
Expansion of China rail service to accelerate economic growth

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Xinhua reported that China's new railway schedule and the operation of two new high speed passenger lines will accelerate the economic growth and improve people's living standards.

Mr Ding Li a researcher on regional economy competitiveness at the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Social Sciences said that high speed railways and inter city express services would bring more opportunities to less developed regions, such as the central and northwestern parts of the country and rural areas.

The Ministry of Railways launched a major overhaul of the rail schedule the seventh since 1997, featuring faster trips and more seats. The new schedule includes 89 new direct passenger trains, bringing the daily total to 1,551 pairs and raising passenger capacity by more than 10.6%.

China also launched two 250 kilometers per hour inter-city railway passenger lines Wednesday. One line links Hefei, capital of eastern Anhui Province, with Wuhan, in central Hubei Province. The other connects Shijiazhuang in northern Hebei Province with Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. The new lines will cut the travel time from Wuhan to the eastern metropolis of Shanghai by half to less than five hours. The journey between Taiyuan and Beijing would only take three hours, down by five hours.

Mr Ji Min, a frequent business traveler between the two cities said "It is great that traveling from Beijing to Taiyuan takes only three hours now and there are more trains running. I used to spend a night on the trip and it was really hard to get a ticket."

Mr Wang Gang, a businessman who operates a private mineral company said "The new high-speed train is now the best choice for a trip between the two cities as it is much faster than the coach bus, and the price is affordable."

Analysts said the two new lines would bring under-developed central region closer to developed eastern region and Beijing and facilitate economic cooperation among various parts of the country.

Mr Sun Zhang, a professor of Shanghai-based Tongji University, said the high-speed railway line now links the middle reaches of the Yangtze River with the Yangtze Delta region, forming a long economic belt on the Yangtze River. He said that this would have a positive effect on the central and western parts of the country.

Mr Yu Hongsheng researcher with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, agreed, saying operation of the Hefei-Wuhan line would strengthen cooperation between the two regions, which would expedite industrial restructuring and local economic development, and promote balanced development among regions.

China's first inter-city express railway, the Beijing-Tianjin line running at more than 300 kilometers per hour, opened last August.

(Sourced from Xinhua)

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