraq

25 March—JR Kyushu announced opening of redbrick Kyushu Railway Museum in Kita Kyushu City with exhibits including steam and electric locomotives

26 March—MLIT announced tests on Yosan Line between Tadotsu and Sakaide of free-gauge train for operations on shinkansen and other lines

27 March—Third-sector 3.1-km Kami-iida Link Line opened between Ajima and Heian-dori, linking Nagoya Railroad's Komaki Line with Meijo subway in central Nagoya and allowing direct connections to Komaki and elsewhere

28 March—Hijacker of Turkish Airlines A-310 Airbus carrying 203 passengers and crew overpowered when plane stopped to refuel in Athens

31 March—Cuban Airlines hijacker with hand grenade arrested when plane landed at Key West International Airport in Florida, USA

1 April—Air Canada, Canada's largest air carrier, filed for corporate reorganization in Toronto district court. *De-facto* bankruptcy attributed to public's reluctance to travel by air following terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and rising fuel prices due to Iraq War

3 April—Japanese government recommended postponing non-essential travel to China's Guandong province and Hong Kong due to spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

3 April—Central Linear Shinkansen Basic Scheme Study Committee formed by MLIT, JR Central, and others, announced initial estimates (including vehicles) for construction of 500-km line between Tokyo and Osaka as anywhere between ¥8.3 trillion and ¥9.9 trillion

6 April—JR East recorded record service speed of 362 km/h on high-speed test run of Joetsu Shinkansen (Series E2-1000) between Urasa and Niigata

8 April—JR East announced development of New Energy (NE) Train, world's first hybrid diesel locomotive featuring similar construction to low-pollution hybrid automobiles and regenerative electrical brakes

10 April—British Airways and Air France announced retirement of *Concorde* ultrasonic passenger jet at end of October 2003 due to prohibitive maintenance costs and declining passenger levels following crash outside Paris in 2001

10 April—Shiodome City Center ultra-high-rise multi-purpose development and The Old Shimbashi Station opened on site of Japanese National Railways (JNR) Shiodome Yard

11 April—Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology cancelled planned supersonic flight testing for joint international next-generation supersonic passenger plane at Japanese National Aerospace Laboratory after determining demand insufficient to justify huge investment

15 April—Keihan Electric Railway announced full adoption of rail miles programme by end of fiscal 2003, awarding points for travel miles

18 April—Culture Council of Agency for Cultural Affairs sent finding to Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology specifying red-brick Tokyo Station and seven other buildings as important cultural assets. Tokyo Station partially destroyed in WWII and now being restored by JR East to former condition at completion in 1914

18 April—Narita Airport Authority, Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Sagawa Express, and 12 other companies initiate joint research on luggage-free overseas trips with travellers' luggage picked up from home by express service, automatically checked-in and delivered to arrival airport for collection

21 April—US-based Southwest Airlines announced 14.3% earnings increase for January–March 2003 quarter, bucking worldwide industry trend

30 April—Hisatsu Orange Railway applied to Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport for permit to operate Kagoshima main line between Yatsushiro and Sendai after opening of Kagoshima Shinkansen in March 2004

MILESTONES

Mr Takeshi Kakiuchi

JR West Vice President to become President on 1 April 2003. Joined JNR in 1969 after graduating in law from University of Tokyo. Joined JR West in 1987 after JNR privatization, becoming board member in 1993, managing director in 1998, and Vice President in June 2001. President Shojiro Nan'ya to become Chairman, taking over from Masataka Ide who becomes board advisor

Mr Shunzo Miyawaki

Respected railway and travel writer died on 26 February 2003 aged 76. After graduating in Western history from University of Tokyo, joined Chuo Koronsha, becoming editor of *Chuo Koron*. After retiring in 1978, he travelled every JNR line, publishing travel diary as *Jikokuhyo Ni Man Kiro* (200,000 Timetable Kilometers). Won Kikuchi Hiroshi Award in 1999 for establishing railway travelogue genre

Mr Hiroshi Komori

Vice President of Japan Railway Construction Public Corporation (JRCC) appointed President on 23 March. Joined JNR in 1964 after graduating in engineering from Hokkaido University. Entered JRCC in 1985, becoming head of Shinkansen Division and Director

Mr Toshiyuki Matsuda

Executive Director of Odakyu Electric Railway appointed President from June. Joined Odakyu Electric Railway, after graduating in 1965 in economics from Hosei University, becoming Managing Director in 1997 and Executive Director in 2001. Current President Makoto Kitanaka to become Board Advisor and current Vice President Kunio Toshimitsu to become Board Chairman and Group CEO

Mr Kazuo Sumi

Managing Director of Hankyu Electric Railway named President from late June 2003. Joined Hankyu Electric Railway in 1973 after graduating in political science and economics from Waseda University. Became Head of Railway Planning at head office in 1999, Director in 2000 and Managing Director in 2002. Current President Taro Ohashi to become CEO and current CEO Kohei Kobayashi to become Board Advisor

Mr Tsuguo Nagao

Executive Director of JR West named President from late June 2003. Joined former JNR in 1966 after graduating in law from Kyushu University. Became JR West Director in 1993 and Managing Director in June 2001. Current President Hiroshi Akashi to become CEO and current CEO Hirohiko Yamashita to become Board Advisor

Mr Kan Kato

Vice President of Keio Electric Railway named President from late June 2003. Joined company in 1962 after graduating in commerce from Keio University. After holding positions as company Director and Managing Director became Vice President of Keio Plaza Hotel in 1997 and Vice President of Keio Electric Railway in 1998. Current President Masayuki Saegusa to become CEO and current CEO Koichi Nishiyama to become Board Advisor