



- *Tunnels have been much in the news recently – under the Gaza Strip, under Southern Lebanon. In contrast we have here (thanks to Tuvia Friedlander and Steve Sattler) a more positive image of a tunnel which does indeed have light at the end of it – part of the new Tel Aviv Red Line Metro under construction in early May.*

EDITORIAL

Without wishing to get too morbid, the last issue was put together just as the Editor had lost his mother at the age of 96 and as Steve, who does so much for the layout, printing and despatch had lost his brother aged 88. While we both struggled with other emotions we were exchanging e-mails, hunting maps that got 'lost' in the system, correcting typos and so forth. And this is meant to be a 'hobby'!

Work on this issue went ahead rather placidly with much help from several people in several countries who sent information, but then in mid-May all hell broke out once again with rocket attacks from Gaza into Central Israel, and disturbances on top of this, affecting Tel Aviv, Lod, Modiin, Beersheba and more. At the time of writing the scene remains very confused, all we can say is that despite the mayhem and bloodshed there is as yet no information on specific damage to railway installations and stock. A Cease-Fire was called on 21.05, the IDF announcing that they had destroyed around sixty miles of tunnels under the Gaza Strip, referred to as "the Gaza Metro". (According to other reports Hizbollah have also dug many miles of tunnels in southern Lebanon towards the Israeli border. Why cannot these people get jobs building new railway tunnels in Lebanon instead?) Naturally the political and especially emotional fall-out will continue for some time.

Whereby it is worth noting that a journalist living in Germany has just been once more accused by Turkey for the crime of "insulting the State" by reporting on incidents there and making a joke and a German tourist was arrested at the airport for "insulting Turkey". Hefty prison sentences could await them. In such a bizarre, medieval world even editors of railway magazines (especially those with a sense of humour) may have to learn to be careful. Dare we publish details of a rail accident on the TCDD? Or report delays to a metro project? Is this "insulting Turkish honour"? Alas there is so much that one would want to say.... For future issues we have lined up some translations of German newspaper reports from the Ottoman period and not all that is included here is flattering or complimentary concerning the Empire or the local administrators. So 'just in case' – see below.

We await with interest the first through train – whether filled with containers or tourists – from Istanbul to Gaza.....

The Editor.

133.03 Modern trains in Turkey. (From 'Railway Gazette International')



News from the line

(i). ELECTRIFICATION WORKS CONTINUE.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced on their website that due to track upgrading works the line between Beer-Sheva and Dimona would be closed for passenger traffic from Sunday 07.03.2021 at 05:00 until Sunday 14.03.2021 at 05:00.

Due to electrification works, there are some changes to timetables of trains on the Ashkelon – Ashdod – Tel-Aviv – Herzliya line, at the stations of Rehovot and Rishon-LeZion HaRishonim and with some direct trains between Tel-Aviv and Haifa from 03.03.2021 between 05:00 and 06:00 and between 19:00 and 20:00, so it will hardly disrupt passenger services.

(ii). LOD - GANOT JUNCTION.

From a press release of 14.03.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. have started test running with electric trains on the section Lod - Kfar-Habad - Ganot Junc. on which electrification was completed recently. (Ganot is the junction for the airport and Jerusalem line).

This section is highly important due to being a trunk line between the south and the centre of Israel, aside from the AI with which it shares the section Ganot - Tel-Aviv; this is in addition to electrification of the West Negev line (Tel-Aviv HaHagana - Rishon LeZion Moshe Dayan - Yavne West – Ashdod - Ashkelon section) the electrification of which is also being currently accelerated. The electrified Lod – Kfar-Habad - Ganot section will enable maximal operational flexibility in favor of the AI and additional lines to be electrified.

The test runs - as already performed on the AI prior to its opening, and as currently being performed between Ashdod and Ashkelon (on the latter mainly with Siemens DDEMU's), will include various operational tests.

