

China sees faster trains ahead

China is expected to supply next-generation bullet trains capable of traveling at 400 km per hour for Russia's Moscow-Kazan line by 2020, which could enhance the country's position as the world's leader in high-speed rail products and services, said an expert working on the project.

The line is expected to be about 770 kilometers long and will run through seven Russian regions with a total population of more than 25 million. It will use regular high-speed trains rather than magnetic levitation trains.

"To ensure the operation, China will test the 400 km/h train in a selected part of the 709-kilometer Beijing-Shenyang high-speed railway line," said Yang Guowei, a researcher at the Institute of Mechanics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. The railroad is expected to be completed in 2019.

Yang's work unit is responsible for designing the shape of the high-speed trains.

Yang said China will be able to produce cargo trains for transporting regular goods, high-end products and industrial equipment at speeds ranging from 120 to 250 km/h between Asia and Europe by 2020.

Through innovation and development, China has the technology to make electric multiple-unit passenger trains with speeds between 200 and 250 km/h and has established a technology platform for producing trains with a speed of 350 km/h, according to data on the website of the National Railway Administration.

The country does not currently have trains with a speed of 400 km/h. However, Yang said that once they are developed, China can introduce them to the domestic market as well. However, the ticket price may increase because of higher operating costs.

Jia Limin, head of China's high-speed rail innovation program under the management of China Railway Rolling Stock Corp, said, "This could help China build cross-border high-speed train services with its neighboring countries that can alternate between different track gauges, ranging from 60 cm to 1.676 meters." The CRRC is China's rail vehicle manufacturer and exporter.

Wang Mengshu, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said it will take time to test safety and control if the speed is increased to 400 km/h.

He said there is a big difference between Chinese engineers getting a high-speed rail system up and running at home and doing something similar in foreign markets. The differences in standards and regulations remain the challenges for China's rail vehicle exporters and infrastructure suppliers hoping to set up overseas. In addition, building costs are fairly expensive.

“Rather than investing in high-speed railway networks overseas, China should focus on expanding domestic lines with faster train speeds,” said Wang.

The CRRC is trying to overcome technical barriers in its push to develop maglev trains with speeds of 600 km/h in its Qingdao research center in Shandong province.

[Candid photos record phone being stolen](#)

A young woman in Zhuzhou, central China’s Hunan Province had her cellphone stolen on Feb. 3 while shopping with her friend, whose candid photos happened to record the theft taking place.



[Photo: zznew.gov.cn]

Victim Xiaojia said she and her friend Yueyue loved taking candid photos of each other during funny occasions. While they were shopping that day, Xiaojia chucked her iPhone 6s into her coat pocket in order to eat grilled chicken wings. Yueyue then started to photograph her secretly.

Yueyue did not review the photos for fear of being caught, nor did Xiaojia realize that her phone was gone until two minutes later.

They hurriedly examined the candid photos. In the first photo, a middle-aged man was lurking behind Xiaojia, ready to stretch his hand into her pocket;

and in the second photo, the iPhone was already in his hand.

They reported the crime to police and the candid images were treated as critical evidence in catching the suspect.

More homes

The government's White Paper today needs to look at ways to provide more homes, all the time we remain in the EU and have to accept more than 300,000 additional people each year coming to stay in the UK. Even after we are out it is likely we still want to invite in a large number of people. Ministers have made clear we will still welcome talent from around the world, whilst controlling the numbers seeking low paid employment. It's no good inviting people here if we do not provide homes for them to buy or rent, and if we fail to provide all the other public services people expect in a rich country.

Much has been made of the need for more homes to rent. We should not forget that there are many more people wanting to buy who currently rent, than there are people who currently own who want to become tenants. Many of the people who now settle for the rented option do so because they cannot afford the deposit or think they will have problems getting the mortgage to buy.

