

# China brings forward key high-speed rail launch

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The link, which has been operating on a trial basis since mid-May, "has passed [safety assessment](#) and currently is fully qualified for the launch of service", the railways ministry said in a statement released late Thursday.

It gave no reason for the change.

Passengers can book tickets from Friday on [www.12306.cn](http://www.12306.cn), a website run by the ministry, or at railway stations and agencies across the country, the statement said.



To fly between Beijing and Shanghai takes about two hours but travel to the airports is time-consuming, and the busy air route is often subject to delays and cancellations, making train travel an attractive option.

Work on the high-speed \$33 billion railway started in April 2008.

One-way [ticket prices](#) will range between 410 yuan and 1,750 yuan subject to further adjustments, vice rail minister Hu Yadong said last week, compared with about 1,300 yuan for a flight.

The railway ministry has said the trains would run between 250 and 300 kilometres (155-188 miles) per hour on the Beijing-Shanghai link, although the line is designed for a maximum speed of 380 kph.

The speed is in line with a nationwide directive made public in April that said all high-speed trains must run at a slower pace than previously announced -- no faster than 300 kph -- to make journeys safer.

Former [railways](#) minister Liu Zhijun was sacked in February after he allegedly took more than 800 million yuan in kickbacks on contracts linked to the [high-speed rail](#) network, raising concerns about the safety of the lines.

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