Israel Railways CEO Mr. Michael (Micha) Maixner said: "The completed electrified section is an additional layer of the complex electrification project; I greatly appreciate all those involved in the professional and qualitative promotion of the project".

(iii). NEW STATION PLANNED AT GELILOT.

Gelilot was last a railway name when it referred to a fuel depot west of the Ayalon road and served by a siding from the then-single-track main line. Now Transport & Roads' Safety Minister Mrs. Miri Regev has in early March announced her decision to build a new passenger station, to be called Gelilot North, to be located near Ayalon highway No. 20 and Rehavam Ze'evi road bridge, to serve the people of Ramat HaSharon - a city south/east of Herzliya, as well as several IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) camps nearby, and the 1 million acres area of business, industry and entertainment under construction; the station will be linked with the Rosh HaAyin–Tel-Aviv University line; it will provide fast link to the north and south of Israel and will hopefully reduce the congested road traffic and thus the air pollution; more details when available.

(iv). FRIDAY SERVICES RESUMED.

Issue 132 had just gone out when this was received from Sybil Ehrlich on 09.03.2021: "Announced on the radio this afternoon (in brief), sending me to the IR website where it had not yet appeared at 5 p.m. It was there a few hours later and this is my translation:

Starting March 19, some train services will resume on Fridays and Saturday nights. [There have

been no weekend trains for a year – S.E.] They will run hourly on Fridays between 06:00 and 14:00, and on Saturdays between 21:00 and 24:00.

These are the lines that will be reactivated:

Beersheva Central – Herzliya, calling at Beersheva North-University, Lehavim-Rahat, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Malachi-Yoav, Mazkeret Batya, Ramle, Lod and all Tel Aviv stations.

Nahariya – Haifa Hof HaCarmel, calling at Akko, Kiryat Motzkin, Kiryat Haim, Hutzot HaMifratz, Merkazit HaMifratz, Haifa Merkaz HaShmona, Haifa Bat-Galim.

Beit She'an – Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, calling at Afula, Migdal Ha'Emek-Kfar Baruch, Yokne'am-Kfar Yehoshua, Merkazit-HaMifratz, Haifa Merkaz HaShmona, Haifa Bat-Galim.

Karmiel – Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, calling at Ahihud, Kiryat Motzkin, Kiryat Haim, Hutzot HaMifratz, Merkazit HaMifratz, Haifa Merkaz HaShmona, Haifa Bat-Galim.

In addition, electrification between Lod and Ganot [the junction with line to Modi'in and Jerusalem] has been completed and evening trains on Sundays-Thursdays to Beit Shemesh, Lod and Rehovot will be increased. [Even though this is taken from the updates page on the IR website, I don't see any difference in the evening timetable to Beit Shemesh. It could be that it's not yet updated. – S.E.]

(v). A RAILWAY WITHOUT RAILS.

We now come to a philosophical, indeed almost theological question. Trolleybuses were originally known as 'Trackless Trams' and now a new version of this concept seems to have been introduced in Ashdod. The question is: If there are no rails, does it count as a railway? Since we have included cableways and since there are clearly buried cables in the road, albeit no continuous catenary, we will do so. But we need a new name! In any case the word train is related to something being pulled – as the German word 'Zug' indicates but think also of the train of a dress – and so multiple units which move themselves rather than having a locomotive to pull them are already a linguistic contradiction.

This link brings one to a lengthy promotion video for the new technology.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/298187>

"For the first time in Israel: an electric train on wheels that will carry up to 500 passengers, said Minister Regev. "When I took office, I promised to do everything possible to solve the traffic-jam problem and bring in new means of public transportation that would convince drivers to leave their private vehicles at home. Israel was chosen to be the first country in the world to receive the train, which arrived in Israel in a record time of only three months."

Miri Regev received the first model of a "train on wheels" at the port of Ashdod today, an innovative means of mass transportation that is expected to revolutionize the world of public transportation.

