Typhoon-damaged bullet trains scrapped in Japan

9th November, 2019

Creative Commons 2.0
via mattlucht on flickr.com

Ten of Japan's famous bullet trains will be scrapped. They were caught in the floods after Typhoon Hagibis hit eastern Japan in October. The typhoon caused widespread damage and loss of life in Japan. There were many photos and TV footage of the 10 shiny bullet trains lined up next to each other at a train yard near the central city of Nagano. They were deep in floodwater after the nearby Chikuma River burst its banks. The trains used to run between Tokyo and a city on the Sea of Japan coast called Kanazawa. The line is now running 80 per cent of its normal services. The bullet train company said it hopes to be running a full service again by the end of March 2020.

Bullet trains are called Shinkansen in Japan. They started in 1964 in time for the Tokyo Olympics. They became an iconic symbol of Japan and were the world's fastest trains. They currently reach speeds of 320kph. The bullet train rail network has expanded to currently consist of 2,764km. People take around 350 million rides a year on the Shinkansen. A Shinkansen president, Yuji Fukasawa, spoke about the flooded trains. He said the floodwater seriously damaged their motors and braking systems. The total cost of the damage is around $135 million. He said: "For stability and safety, we [will] replace the trains with newly built ones instead of repairing them."

Sources: *nhk.or.jp / kyodonews.net / wikipedia.org*

Writing

There should be a speed limit on super-fast trains. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

bullet train / floods / typhoon / damage / photos / banks / normal / service / March / 1964 / Olympics / iconic / network / president / motors / systems / stability / safety

True / False

a) A dozen bullet trains are going to be scrapped in Japan. T / F

b) The trains were in a train yard in a city called Nagoya in central Japan. T / F

c) The scrapped bullet trains used to run between Tokyo and Osaka. T / F

d) Full service will be resumed on the bullet train line by March 2020. T / F

e) Bullet trains first came into service in Japan in 1964. T / F

f) The bullet train travels at speeds of 320kph. T / F

g) Around 350,000,000 rides a year are taken on the bullet trains. T / F

h) A Shinkansen president said the trains' wheels and seats were damaged. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**famous**	a.	began
2.	**widespread**	b.	broke
3.	**shiny**	c.	regular
4.	**burst**	d.	fixing
5.	**normal**	e.	extensive
6.	**started**	f.	badly
7.	**symbol**	g.	price
8.	**seriously**	h.	well-known
9.	**cost**	i.	sign
10.	**repairing**	j.	gleaming

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you know about bullet trains?

b) Why are Japan's bullet trains so famous?

c) How can companies better protect trains from weather?

d) How safe is train travel?

e) What do you think of the name 'bullet train'?

f) What is the best train journey you have been on?

g) What will train travel be like in the future?

h) What do you know about bullet trains?

Phrase Match

1. They were caught
2. The typhoon caused widespread
3. shiny bullet trains lined
4. the nearby Chikuma River burst
5. it hopes to be running a
6. They became an iconic
7. They currently reach
8. The bullet train rail network
9. damaged their motors and
10. replace the trains with newly built ones

a. up next to each other
b. instead of repairing them
c. full service again
d. symbol of Japan
e. speeds of 320kph
f. damage
g. braking systems
h. in the floods
i. has expanded
j. its banks

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think about what you read?
b) What do you think of trains?
c) What is the train system like in your country?
d) What are the best and worst things about train travel?
e) Should there be a speed limit on trains?
f) How can train travel be improved?
g) Which country has the best trains?
h) What questions would you like to ask the rail company bosses?

Spelling

1. They were cutgha in the floods
2. The typhoon caused dwapsdeeir damage
3. many photos and TV ageooft
4. the rclnaet city of Nagano
5. the nearby Chikuma River urtbs its banks
6. on the Sea of Japan scato
7. an iconic bymsol
8. They cylnrtreu reach speeds of 320kph
9. The bullet train rail etknowr
10. currently ctosnsi of 2,764km
11. aittlysib and safety
12. instead of iepinrgar them

Role Play

Role A – Bullet Train
You think bullet train is the best form of transportation. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): helicopter, bicycle or bus.

Role B – Helicopter
You think helicopter is the best form of transportation. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): bullet train, bicycle or bus.

Role C – Bicycle
You think bicycle is the best form of transportation. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): helicopter, bullet train or bus.

Role D – Bus
You think bus is the best form of transportation. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their forms. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): helicopter, bicycle or bullet train.

Speaking – Transportation

Rank these with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- airplane
- bus
- motorbike
- bicycle
- bullet train
- helicopter
- river taxi
- rickshaw

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. c
6. a	7. i	8. f	9. g	10. d

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.