

JRTR

2007

No. **48**

August

Feature: High-Speed Railways in Asia

- The History and Future of High-Speed Railways in Japan
- High-Speed Railways in China
- Launch of Korean High-Speed Railway and Efforts to Innovate Future Korean Railway
- Comparative Culture Study—High-Speed Railway Systems in Japan and South Korea
- Taiwan High Speed Rail
- Staff Training at Taiwan High Speed Rail Corporation (THSRC)



Editorial

Asia's High-Speed Era

The Japanese stock market has a well-known saying—'the higher the mountain, the greater the descent', which is often used to describe stock price readjustments in an overheated market. The same idea can be applied to high-speed railways as—'the faster the shinkansen, the worse the accident' or 'the more you blow your own horn, the more criticism you get'.

Some 30 years ago, a kingdom in the Middle East was looking at plans for a high-speed railway, and engineers from Japanese National Railways (JNR) were sent to help promote the idea. However, the plans fell through in the end and no high-speed railway has materialized in that country so far. The king at that time was trying to boost national prestige by proposing the plans, but high-speed railways are not for maintaining national dignity. Instead they need both passenger demand and technology to sustain long-term profitability and safe operation. Japanese shinkansen were not built for national prestige and, in fact, the Japanese government opposed building the first shinkansen. However, JNR understood the transportation demand accurately, analyzed its own technical capabilities, and built its unique high-speed railway. After the JNR 1987 division and privatization, the passenger operators in the JR group have focused their energies on safety and disaster countermeasures, as well as environment conservation.

Considering recent transportation systems in Asia, I can say that Asian railway operators are now embarking on the high-speed era. However, I really hope these high-speed railways will not be manipulated by policymakers and that each will be well adapted to its home country to assure future steady development.

K. Aoki

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JAPAN RAILWAY & TRANSPORT REVIEW

August 2007 No.48

Published by **East Japan Railway Culture Foundation** (EJRCF)

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Translation, Design & Production:

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JRTR is printed in Japan.



Montage of new THSRC high-speed train, JR Central Series N700, China Railway high-speed CRH2, and KORAIL KTX high-speed train (clockwise)

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