

China Completes World's Highest Railway To Tibet

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China announced on Saturday completion of the world's highest railway, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, which stretches 1,956 kilometers from Xining to Lhasa cities in western China.

The announcement was made at a ceremony held at the Lhasa Railway Station Saturday morning to mark the country's success in making the impossible possible, by building a railway line across 5,000-meter-high mountain ranges and 550-km-long frozen belt.

Chinese President Hu Jintao praised, in a congratulatory letter, the landmark railway as an "unprecedented triumph" in human history of railway construction.

At Saturday's ceremony, Vice-Premier Huang Ju urged railway builders to continue their efforts in a bid to ensure test runs can be conducted as planned in July next year and to ensure the railway can "stand the tests of operation, time and history".

Tibet's regional capital basked in glory as merrymaking crowds of railway builders, officials and ordinary citizens hailed in Tibetan and Mandarin the completion of the railway that is soon to become a more efficient and affordable means of transportation.

"In my younger days, I thought we would have to wait for 100 years for building a railway in my hometown," said Qamba Zoinzhu, a 58-year-old businessman in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Construction of the 1,142-km-long Golmud-Lhasa section of the railway, which runs across the Kunlun and Tanggula mountain ranges, started in June 2001 and has cost 24 billion yuan (3 billion US dollars) to build thus far.

The highest point of the railway is 5,072 meters above sea level, at least 200 meters higher than the Peruvian railway in the Andes, which was previously the world's most elevated track.

Sources from the Ministry of Railway say after the test runs next year, the railway will link Lhasa with five major Chinese cities -- Beijing, Shanghai, Xining, Chengdu and Guangzhou. It will also carry 75 percent of all the inbound cargoes into Tibet, cutting transportation costs and boosting local economy.

In five years, the railway will stretch further into Tibet, extending from Lhasa to Xigaze and Nyingchi, according to the ministry.

Source: Xinhua News Agency

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