Quiet, fast and safe, fast ascent and descent - without the need for complex, expensive and lengthy infrastructure work. It currently operates only in China and many countries around the world are interested in it. Israel was chosen to be the first country in the world to receive the train,

"Rail on wheels" was developed in China several years ago and was put into commercial service in 2019. Today, dozens of "trains on wheels" move successfully and without glitches in several large cities in China. Many cities in Australia, Europe and the United States have expressed interest in the new machine, but Israel is the first in the world to receive it for road trials and demonstrations.

Ayalon Highways, which is in charge of the project on behalf of the Ministry of Transportation, ordered the train from the manufacturer only four months ago. It should be noted that the normal delivery time is 18 months, and the early delivery was made possible thanks to Israel's reputation and the close ties that Israel has with the Chinese government, which is very interested in technological cooperation, especially in the field of transportation.

A train on wheels is powered by electricity, using advanced batteries that are sufficient for about 80 kilometres and can be recharged in a few minutes. The new train does not require the deployment of power pole infrastructure along the route, and is satisfied with stations for fast charging at the end terminal.

The train comes in a semi-autonomous configuration: the train follows a virtual track marked with colour bars on the road and the driver only controls the stopping and acceleration. In the future the train will be fully autonomous, controlled by a municipal control centre.

The train can carry between 250-500 people depending on the configuration, from three to five carriages. The carriages move on a normal road that has undergone minor adjustments, without the need to lay tracks or other special infrastructure. The cost of implementation is about a third of a light rail, and the infrastructure preparation time is significantly shorter than any similar solution.

Israel is the first country in the world, outside of China, to receive the new tool for testing and experimental operation. The road train will assimilate Israeli technologies to improve safety and encourage the creation of jobs in the economy.

After assembling the train at the Experimental Centre of the Ministry of Transportation in Ashdod, its operation will be tested at the Experimental Centre and later on the country's roads. Depending on the results, it will be decided to integrate the train in projects planned for the coming years, including the "heat line" in the southern metropolis of Tel Aviv, which will connect Lod, Ramla, Beer Yaakov and Rishon LeZion."

[The Editor's first thoughts is that this seems a very interesting idea – in fact there is a guidance system but buried beneath the road surface. However, as we all know, the devil lies in the details. In terms of Climate: How good will the system function should the asphalt melt in the heat, or be covered in drifting snow or sand? In terms of Speed

and Flexibility: The video indicates that the 'train' will join the vehicular traffic on normal roads, which certainly looks a cheaper option than a separate ballasted alignment but also means that the train will be subject to the very traffic congestion that LRV is intended to alleviate! Plus, there is no barrier to prevent road vehicles hitting the train at any point (and not just at designated crossing points which could, in Israel, often be signposted as "Please Collide here". The first set of road works in which some twerp drills a trench across the road to lay a pipe (as they always do) will disable the entire system. We await more information.... The 'Railway Gazette' incidentally refers to this scheme: "Israel's Ministry of Transport Experimental Centre in Ashdod has taken delivery of a Chinese-made battery-powered optically guided bus for trials...." So for them it is also worth mentioning - but as a bus!]

(vi). EXTENSION OF DAILY SERVICE TIMES.

From Wednesday 17.03.2021 train services on three coastal lines will be extended between Sundays and Mondays until 22:00 according to instructions of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, intended to increase accessibility by rail in the evenings too.

Mrs. Regev said: "Extending service hours along the coast line will improve accessibility between Tel-Aviv, the coastal cities and northern Israel and it continues the extension of services at the stations of Beit-Shemesh, Lod and Rehovot, as well as on the Tel-Aviv - Beer-Sheva lines, Rehovot - Binyamina and Beit-Shemesh - Tel-Aviv which took place last week".

The changes are as follows:

On the Modi'in-Nahariya line train 180 departs from Modi'in Central at 19:48 and terminates at Nahariya at 22:16.

In the opposite direction train 179, which was operated until 16.03.2021 as a split service, now departs from Nahariya at 19:15 and terminates at Modi'in Central at 21:43 without the need to change trains.

