

August–December 2012

August

- 1**—ANA low-cost carrier (LCC) subsidiary AirAsia Japan started services between New Tokyo International Airport (Narita) and Sapporo/Fukuoka as third domestic LCC since March following Peach Aviation (ANA) and JetStar Japan (JAL)
- 5**—Chinese government announced planned year-end opening of dedicated 2100-km high-speed passenger railway linking Beijing with Shenzhen in about 9 hours via Shijiazhuang, Wuhan and Guangzhou
- 6**—Japanese Ministry of Justice started operation of automated immigration inspection gates at Narita and Haneda Airports using photo ID IC passports with prototyping test using three types of facial recognition technology to last until September
- 7**—Mitsubishi Electric announced prototyping test from mid-August for 2 months at Nishifunabashi substation to use power from train regenerative braking as station supplementary power to supply lighting and air conditioning with aim of commercial launch from April 2013
- 10**—Kinki Japan Tourist (KTB) announced merger with Club Tourism (CT) from January 2013 with KTB becoming holding company and CT becoming subsidiary. CT draws main customer base from newspaper advertising and split from KTB in 2004. Kazuyoshi Togawa, Vice President of Kinki Nihon Railway, to become President of holding company
- 11**—Bus plunged 60 m off mountain road in north India, killing at least 41 people and injuring 17 others
- 15**—UK Depart for Transport (DfT) announced rail and bus operator First Group as successful bidder for west coast mainline operator franchise between London and Glasgow, beating out current operator Virgin Trains (decision reversed and put out to new tendering after legal challenge by Virgin Trains uncovered DfT mistakes—see October Topics)
- 16**—JR Kyushu clarified 1-year plan to restore operations on 34.6-km section of Hohi Line between Miyachi and Bungo Takeda in northern Kyushu washed away by typhoon flooding
- 16**—Coastal freighter sank off Manshan City, Anhui Province, China, with 12 of 21 crew missing
- 18**—Work started on 21-km section between Nagasaki and Isahaya on Nagasaki route of Kyushu Shinkansen; section between Takeo Onsen and Isahaya now under construction with completion expected in 2021 and narrow-gauge section between Shin Tosu and Takeo Onsen to use free-gauge trains
- 19**—Groundbreaking ceremony held for start of work on 114.4-km section of Hokuriku Shinkansen between Kanazawa and Tsuruga with full opening expected in 2025 and section now under construction between Nagano and Kanazawa to open in 2014. Three routes (Obama, Kosei, Maibara) west of Tsuruga to Osaka still under investigation
- 19**—Aircraft crashed in mountainous region of south Sudan killing all 32 crew and passengers celebrating end of Muslim Feast of Ramadan
- 20**—JR East started substitute bus/rail service (BRT) to replace services on 55.3-km section of Kesenuma Line between Yanaizu and Kesenuma, extending dedicated line in sections to finally replace 60% of services
- 20**—21 wagons of 80-wagon freight train derailed near Baltimore, Maryland, USA, killing 2 people
- 22**—Small plane on safari tour crashed in Masai Mara National Park, Kenya, killing 2 of 11 passengers and 2 pilots
- 24**—About 130-m section of 15.2-km road bridge opened in November last year near Harbin, north China, collapsed while 4 trucks crossing it, killing 3 people and injuring 5 others
- 25**—Groundbreaking ceremony held for Shin-Hakodate to Sapporo section (211 km) of Hokkaido Shinkansen with completion expected in 2035, starting construction work on all 3 government-approved new shinkansen
- 26**—Night bus collided with tanker truck carrying methanol on highway near Yan'an City, Shanxi Province, China, to catch fire and kill 36 people on bus; three bus passengers and two tanker truck drivers escaped unharmed
- 27**—Bus and truck in head-on collision in Gansu Province, China, killed 5 people and injured 9 others
- 28**—Work started on Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam) railway line (19.7 km) including part of first metro line linking city centre with northeast suburbs and costing ¥230 billion with most financed by Japanese overseas aid; Sumitomo Trading and local government general contractor received orders for more than half of elevated viaduct and carriage yards
- 29**—Kawasaki Heavy Industries announced successful bid for 132 metro cars (22 train sets) from Qingdao Sifang Locomotive & Rolling Stock Co., Ltd. and Singapore Land Transport Authority (LTA) worth total of ¥17.7 billion; Kawasaki Heavy Industries already delivered 654 carriages to LTA and now manufacturing 78 cars