Nor should we forget that it is much dearer over a lifetime to rent than to buy. If someone needs a home for 60 years as an adult, it will be much cheaper to take on a 25 year mortgage and pay it off over the 25 years, leaving you free of any rent or mortgage costs for more than half your life, than to have to pay rent for all 60 years. The joy of owning comes in retirement when you have no rent or mortgage payments to make, and when you also have a capital asset which you can sell to pay the nursing home fees in a home of your choice if need arises. In rented accommodation you will be paying the highest rent of your life as a pensioner, because rents always seem to rise. You have no asset to fall back on if you need to move to a care home.

The good news today is more mortgages are available and mortgage rates of still very low by historical standards. The bad news is house prices are high, and saving for the deposit even with the help of government schemes can be difficult.

Thousands of children out of school as classrooms shelled in eastern Ukraine – UNICEF

7 February 2017 – With thousands of children forced out of school in eastern Ukraine due to last week's surge in fighting, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its partners have strongly condemned the indiscriminate shelling of schools, and called for all sides to immediately recommit to the ceasefire signed in Minsk in August 2015.

"The shelling of schools, the one place where children find safety and normalcy during conflict, is unacceptable and has to stop," said UNICEF's Representative in Ukraine, Giovanna Barberis, in a news release. "Children in eastern Ukraine have suffered enough and we must ensure that they have safe spaces to seek solace and support."

At least five schools and two kindergartens have been damaged by heavy shelling and 11 other schools have had to close, according to humanitarian organisations supporting the emergency education response in Ukraine.

More than 2,600 children from 13 schools in government-controlled areas in eastern Ukraine have been affected by the sharp escalation in fighting, along with hundreds more from schools in non-government controlled areas.

"Schools being shelled has tragically become commonplace in this conflict," said Save the Children's Representative in Ukraine, Michele Cecere. "There are reports of large numbers of unexploded ordnance in the streets, putting children at enormous risk when going to school, even when they can reopen. It's vital that children can get safely back to school as soon as possible so they don't miss out on any more learning."

In the town of Avdiivka, seven schools and kindergartens remain shut, with almost 1,400 children out of school. Families in Avdiivka and other villages in the area are afraid of sending their children to the schools that remain open, due to the heavy fighting and fears of unexploded ordnance in the streets.

The latest closure of schools has worsened the ongoing education crisis already affecting more than 600,000 children in eastern Ukraine. After nearly three years of conflict, more than 740 school – one in five – have been damaged or destroyed, resulting in girls and boys missing many months of schooling due to displacement and the effects of conflict.

UNICEF and Save the Children urged all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and ensure that schools and other civilian infrastructure are never attacked or in the line of fire.

UN rights expert urges Thailand to loosen restrictions around monarchy defamation law

7 February 2017 – As a student activist awaits trial in detention for posting a news article about the new monarchy on social media, an independent United Nations expert today called on Thai authorities to stop using royal defamation laws to stifle free speech.

At issue is the concept of lèse-majesté – the defaming, insulting or threatening of the royal family – which in Thailand carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.

Lesè-majesté provisions have no place in a democratic country, said David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of freedom of opinion and expression. The lèse-majesté provision of the Thai Criminal Code is incompatible with international human rights law.

The expert underlined that public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority, may be subject to criticism.

The fact that some forms of expression are considered to be insulting to a public figure is not sufficient to justify restrictions or penalties, he stressed.

The comments were sparked by a case against Jatupat Boonpataraksa, a student activist, who shared a BBC news article on the new King, Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun, on his private Facebook page.

Mr. Boonpataraksa is being held in detention after an appeals court revoked his bail on 27 December, reportedly justified by the case's sensitive matter and on public order and national security grounds. He is expected back before a judge on 10 February.

In 2015, three people were sentenced to decades in prison for criticizing the monarchy on Facebook.

Mr. Kaye has repeatedly urged the Thai Government to allow free speech, including in July of last year when authorities clamped down on public and social media expressions ahead of a constitutional referendum later in the year.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.