These trains will call at: Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat Hayim, Hutzot-Hamifratz, Merkazit-Hamifratz, all Haifa stations, Atlit, Binyamina, Caesarea-Pardes-Hanna, Hadera West, Herzliya, all Tel-Aviv stations and Modi'in Outskirts.

Train 280 departs from Rehovot at 19:54 and terminates at Binyamina at 21:20 instead of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central. The train calls at Beer-Ya'akov, Lod, Kfar-Habad, all Tel-Aviv stations, Herzliya, Beit-Yehoshua, Netanya-Sapir, Netanya, Hadera West and Caesarea-Pardes-Hanna.

(vii). REHOVOT STATION REBUILDING.

Temporary entrance/exit arrangements at the entrance of the northern hall of Rehovot station:

Due to upgrading and rebuilding works at the station, the entrance/exit to the station northern hall was to be closed between Sunday 14.03.2021 and Wednesday 01.09.2021, passage being possible through a temporary point only; as a result, tickets could not be purchased at the northern hall;

additional public transport bus stops were provided adjacent to the southern hall, which keeps operating as usual.

(viii). TIMETABLE CHANGES THROUGH THE PASSOVER HOLIDAYS.

During the Passover holidays trains will operate as follows: [NB: This year the festival begins on a Saturday evening, which makes many preparations more complex. Ed.]

- On Friday 26.03.2021 trains will operate as on a regular Friday, namely: between 06:00 and 14:00.
- On Saturday night 27.03.2021, as on Sunday 27.03.2021 which is Passover's first holiday, trains will not operate.
- On Sunday night 28.03.2021 trains will operate as on a regular Saturday night, namely: between 21:00 and 24:00.
- Between Monday 28.03.2021 and Thursday 01.04.2021 trains will operate as on regular weekdays.
- On Friday 02.04.2021, the evening of Passover's second holiday, trains will operate as on a regular Friday, namely: between 06:00 and 14:00. On Saturday night 03.04.2021, which is also the end of the Passover holidays, trains will operate as on a regular Saturday night, namely: between 21:00 and 24:00.

EXTRA SERVICES were announced by instruction of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev on 25.03.2021 and per Israel Railways Ltd. press release of the same date; Eight special additional trains (four pairs) were running daily on the A1 between Herzliya, Tel-Aviv (all stations) and Jerusalem Navon daily from 29.03.2021 until 01.04.2021 :

- Train 8777 leaves Herzliya 21:31 terminating at Jerusalem Navon 22:26.
- Train 8778 Jerusalem Navon 22:03 terminating at Herzliya 22:58.
- Train 8779 leaves Herzliya 22:00 terminating at Jerusalem Navon 22:55.
- Train 8780 Jerusalem Navon 22:33 terminating at Herzliya 23:28.
- Train 8781 leaves Herzliya 22:31 terminating at Jerusalem Navon 23:26.
- Train 8782 Jerusalem Navon 23:03 terminating at Herzliya 23:58.
- Train 8783 leaves Herzliya 23:00 terminating at Jerusalem Navon 23:55.
- Train 8784 Jerusalem Navon 23:33 terminating at Herzliya 00:28.

(ix). PHONE APP PAYMENT SCHEME EXTENDED.

From a press release of 17.03.2021 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Another revolution in the public transport: there is no need any more to decide ahead how much monthly journeys are to take place; payment can be

done by a new phone application called "The Station" introduced by the ministry and the three authorized application providers: Move it, Rav-Pas and ANY-WAY; after being introduced as a pilot on all city and intercity buses, now it includes also Israel Railways Ltd., the BRT-METRONIT buses and the Haifa underground funicular Carmelit. The invoice is issued only at the end of the month according to actual use."

(x). 2020 RESULTS.

From a press release of 22.03.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Today - Monday 22.03.2021, the railways published their results for 2020:

The performance in 2020 has been significantly affected by the Covid19 crisis and its effect on the economy. Already at the beginning of the crisis in February 2020 there was a sharp decline in passenger traffic, combined with a sharp decline of passenger services till a standstill on 26.03.2020 by government instruction.