31—Tokyu Electric Railway, JR East, and Tokyo Metro announced redevelopment plan for Shibuya Station with construction of three station buildings (east, west and central) by 2027, with 262,000 m² of floor space including offices and shops

September

- 3**—JR Hokkaido announced closure to trackside governments of 42.1-km Esashi Line between Kikonai and Esashi at start of 2013; narrow-gauge Esashi Line to be split off for separate management between Gouryokaku and Kikonai (37.8 km) with opening of Hakodate section of Hokkaido Shinkansen
- 4**—JR East announced joint development with JR West of new E7 rolling stock (12 train sets) for better comfort and safety based on E2, targeted at opening of Kanazawa Hokuriku Shinkansen (late 2014)
- 6**—Small fishing boat carrying Palestinian and Syrian refugees sank in Aegean Sea off western Turkey, drowning at least 61 people with 41 others rescued
- 7**—Berlin airport operator announced delay in opening of new Brandenburg International Airport now under construction until 27 October 2012 following two previous delays from first expected opening in November 2011; Brandenburg extends current Schönefeld Airport on south side
- 12**—Russian-built AN29 (twin propeller) crashed in Kamchatka, Siberia, killing 8 passengers and 2 pilots and severely injuring 4 others
- 19**—JAL rejoined first section of Tokyo Stock Exchange following business restructuring after 2010 collapse; new business sold all stock holdings to recover ¥350 billion investment, using slightly less than ¥200 billion from stock sale profits (after tax) for reconstruction funds
- 24**—JR West announced technical cooperation agreement including staff exchanges, etc., with Spanish National Railways (RENFE) and railway infrastructure company (ADIF) to upgrade safety and technology levels; Spanish National Railways operating free-gauge trains (FGT) since 1969 and JR West investigating introduction at Osaka start of Hokuriku Shinkansen
- 24**—Fishing vessel (119 tonnes) collided with large freighter (25,057 tonnes) in Pacific Ocean 900 km off Miyagi Prefecture, to sink with loss of 13 out of 22 crew

26—JR Central announced introduction of new N700A rolling stock for Tokaido Shinkansen from 8 February 2013 based on improvements to running gear of N700 series; 6 train sets to be introduced by March 2013 followed by another 7 before year end

26—New 179.5-km line opened between Tonghua, Jilin Province and Liaoning in northeast China, completing 1380-km line between Dalian and Mudangjiang crossing China—North Korea/China—Russia border

28—536-km section of railway linking Zhengzhou and Wuhan in just under 2 hours opened as part of Beijing—Guangzhou high-speed railway

28—Small Dornier 228 propeller plane carrying mountaineers crashed in Nepal, killing all 19 people onboard

MILESTONES

Akihiko Tamura appointed Director-General of Civil Aviation Bureau on 11 September. Joined previous Ministry of Transport in 1980 after graduating from Faculty of Law of Tokyo University and appointed Deputy Director-General of Railway Agency in August 2011 after holding other senior posts, including Assistant Vice-Minister

Takashi Kitamura appointed Director-General of Maritime Safety Agency on 11 September. Joined previous Ministry of Transport in 1976 after graduating from Faculty of Law of Kyoto University and held various senior posts, such as Director-General of Railway Agency, Director-General of Policy Bureau, etc., before appointment as Vice-Minister for Infrastructure from September 2011

Masaru Honda appointed Assistant Vice-Minister for Transport on 11 September. Joined previous Ministry of Transport in 1980 after graduating from Faculty of Law of Tokyo University and held various senior posts, including Director-General of Road Transportation Bureau, Director-General of Railway Agency, etc., before appointment as Director-General of Civil Aviation Bureau from September 2011

