

T O P I C S

January

2 January—Japan's National Police Agency announced 6352 road fatalities in 2006 (down 7.6% over previous year, 6th year of continuous decrease)

5 January—About 10 m of heavy communications cables (20-mm Cu core) buried alongside Heisei Chikuho Railway in Fukuoka Prefecture stolen in night causing stoppage of three trains on tracks and delays to 11 other services

5 January—Taiwan High Speed Rail opened between Taipei and Kaohsiung (345 km) with 19 daily operations using 12-car train sets of Series 700T shinkansen designed by JR Central

7 January—Washington Metro (USA) subway train derailed near Mt. Vernon Square Station injuring 16 out of 150 passengers

14 January—Head-on collision between trains in central Thailand killed 3 railway staff and injured more than 100 passengers

15 January—JR Hokkaido announced start of test runs of dual mode vehicle (DMV) from 14 April between Hamakoshimizu and Mokoto on Senmo main line (DMVs operate as bus on road and as railcar on track)

15 January—China Ministry of Railways announced plans to build 2099 km of new tracks and double-track 2347 km of existing lines starting from 2007

16 January—Heavy freight train with 4 engines and 80 wagons derailed in Kentucky near Louisville, causing fire resulting in closure of nearby road and evacuation local residents

28 January—China Railway started operation of CRH2 16-car 'Bullet Train' (based on JR East *Hayate* E2 design) between Shanghai and Hangzhou, Nanjing with planned operations between Beijing and Shanghai and Guangzhou and Shenzhen from February

(The CRH1 series is based on a design by Bombardier of Canada, the CRH3 series on a design by Siemens of Germany, and the CH5 series on a design by ALSTOM of France.)

February

1 February—China Railway debuted CRH1 8-car high-speed train set built under licence from Bombardier of Canada between Guangzhou and Shenzhen

2 February—Start of Taiwan Shinkansen services over 7-km Taipei to Banciao section from 6 February announced, completing full service over 345-km shinkansen line from Taipei to Kaohsiung

9 February—Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China and Ministry of Finance People's Republic of China announced plans to develop high-speed linear motor car running at 500 km/h by 2010

16 February—Sheba Express Railway tourist train crossing Andes in Ecuador caught telephone wires and pulled down utility pole, killing two Japanese tourists sitting in roof seats and injuring one other person

23 February—Virgin Trains London-to-Glasgow Pendolino tilting express train running at 130 km/h derailed and overturned by faulty points near Grayrigg, Cumbria, killing one passenger and injuring 22 others

28 February—11-car train derailed by sandstorm in Xinjiang autonomous region of China, killing four people and injuring 34 others

March

1 March—Mayor of Miki City, principal stakeholder in third-sector Miki Railway (6.6 km between Miki and Yakujin) announced closure plan due to mounting losses with plans to run substitute bus service from 2007 at earliest

1 March—Single railcar belonging to JR Hokkaido collided with truck on level crossing in Bihoro Town injuring train driver and 50 of 70 train passengers

2 March—345-km Taiwan Shinkansen fully opened between Taipei and Takao

2 March—Construction of 28.1-km monorail linking Dongzhimen subway station and Beijing Capital International Airport started with opening expected on 1 July 2008 as China's first fully automated transport system

8 March—Tibetan Autonomous Region of China announced start of construction in mid-2007 of 254-km branch line between Lhasa and Shigatse of Qingzang Railway (1956 km between Xining and Lhasa) with completion expected in 2010

17 March—Extension to 6.6-km Saito branch line from 21.2-km main line of Osaka Monorail (straddle beam monorail) opened between Handai Byoin Mae and Saito Nishi (4.2 km) stations

18 March—Work started on 7.1-km Sendai Airport Transit (Natori to Sendai Airport) offering airport access in 17 minutes (express train) by changing from JR Central's Tohoku main line at Natori Station