By government instruction, traffic resumed - though with restrictions - on 22.06.2020 with a low number of passengers compared with the pre-Covid19 era; the low figures continue during the second half of 2020.

2020 ended with an overall profit of \$9.1M (NIS 30M), compared with almost \$11M (NIS 36M) in 2019; down by 16.7%.

The revenues in 2020 were \$726M (NIS 2.397Bn), compared with almost \$777M (NIS 2.564 Bn) in 2019; down by 6.7%.

The 2020 operational profit was \$0.76M (NIS 2.5M); compared with \$0.15M (NIS 0.5M) in 2019. Passenger Sector:

24M were carried in 2020 compared with 69M in 2019; down by 65%! The daily average number of passengers in 2020 was 119,000 compared with 259,000 in 2019; down by 55%!

Revenues from passenger services in 2020 were \$73M (NIS 241M), compared with \$223M (NIS 737M) in 2019; down by 67%!

Average punctuality on 2020 was 95.7% compared with 90.8% in 2019; up by 5.4%; explained by more standby trains but also to much less trains and passengers.

Freight Sector:

During 2020 the railways carried 8M tons compared with 8.5M during 2019; down by 6%.

Revenues during 2020 were \$51M (NIS 168M), compared with \$55M (NIS 182M); down by 8%!

The loss in 2020 reached \$14M (NIS 47M), compared with \$10.3M (NIS 34M) in 2019; up by almost 4%!

The situation in the Freight section is explained by line closures in favour of track infrastructure and electrification works."

(xi). CHANGES IN THE NEGEV MINERALS TRAFFIC.

From Harel Even: "The Phosphates mine at Nahal Zin is now closed. The last loaded train left on 25.3.2021. The siding at Oron is currently used for wagons storage and there is currently no commercial traffic south of Mamshit.

Traffic from Tzefa is continuing as usual and includes: potash, phosphate fertilizers, phosphoric acid, sea containers and sand in containers. Traffic to Tzefa includes: Sulfur, Sea containers and waste in containers. There are about 10 pairs of trains daily. No phosphate wagons are being scrapped.

A new 7 km line is planned by IR from Tzefa eastbound to Tamar quarry for transporting aggregates northbound."

Here is a link to a video of the last train: <https://youtu.be/gsvJUUEtAo>

And also one of it arriving at Ashdod, with 28 hoppers: <https://youtu.be/LZS23enleHk>

See photos on next page.....h.

(xii). TRACKWORKS

(a). From a press release of 04.04.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the annual track maintenance programme in order to improve rail services, as well as improving safety, the Tel-Aviv - Lod section will undergo upgrading works. As a result, there will be temporary changes in train traffic between Thursday 08.04.2021 at 23:30 and Sunday 14.04.2021 at 05:00.

On Friday 09.04.2021 and on Saturday night 10.04.2021 trains running between Beer-Sheva and Herzliya through Tel-Aviv, Lod, Ramla, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat will operate between Beer-Sheva and Lod only!

All Tel-Aviv stations and Herzliya will be closed. The railways will operate alternative bus shuttle services between Tel-Aviv and Lod during closure times. Traffic will resume on Sunday 14.04.2021 at 05:00."

(b). From a press release of 29.04.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of annual track maintenance in order to improve service and safety, track upgrading works will be performed at Tel-Aviv Hahagana railway station. As a result, there will be temporary changes to train traffic from Thursday 06.05.2021 at 23:30 and during all activities on Friday 07.05.2021 and Saturday night 08.05.2021.

On these dates trains between Beer-Sheva and Herzliya (through Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat, etc.) will operate between Beer-Sheva and Lod; the stations of Tel-Aviv Hahagana, Tel-Aviv Hashalom, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, Tel-Aviv University and Herzliya will be temporarily closed. The railways will provide shuttle bus services between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Lod stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday, 09.05.2021 at 05:00.