Shigeto Kubo appointed Deputy Vice-Minister of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism on 11 September. Joined previous Ministry of Transport in 1977 after graduating from Faculty of Law of Kyoto University and held various senior posts, including Deputy Director-General of Railway Agency, Assistant Director of Maritime Safety Agency, etc., before appointment as Director-General of Railway Agency from August 2010

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Keiji Takiguchi appointed Director-General of Railway Agency on 11 September. Joined previous Ministry of Transport in 1979 after graduating from Faculty of Law of Tokyo University and held various senior posts, including Deputy Vice-Minister of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism before appointment as Vice-Director of Policy Bureau from August 2010

October

- 1—Red-brick Tokyo Station Marunouchi building reopened after restoration of 3rd floor and North and South domes lost in 1945 bombing
- 1—Hitachi Ltd., announced start of construction in Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, of new bus operation system designed to reduce CO₂ emissions using GPS navigation to inform bus operator of road and traffic congestion conditions for more efficient operation in cooperation with Toyota City, Toyota Motor, and Meitetsu Bus
- 1—IATA announced upward revision of 2012 net profits for world airlines to \$4.1 billion as \$1.1 billion increase over June forecast but still less than half of 2011 figures; 2013 figures expected to recover driven by increasing demand in Asia
- 1—Collision between ferries near Lama Island, Hong Kong, left 38 people dead and more than 100 injured
- 4—IHI and IHI Aerospace announced world-first successful test flight in conjunction with Boeing of airliner fitted with new regeneration fuel-cell system to supply power independently of engines and producing only environment-friendly water as waste product
- 5—Sagami Railway and Tokyu Railway received permission from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism to build Sagami–Tokyu Line (about 10 km) linking Nishigaya on Sagami Line with Hiyoshi on Tokyu Line at east end (Tokyu side) and Hanezawa at west end (Sagami Line) for through operations between Sagami Railway, JR East and Tokyu Railway when completed
- 5—Boat carrying 22 people collided with sand barge near Hunan Province, China, leaving 9 people dead, 10 rescued and 3 missing
- 7—Tourist bus collided with passenger car and guardrail on expressway in Shandong Province, China, before overturning to leave 14 people dead and some 40 others injured
- 9—JR West and Kinki Sharyo announced running tests of hybrid rolling stock combining diesel engine with lithium-ion batteries to cut fuel costs by 20% compared to conventional rolling stock
- 10—Hitachi Ltd. announced opening of European Rail R&D Centre as fundamental railway research laboratory in London, UK, targeting R&D into design, maintenance, and manufacturing of rolling stock for Europe, signalling and operations management systems, etc., following order this summer for 600 carriages for UK high-speed rail
- 10—Sumitomo Trading and Mitsubishi Heavy Engineering announced ¥21 billion contract from Indonesia to electrify and multi-track 32-km section of Bekasi Line between Manggarai, Bekasi and Cikarang to separate trunk and commuter lines near Jakarta
- 10—Nippon Sharyo, Marubeni and Toshiba announced receipt of order from Venezuela National Railways for 13 trainsets (52 carriages) for urban railways as follow-up order to previous 13 trainsets (52 carriages) already delivered to international consortium of Italian, and local companies building new lines in Venezuela between Caracas and Cue (42 km) since 1992
- 12—JR East announced restoration of C58-239 steam locomotive preserved in Morioka City with special SL *Ginga Tetsudo* train runs expected to start in summer 2013 on Kamaishi Line; same company also preserving D51, C57, and C61 SLs
- 18—JR East announced plans for new route from Sendai via Tohoku Line as direct connection with parallel Tohoku Line using diesel railcars due to incompatible electrification systems following 2015 recovery of part of Sendai Line between Sendai and Ishinomaki damaged by Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami
- 18—Bus ran off cliff at well-known accident black spot in Yunan Province, China, killing 4 people and injuring 44 others
- 22—Kuala Lumpur MRT announced placement of order with Mitsubishi Heavy Engineering to build tracks for No. 1 line running 51 km between Sungai Buloh and Kajang from northwest to southeast of capital with completion expected in July 2017
- 22—Large Greek airline Aegean Airlines announced 100% subsidiary acquisition by Olympic Air for €72 million in stock with both companies continuing to trade under own logo with own staff; new group now owns 50 aircraft and carried 8.9 million passengers in 2012
- 24—JR Central, JR West, JR Kyushu and Taiwan High-Speed Rail announced cooperation in overseas development of Tokaido and San'yō shinkansen systems; all four companies use same high-speed rail system with Taiwan High-Speed Rail as first overseas development

