

1 March—Nagoya Railroad (Meitetsu) submitted closure notice and application to shut (on 31 March 2005) 12.7-km Ibi Line (Chusetsu–Kuroko), 10.9-km Shinai and Tagami lines, and 13-km Minomachi Line (Hinobashi–Sekima) in Gifu Prefecture

6 March—*Saemaeul* express train (16 cars) bound for Pusan from Seoul derailed at Sechun Station in Taejeon

6 March—Water taxi capsized in Baltimore, Maryland, drowning two people and leaving three missing

11 March—Three terrorist bombs exploded almost simultaneously on commuter trains in Madrid, Spain, killing about 200 people and injuring over 1700

16 March—Advanced Airport Systems Technology Research Consortium, comprising Narita Airport Authority (NAA, now Narita International Airport Corp.) and various airlines started trial of Hands-free Travel Service (full scale from 2006), allowing luggage with embedded IC chip to be picked up at home and permitting luggage-free travel to international destination airport

16 March—All Nippon Airways (ANA) and Suruga Bank announced world's first integration of ATM cards, mileage cards, and electronic money with start of new housing loan service that earns mileage points

22 March—JR East started new service enabling use of *SUICA* smart-card rail pass for shopping and other payments at some 200 convenience stores and shops in stations in Kanto region and Sendai City

23 March—Noto Railway Company announced closure of 61-km Noto Line (Anamizu–Takoijima) on 31 March 2005, following March 2001 closure of Anamizu–Wajima section of 20.4-km Nanao Line and leaving only 33.1-km Nanao–Anamizu section of Nanao Line in operation

24 March—Tokyo Metro held first general meeting in advance of privatization of Teito Rapid Transit Authority (TRTA) on 1 April

24 March—Completion ceremony held for Central Japan International Airport with single 3500-m runway in Ise Bay off coast of Tokoname City in Aichi Prefecture with opening by February 2005

24 March—Third-sector company to take over JR West 8-km Toyama-ko Line (Toyama–Iwasehama) from FY2006 with start of tram operations announced new name of Toyama Light Rail

27 March—NASA set new world jet speed record with speed of Mach 7 (about 8000 km/h) with unmanned test flight of X43A experimental craft powered by ramjet

30 March—Opening ceremony held for KTX high-speed railway using French TGV technology before start of 300-km/h operations on Kyongbu (Seoul–Pusan) and Honam (Seoul–Mokpo) lines

31 March—Meitetsu closed 16.4-km Hekinan–Kira Yoshida section and 8.6-km Sanage–Nishi Nakagane section of Mikawa Line in Aichi Prefecture

1 April—NAA managing and operating New Tokyo International Airport (Narita) and TRTA privatized respectively as Narita International Airport Corporation and Tokyo Metro

1 April—German ICE train collided with tractor on tracks in Baden-Württemberg, injuring tractor and train drivers and one passenger

2 April—US government announced biometric identifications such as fingerprints and photographs required of all tourists and short-stay visitors from 27 visa-exempt countries

7 April—US-based Continental Airlines announced complete switch to electronic tickets by year-end in order to reduce costs

7 April—Eurotunnel board unseated by revolt of individual shareholders to lose control of company managing Channel Tunnel

7 April—WHO and World Bank reported world total of 1.183 million traffic deaths (3342 per day) in 2002

8 April—Tokyo Air Traffic Control System of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) offline for 2.5 hours throwing air schedules into turmoil

12 April—Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO) announced 19.5% year-on-year drop (to 3.22 million) in 2003 departures from Japan due to effects of concerns about SARS, terrorism, and poor Japanese economy; 5.21 million (-0.5%) foreigners visited Japan in same period

13 April—JR East announced intended introduction of mobile phone with built-in *SUICA* prepaid smart-card train pass in late FY2005

14 April—MLIT announced Plan for Promotion of Removal of Utility Poles, calling for removal of utility poles and power lines from about 3000 km of main roads in urban areas between FY2004 and FY2005 with aim of improving appearance of urban and tourist locations to make Japan more popular tourist destination

18 April—Chinese Railway Ministry revised train schedules with introduction of non-stop, high-speed (160 km/h) express between Beijing and Shanghai, reducing travel time between two cities by about 2 hours

19 April—Meitetsu and Central Japan International Airport Line Railway Co., Ltd. announced provisional opening of railway connecting Central Japan International Airport and Nagoya Station in about 30 minutes from mid-October 2004; access restricted to people involved with airport

19 April—Trains collided in tunnel at New York's Pennsylvania Station, injuring at least 130

27 April—JR East and JR West announced agreement permitting 8.83 million users of JR East's *SUICA* smart-card train pass and 1.2 million users of JR West's *ICOCA* smart-card train pass to use passes on each other's lines from August 2004