- GT26CW 717 & 718 shunting loaded wagons from the loading sidings at the ICL phosphate mine at Tzin to the station to form train no. 8886 to Ashdod Port. (All photos by Harel Even)



- At Nahal Tzin, Vollert shunter No. 1 on 16.3.2021 shortly before the mines here closed on 25.3.2021



- Old 'Baggie' trolley formerly used for shunting at a siding at Nahal Tzin., 16.03.2021



- Vollert 1 shunting empty phosphate wagons to the loading tracks - there were formerly two here, latterly only one - on 2.10.1988. In rear left background the line curves off to Dimona, Beersheva and beyond. Har Tzin, also known as Har Hor, where Aharon died (Numbers Chap. 20) stands majestically in the background.

(xiii). MEMORIAL DAY AND INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL TIMETABLES.

From a press release of 13.04.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As each year, the railways follow a special timetable on the Memorial Day for the Victims of the Israeli Wars and Hostilities and on the Independence Day which follows it: On the Memorial Day for the Victims of the Israeli Wars and Hostilities, (Yom HaZikaron), Wednesday 14.04.2021, regular traffic will run until 15:00 approximately. Then, as in recent years, from 15:00 until the end of service the frequency will be reduced. On most lines the frequency will be one train/hour in each direction; some of the trains will call at additional intermediate stations. On the Herzliya - Jerusalem Navon line and between Rehovot and Binyamina the service frequency will be 2 trains/hour in each direction as usual. Service end on the various lines will be the same as on routine days.

On the Independence Day 15.04.2021 (Yom HaAtzma'ut) on most lines the frequency will be one train/hour in each direction; some of the trains will call at additional intermediate stations. On the Herzliya - Jerusalem Navon line and between Rehovot and Binyamina the service frequency will be 2 trains/hour in each direction as usual. On the Beit-Shemesh - Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central line service frequency will be one train in 2 hour-intervals in both directions. Service end on the various lines will be the same as on routine days."

(xiv). TIMETABLE ALTERATIONS.

From a press release of 13.04.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.

"The railways are updating their timetable and services, while continuing the acceleration of electrification according to the progress of works. A new timetable will commence on Sunday 18.04.2021 until further notice, involving service upgrading, extending service hours, extending destinations and reopening of stations:

*The stations of Holon Junction, Holon Wolfson, Bat-Yam Komemiyut (on the Tel-Aviv -Yavne West - Ashdod line) and Yavne East will be reopened after being closed temporarily in favour of acceleration of the electrification works.

*The services on the suburban line Binyamina – Netanya - Rehovot will be re-extended to Ashkelon with additional calls at Yavne East and Ashdod.

*The services on the Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central - Beer-Sheva line (running through Lod, Kiryat-Gat and Lehavim/Rahat) will end at 23:00 instead of the current 21:00.

Changes to train traffic around Haifa and Hadera West:

*Due to electrification works there has been no traffic during the last months between Herzliya and Hadera West each evening (Sunday to Thursday) after 20:30 as well as on Friday and Saturday nights.

*The railways are now extending works to the area of Zikhron-Ya'akov (north of Binyamina) too; as a result, and similarly to the section mentioned (between Herzliya and Hadera West) and at the same times, trains from the north currently terminating at Hadera West will instead terminate at Haifa Hof-HaCarmel; consequently the stations of Atlit, Binyamina, Caesarea - Pardes-Hanna will be closed on the days and hours mentioned.

Changes to train traffic at the Modi'in area:

*Due to development works and electrification in the Modi'in area, with emphasis on the Modi'in Curve (the rail link between Modi'in and the A1) to enable a fast electrified service between Modi'in and Jerusalem, there will be changes to traffic in this area each evening (Sunday to Thursday) between approximately 20:30 and 06:00 next morning.

*Trains on the Nahariya - Modi'in line will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana instead of Modi'in Central.