- 26— Itochu Trading announced order worth €41 million for parts and equipment for 95 carriages from Ukraine rolling stock maker Kryukovsky Railway Car Building Works and Kiev Metro with delivery by Japanese makers Mitsubishi, Fuji Electric, etc., from June 2013 using funds paid by Japan for global-warming emissions trading contracts between both countries
- 29— Low-cost carrier Scoot subsidiary of Singapore Airlines announced start of one daily return service (including Business Class) between Narita and Singapore via Taipei using medium size B777-200
- 29— Super-hurricane *Sandy* struck eastern seaboard of USA with high winds and torrential rains, causing flooding, blackouts, etc., in many states, as well as total closure of New York subways, regional airports, etc., and loss of at least 85 lives

November

- 6— JR East announced decision to start E6 *Super Komachi* shinkansen services on Akita Shinkansen from March 2013, running at 300 km/h and cutting shortest time between Tokyo and Akita by 5 minutes to 3 hours 45 minutes; 24-car trainsets to start operation in spring 2014
- 6— JR East announced plans to start operations of storage battery powered railcars on Karasuyama Line between Hoshakuji and Karasuyama stations (22.4 km) in Tochigi Prefecture and on Tohoku Line between Utsunomiya and Hoshakuji stations (11.7 km); cars to draw power from overhead catenary on electrified section of Tohoku Line and then to run on non-electrified section of Karasuyama Line using power stored in onboard lithium-ion storage batteries
- 7— Sumitomo Trading and Nippon Sharyo announced order worth US\$352 from US California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for 130 double-decker carriages destined for semi-high-speed rail services in Michigan, Illinois, California and Missouri; every stage from materials procurement, through to manufacturing and final assembly to be performed at new Nippon Sharyo works in USA
- 9— Freight train composed of petrol tanker wagons derailed and caught fire in northern Myanmar, killing 25 trackside residents and injuring 62 others when people tried to collect leaking fuel
- 15— Flat-back trailer carrying veterans and families at parade in southern Texas, USA, hit by train on level crossing, killing 4 people and injuring 17 others
- 17— Bus hit by train on level crossing near Manfalut, Egypt, after crossing gate operator fell asleep, killing 52 children on daytrip excursion
- 21— The Railway Museum in Omiya, Saitama Prefecture, Japan announced sister partnership with UK's National Railway Museum in York on 19 November with aim of deepening exchange of information and relationship with world's largest railway collection opened in 1927
- 21— Tokyu Railway announced start of apartment construction in Binh Duong Province, Viet Nam, about 30 km north of Ho Chi Minh City as first stage in overseas technology transfer project based on Japanese Tama Den'entoshi trackside development with 1500 dwellings called SORA GARDENS
- 26— Multi-vehicle crash of more than 120 cars and trucks in early morning fog on expressway in Shangdong Province, China, left 7 people dead and 35 injured
- 28— Chinese fishing vessel overturned off Shanghai, drowning 12 of 17 crew with 1 rescued and 4 missing
- 30— Steel bridge collapsed in New Jersey, USA, dropping running freight train into Mantua Creek; four tanker trucks carrying extremely flammable and poisonous vinyl chloride leaked some contents into river
- 30— Large Russian-built IL-76T freight plane crashed on landing during heavy rainstorm into houses near Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo, killing all six people on board and 26 others on ground

MILESTONES

Eiji Hosoya Chairman of Resona Holdings since June 2003, died 4 November. Joined old JNR in 1968 after graduating from Faculty of Law at Tokyo University and transferred to JR East at 1987 privatization and division. Became board member in 1993 and Managing Director and Vice President before moving to Resona where credited with managing successful financial restructuring of bank

