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Feature

■ Rolling Stock and Manufacturers (part 1)

Global Market of Rolling Stock Manufacturing: Present Situation
and Future Potential

The Rolling Stock Manufacturing Industry in Japan

Initiative to Standardize Tokyo Commuter EMUs

JR East's Niitsu Rolling Stock Manufacturing Factory

— Building Tokyo Commuter Trains for 10 Years

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Workers at JR East Niitsu Rolling
Stock Manufacturing Factory,
installing in-carriage equipment such
as information display, etc., in Series
E231 (Photo: JR East)

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Editorial

Future of rolling stock business

A recent topic of business interest has been the spate of M&As, both within Japan's domestic pharmaceutical industry and also between foreign and Japanese pharmaceutical companies. The old 'Toyama' (Japanese region famed for herbal cures) image of hawking medicine chests door-to-door has suddenly been replaced by an international business style. Two reasons are the increasing use of generic medicines with different names but the same formulation and effectiveness plus the participation of drug manufacturers in the sales market. Another reason is that the fate of drug companies is determined by their ability to develop revolutionary new medicines that will grab a share of the expanding worldwide market with a shortening drug life cycle. Just a single laboratory mouse used for genetic research costs more than ¥20 million. The ability to discover new drugs depends on the capacity to bear such massive R&D costs and while some Japanese pharmaceutical companies spend about ¥100 billion annually, other foreign companies invest ¥600 billion in such research. Looking at the numbers, it is clear that Japanese pharmaceutical companies are not in same league. Until recently, over-prescribing was very common in the Japanese market but now high-cost drugs are in demand worldwide due people's urge to cling to life as well as to disappearing barriers following trade liberalization. The rolling stock business world is completely unlike the pharmaceutical world—there is almost no general manufacturing and almost all rolling stock is built to order. Moreover, rolling stock delivery costs are huge. If asked whether internationalization like that seen in the pharmaceutical and Japanese rolling stock worlds is dissimilar, I would have to say there are some similarities. Our feature articles describe future rolling stock developments both in Japan and worldwide from these perspectives.

K. AOKI

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