27 April—Power cut stopped Tokaido Shinkansen between Mishima and Shizuoka in Fuji City, Shizuoka Prefecture for about 2.5 hours

4 May—Air France and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines announced merger as Air France–KLM, becoming Europe's largest airline

9 May—Ground-breaking ceremony in Istanbul to mark start of construction of 11.3-km undersea subway tunnel crossing Bosphorus Strait, linking European and Asian sides of Istanbul with planned opening in 2009

11 May—Four-day operation to preserve JR West's Nara Station as cultural asset by relocating entire station on rails as part of project to elevate line

14 May—Passenger plane crashed in Amazon River basin in western Manaus, Brazil, killing all 33 people on board

16 May—Turin-bound train derailed in northern Italy, killing one passenger and injuring 37

18 May—Azerbaijan cargo plane crashed near Urumqi Airport in western China, killing all seven crew

23 May—Glass roof of Satellite E at Terminal 2 of Charles De Gaulle Airport collapsed, killing four people and seriously injuring three

25 May—First 12-car train set for Taiwan Shinkansen (345 km, Taipei–Gaoxiong), unloaded at Gaoxiong Port in Taiwan after construction in Japan by Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd., Hitachi Ltd., and Nippon Sharyo, Ltd. with trials starting in September 2004 and opening scheduled for October 2005

28 May—JR Central announced next-generation Series N700 for Tokaido and San'yo shinkansen with trials to be completed in March 2005 and operation debut in spring 2007

31 May—MLIT announced joint use of Terminal 2 at Tokyo International Airport (Haneda) from 1 December 2004 with Tokyo Monorail to construct Haneda Airport Terminal 2 Station

31 May—Fire on Seattle Center Monorail in Washington injured nine people due to smoke inhalation

MILESTONES

Mr Isao Matsuhashi

Former Chairman of JTB became Chairman of newly established Narita International Airport Corporation on 23 March. After graduating in commerce from Waseda University in 1956, joined Japan Travel Bureau (now JTB) where served as President and Chairman, before becoming Advisor to JTB board in June 2002

Mr Masahiko Kurono

Former President of NAA (from 2002) became President of Narita International Airport Corporation on 23 March. After graduating in law from University of Tokyo in 1964, joined Ministry of Transport (MOT and now MLIT) where served as Deputy Vice Minister and Director General of Civil Aviation Bureau and Administrative Vice Minister

Mr Shoichiro Hamanaka

Former Chairman of Nippon Express became Chairman of Tokyo Metro on 24 March. After graduating in law from University of Tokyo in 1954, joined Nippon Express where served as President and Chairman before becoming Advisor in June 2003

Mr Hisashi Umezaki

Former President of TRTA became President of Tokyo Metro on 24 March. After graduating in law from Kyoto University in 1966, joined MOT where served as Director General of Railway Bureau before becoming Administrative Vice Minister in 1999, and Vice President of TRTA in August 2002

Mr Terumasa Koyanagi

Former Executive Director of Seibu Railway named President on 8 April. After graduating in law from University of Tokyo in 1964, joined Ministry of Transport (now MLIT). Joined Seibu Railway in 1993 and assumed current post in June 2003. Current President Hiroyuki Toda stepped down to become Board Director

Mr Kyoji Nishikawa

Vice President of Hanshin Electric Railway named President on 23 April. After graduating in engineering from Graduate School of Kyoto University, joined former Japanese National Railways (JNR) in 1965. Joined Hanshin in 1986, where served as Director, Managing Director and Executive Director before assuming current post in June 2003. Current President Masatoshi Tezuka to become Chairman

Mr Tsutomu Hanada

Representative Director of Keisei Electric Railway named on 28 April. After graduating in commerce from Keio University, joined Keisei in 1966, serving as Director and Managing Director before assuming current post in June 2002. Current President Hiroshi Otsuka to become Chairman

Mr Kiyohiro Matsuda

Senior Managing Director of JR Shikoku named President of JR Shikoku from 25 June. After graduating in engineering from University of Tokyo, joined former JNR in 1969 and subsequently holding posts as Managing Director and General Manager of Railway Operations in JR Shikoku before assuming current post. Current President Mr Toshiyuki Umehara to become Board Chairman

Mr Masayuki Matsumoto

Vice President of JR Central named President from 23 June. After graduating in law from Nagoya University, joined JNR in 1967 and subsequently holding posts as JR Central Director, Managing and Senior Managing Director, and Vice President. Current President Mr Takayuki Kasai to become Board Chairman with current Board Chairman Mr Hiroshi Suda becoming Board Advisor