18 March—23 private railways and 31 bus companies in Tokyo Metropolitan Area (TMA) started joint use of PASMO IC card service along with acceptance of JR East's Suica card, permitting through travel at 1638 railway stations in TMA using one card; both PASMO and Suica cards have electronic money functions

18 March—JR West's 79.1-km Tsuyama Line (Tsuyama to Okayama) resumed services 4 months after derailment accident caused temporary suspension of operations

25 March—Tokyo Monorail (17.8 km from Haneda Airport No. 2 Terminal to Hamamatsucho Station) stopped for about 5 hours, trapping 130 passengers for 2 hours when 6-car set running on down line touched arm of crane working under elevated section, damaging lead car and preventing it entering station

26 March—JR Freight started rail-sea-rail service with Korea Railroad Corporation, linking Japan's domestic freight container services to Korea's railway system via rail ferry between Hakata and Busan

26 March—Kintetsu Corporation applied to Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport to abandon 16.6-km Iga Line (Iga ueno to Igakanbe) as class-1 railway business and establish Iga Railway as class-2 railway business. Targeting move to new business model from autumn 2007, Kintetsu aims to become third-sector railway business owning railway infrastructure

30 March—Shimabara Railway applied to Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport to abandon southern half (35.3 km) of 78.5-km Shimabara Line in Nagasaki Prefecture between Shimabaraigaiko and Kazusa from 31 March 2008, substituting with bus service

31 March—Kurihara Den'en Railway closed 25.7-km Kurihara Den'en Line in Miyagi Prefecture between Ishikoshi and Hosokura Mine Park Mae, substituting bus service from April

31 March—Kashima Railway closed Hokota Line (27.2 km from Ishioka to Hokota, substituting bus service from April

31 March—Nishi-Nippon Railroad closed 9.9-km section between Nishitetsu Shingu and Tsuyazaki (running parallel to national road and JR Kagoshima main line) of 20.8-km Miyajidake Line in Fukuoka Prefecture, substituting bus service

April

1 April—Train collided with large truck on line in Yuncheng City, China, killing 6 people

3 April—French TGV V150 recorded world top speed for train running on rails of 574.4 km/h, breaking previous record of 513.3 km/h set in 1990

5 April—Train arriving at station northeast of Paris, ran into buffers after brake failure, slightly injuring 71 passengers

6 April—Work started on 60-km straddle-type No. 3 monorail line in Chongqing City, China, with completion due in 2010

14 April—JR Hokkaido tested dual-mode vehicle (DMV) with 22-km return journey over Hamakoshimizu to Makoto section of Senmo Line on outward leg and running on national highway on return leg

18 April—China Railway implemented major timetable revision to facilitate high-speed operations, raising present maximum speed of 160 to 200 km/h on 6000 km of tracks and to 250 km/h on some other sections

26 April—JR Central President Masayuki Matsumoto announced plan to start commercial linear motor Maglev services in 2025 between Tokyo and Osaka although route and infrastructure plans still undecided

26 April—Third-sector Miki Railway taken over from JNR (6.6 km between Miki and Yakujin in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan) announced plans to abandon railway operations due to red budget with submission of closure application to Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport in June

MILESTONES

Mr Tetsuya Kobayashi

Promoted from post of Managing Director to President of Kintetsu Corporation from June 2007. Joined Kintetsu after graduating from Faculty of Politics and Economics at Waseda University in 1968, holding posts of Director in 2001, and Executive Director from 2003 to 2005. Current President Masanori Yamaguchi becomes Chairman

Mr Kazumasa Mawatari

Former JNR Vice-President and Japan Telecom President and Chairman died of brain haemorrhage on 18 April



JR Hokkaido entered trial revenue operation of its dual-mode vehicle (DMV) on 14 April. The DMV can run on both roads and rail tracks and can be switched in 10 – 15 seconds. Trials will continue until the end of September 2007.

(JR Hokkaido)