

Japan bullet train suicide blaze 'kills two'



←The bullet train stops near Odawara station after an apparent suicide attempt by one of the passengers on June 30, 2015 (AFP Photo/)

- 1) Tokyo (AFP) - A man set himself ablaze on board a moving bullet train in Japan Tuesday, killing himself and a woman, in an unprecedented incident on a network with an enviable safety record.
 - 2) Several other passengers were hurt after the man doused himself in flammable liquid and sparked a cigarette lighter at the front of the train as it hurtled through the countryside around 70 kilometres (45 miles) southwest of Tokyo.
 - 3) Reports said a blast was heard from a toilet stall, filling the front carriage with choking white smoke, and bringing the train to an emergency stop as passengers rushed through carriages to get away.
 - 4) Media reported that the driver of the train, which had more than 800 passengers on board, found the still-burning body of the man. The train's top speed is 300 kilometres per hour but it was unclear how fast it was travelling at the time. 中略
 - 5) The train involved in Tuesday's incident -- a super-fast Nozomi bullet train -- was travelling from Tokyo towards Osaka when the blaze erupted near Odawara, southwest of the capital. Footage from inside the train after the fire showed passengers blinking and coughing as they crawled along the aisle to evacuate. Several had soot-blackened faces and some seemed confused and upset.
 - 6) The motive behind Tuesday's public suicide was not immediately clear. Self-immolations are relatively rare in Japan, a country where the culture of political protest is subdued. 中略
 - 7) While Japan has a relatively high suicide rate, mental illness still carries a considerable stigma, and critics say support networks for those suffering from psychological problems are inadequate.
 - 19) In a bid to reduce the number of people throwing themselves in front of trains, some Japanese rail companies demand compensation from surviving family members which can run into tens of thousands of dollars.
 - 20) It was not immediately clear if this policy could apply for Tuesday's episode. Japan's ultra-efficient shinkansen train network, inaugurated in 1964 as Tokyo readied to host the Olympic Games, now connects cities along the length and breadth of the country.
 - 21) Despite the huge volume of passengers it serves, it operates with enviable punctuality. It also has an unparalleled safety record, with no one having been killed in a crash in its half-century of service.【June 30, 2015/ AFP】
- set ~ ablaze:~に火をつける unprecedented:前例のない enviable:うらやましがらせるような douse:ずぶぬれにする flammable:可燃性の hurtle:突進する、ビューンと飛ぶ blast:爆発音 stall:一区画、仕切り部屋 carriage:車両 choking:窒息させるような blast:爆発する blink:まばたきをする cough:せきをする aisle:通路 evacuate:避難する soot-blackened:すすで黒くなった self-immolation:①自己犠牲②(不平等に抗議しての)焼身自殺 subdue:鎮圧する stigma:不名誉 inaugurate:開通する the length and breadth of~:~の全般にわたって punctuality:時間厳守 unparalleled:比類の

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. What is your impression or reaction about the incident?
2. How would this incident affect the security measures in trains?
3. What do you know about the history or reputation of the bullet train service in Japan?
4. Why do you think Japan has a relatively high suicide rate?
5. Do you think it is fair to ask surviving family members to compensate damages caused by suicide involving train system?
6. Make sentences using the following words: douse, flammable, hurtle, stall, subdue, inaugurate, carriage, punctuality and stigma.

安全面で絶大な信頼を誇る新幹線車内で残念な事故が起きた。不燃性や難燃性の素材を使った車両は炎上しなかったが、警備に関しては課題が残る。欧州の「ユーロスター」ではすべての乗客が金属探知検査を受け、荷物はX線検査される。JR各社は警備要員を増やすなど、警備強化に踏み出した。