*The last train from Modi'in to Tel-Aviv and destinations north of Tel-Aviv (train 130) will depart from Modi'in Central at 20:14 and will call at Modi'in Outskirts at 20:20; the last train to Modi'in (train 177) will depart from Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central at 20:01, will call at Modi'in Outskirts at 20:35 and terminate at Modi'in Central at 20:44.

(xv). WINDOWS.21

During the year of Covid19 and according to instructions of the Health Ministry all the folding-down windows on the Bombardier double-deck push/pull trains had to be kept open; on some of the trains running on the A1 line in the tunnels, some of the windows fell down due to pressure, luckily without casualties, albeit mainly "thanks" to the few passengers who were then on the trains; now that many restrictions were removed, the windows on these trains are kept closed and those which fell out were replaced and strengthened.

(xvi). RETURN TO MORE NORMAL SERVICES TO AIRPORT ETC.

From a press release of 20.04.2021 by the Transport & Roads' Safety ministry:

Good news for passenger from/to abroad: Further to the gradual removal of Covid19 restrictions and a gradual return to routine, Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev has instructed Israel Railways Ltd. to reopen and return to full activity Ben-Gurion International railway station as from Thursday 22.04.2021.

The decision is also a result of increase in the number of passengers on trains and a significant rise in the volume of airport activity.

Both Modi'in – Tel-Aviv - Nahariya and Herzliya – Tel-Aviv – Jerusalem services passing through the airport station will stop again there as in the pre-Covid19 times. Passengers will need to issue vouchers as on all rail services, and the Covid19 instructions on wearing masks, social distance and 75% capacity will be strictly kept.

It should be mentioned that, according to the instructions of the Transport Ministry and the ministerial committee for fighting the virus, those returning from abroad and committed to isolation are not allowed to use public transport services, including rail.

As a reminder: The airport station had been closed more than a year ago as part of fighting the virus, after dozens of railway employees and hundreds of passengers had to go into isolation due to passengers who had returned from abroad during March 2020 and used rail were found to be infected.

Minister Regev said: "Reopening the station will provide a comfortable and fast ride for thousands of passengers taking off daily from the airport and hundreds of airport employees; I am glad that at last, thanks of the efforts of all of us and the vast vaccination operation, we're gradually returning to the blessed routine and with it also public transport services are returning."

From a press release of 28.04.2021 by both the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.: "As per instructions of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev today – 28.04.2021 - and due to very few Covid19-infected people, the capacity on trains will be increased from the current 75% to 100% from tomorrow – 29.04.2021 - the masks must still be worn until further notice and vouchers must be ordered and issued, but until 06.05.2021, unlike the masks.

And on 6th. May: Sybil saw a Notice on home page of IR: "Dear passengers, from 7 a.m. on May 6, 2021, the requirement for advanced travel vouchers has been abolished. Please note: masks must be worn in the train and in closed spaces at the stations. Eating is not allowed in the train."

(xvii). LOD STATION PROGRESS.

The transformation of Lod station continues. To attempt to explain the situation and the changes: Until recently the 'classic' former PR station consisted of two island platforms, with the one for southbound trains (formerly Platforms 1 & 2, for trains towards Ramle - Jerusalem / Beersheva and towards Rehovot / Ashkelon) – also holding the stone-built station building, toilets, buffet etc. and access via a pedestrian subway which passed under the southern throat of the east-side sidings. A new footbridge supplemented an earlier pedestrian subway to link the two island platforms which had also at one point had a through line situated between the two inner platform tracks. The northbound island platform (Platforms 3 & 4) served trains heading for Tel Aviv and (very occasionally) the old northbound main line as far as the spur to Ben-Gurion Airport. There is a shelter here but no other facilities.

Sybil went to visit on 26.04.21. The current position is still transitional since several tracks through the station are being relaid, so the final platform numbering is still unclear. There will be six platform faces and the east side face of the new island is currently No. 1 but the others have retained their previous designation. Effectively the two existing islands have been extended northwards to meet a wide new footbridge which links to the large new building on the east side containing the station and IR headquarters. They are supplemented by a third, new island platform on the east side, taking some of the space formerly used for holding sidings, which is much shorter, extending southwards to (approximately) where the original two ended.