December

- 1— Expressway linking Dalian and Harbin (921 km) in northeast China opened with special snow prevention and defrosting technologies due to winter temperatures falling to -40°C
- 2— Roof tunnel collapse due to rock-bolt failure on Chuo Expressway in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan, killed 9 people when 140 meters of concrete ceiling slabs crushed cars

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- 4—Large Japanese HIS travel agency announced establishment of charter flight subsidiary Asia Pacific Airlines in Bangkok, Thailand, serving main cities in Asia and Japan
- 5—Collision in North Sea about 100 km from Rotterdam between Bahamas-registered auto transporter carrying 1417 Mitsubishi Motors' vehicles to Russia and Cyprus-registered freighter sank auto transporter, leaving 5 of 24 crew dead and 6 missing
- 9—Tourist bus ran off road into gully in Hsinchu Prefecture, Taiwan, killing 13 passengers and injuring 10 others, including driver
- 11—British Virgin Atlantic Airways announced sales of 49% share in Singapore Air to US carrier Delta Air Lines with Delta and Virgin to cooperate in transatlantic service and Delta surpassing United as world's largest carrier
- 17—Passenger bus ran off road into gully in Granada, Colombia, killing at least 26 people and injuring 14 others
- 18—Eleven operators and organizations issuing electronic payment IC cards such as JR East's Suica and metropolitan private railways' PASMO, etc., announced start of completely transparent card compatibility from 23 March 2013 for 80 million cards now in use at 1 December as world's largest transport IC card system
- 19—Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, received approval from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism for application to open Shin-Ishigaki Airport in Ishigaki City on 7 March 2013 with city to manage 2000-m runway
- 19—JR West announced construction of Railway Museum adjoining Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum in Kyoto to display 50 pieces of rolling stock, including 500 series shinkansen and steam locomotives after planned opening in spring 2016
- 20—Amagasaki City in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, announced privatization of city buses from FY2016 due to declining passenger numbers; lines and services to be maintained for 3 years after privatization with new private operator to be chosen by city selection committee
- 22—JR East started operation of high-speed bus system (BRT) running on dedicated routes to replace rail services on Kessenuma Line between Yanaizu and Kessenuma (55.3 km) lost due to damage caused by Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent tsunami
- 24—Microbus carrying 17 kindergarten children ran off road into lake in Guixi, Jianxi Province, China, killing 11 children
- 25—Osaka Transport Bureau announced basic provisional concept for privatization of city's subways and buses with subways to be privatized in FY2015 as 100% city-owned private business and bus lines to be consolidated and transferred to private sector in 2014
- 25—Small Fokker 100 carrying 65 foreign tourists made forced landing in Shan State, eastern Myanmar, killing one child in plane and one person on ground, and injuring 11 other passengers
- 26—Beijing–Guangzhou high-speed railway fully opened to commercial service as world's longest high-speed line (2298 km) and linking two cities in about 8 hours at speeds of 300 km/h; line opened from Guangzhou to Wuhan and Zhengzhou in stages
- 26—Liberal Democratic Party of Japan won landslide victory in general election, bringing Prime Minister Abe to power for second time
- 29—Russian Tupolev 204 over-ran runway on landing at Vnukovo International Airport southwest of Moscow, Russia, killing 5 of 8 people onboard and injuring three others
- 30—Metro Line 4 (89.8 km) opened in Beijing, China, taking total city subway length to 442 km and surpassing London (408 km) as world's longest metro; opening extends lines 8, 9 and 10 as well as line 6 linking city centre with east and west suburbs
- 30—Tourist bus ran down roadside slope on icy interstate highway in northeast Oregon, USA, killing 9 passengers and injuring more than 20 others
- 30—Sleeper express running through dense fog struck herd of elephants in Odisha State, eastern India, killing 1 passenger and 6 elephants including two baby elephants

MILESTONES

Akihiro Ota appointed Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism in second Abe Cabinet on 26 December; joined Komeito Party after completing postgraduate studies in engineering at University of Kyoto in 1971. Worked as journalist on Komei Shimbun and Soka Gakkai study group before election to House of Representatives in 1993, later becoming Komeito Chairman in 2006 before losing seat in 2009 election