Trains using the current Platforms 2 and 3 / 4 halt midway, so covering parts of the older and newer platform faces.

She adds: "While I was there, an announcement was made that the 11:27 train to Beersheva would leave from platform 2 instead of platform 1. These platforms are of course reached by different escalators/lifts so there was a mad dash to platform 2. Then a few minutes later there was another announcement that this train would leave from platform 4!!! I don't know how often this happens, but how amazing that it was just when I was there... when everyone knows that since the beginning of time - well, certainly since British Mandate times! - all trains heading towards Na'an/Jerusalem/Beersheva have left from platform 1. Further stampede to the correct platform! The train came in, a few minutes late, and my train to Herzliya (11:33), which should have left from platform 4 was announced as platform 3, just across.

Arrived at Herzliya, I changed for the train to Ra'anana. This train starts in Herzliya, terminates in Beersheva and takes two and a quarter hours for the journey. It starts by heading north, of course, which is somewhat bizarre considering the destination. Herzliya now has six platforms, and these (hourly) trains to Beersheva leave from platform 1."



• Lod station looking north on 07.04.2021 (Photo Aharon Gazit)



• : Lod station Photo courtesy of Aharon Gazit

(xviii). MERON DISASTER – REACTION.

Sybil wrote on 30.05.21, the morning after the mass crushing and crowd catastrophe at the 'Lag BaOmer' celebrations at Meron, in which 45 persons died: "Notice on the IR home page, Friday morning April 30 (my translation): "Following the tragedy at Mount Meron, special trains are operating from Karmiel to allow speedy evacuation to many destinations. As a result, there will be changes to the normal timetable. Further information is available from the customer services number: *5770."

It was then announced on the 09.00 news: No regular timetabled trains were running on the Karmiel line. Special trains from Karmiel were running to Tel Aviv Savidor Merkaz, and other trains from there to various destinations.

(xix). "THIS IS A PLATFORM ALTERATION....."

In early May disturbing reports began to come in concerning the new Siemens electric multiple units. It appears the entrances are lower than most new IR platform heights so that passengers on entering have to step down.

To be honest this is also a problem in Germany where there have been several failed attempts to standardise on platform heights, to the extent that S-Bahn trains built for Hanover are not suitable in other areas and the double-deck carriages used in Berlin are below the platform levels at the stations..... Of course the current concern with "accessibility" for those in wheelchairs (or prams) is a major issue affecting

train design. But it seems nobody thought to ask or to mention or to check..... a typical issue for Engineers who get very excited about technical solutions for some problems while overlooking others. (The Editor, now of an age where prostate issues make themselves felt, and who has raised three small children, is VERY annoyed at young engineers who continue to build trains without toilets, especially when most stations are unmanned and don't have them either.)

In 'The Calcalist' (translation by Jeremy Topaz) is the following by Udi Etzion:

"The railway has purchased for billions carriages that are 20 centimetres lower than most platforms.

The Siemens electric trains that will enter service in September are adapted to the European standard, which will create a step up for passengers at the entrance and exit. Transport Minister Miri Regev appointed her office's Director-General, Ofer Malka, to examine how the decision was made. The CEO of the railway has instructed professionals to find solutions to reduce height differences.

"The new electric Siemens trains purchased by Israel Railways are lower than most of the platforms at the stations, which will create a step of about 20cm for passengers at the entrance and exit to the carriages. In recent months the railway has been carrying out test rides for the first sets of new trains, before the arrival of the bulk of the 330 new carriages ordered in 2016, at a cost of NIS 3.8 Billion, including a special depot built for them in Ashkelon.

However, the railway decided at the time that the new carriages would be European standard, adapted to the platform at an altitude of 76 cm; About two-thirds of the platforms are 93 centimetres high.

When the decision was made, it was determined that the platforms of the future stations along the Eastern Railway and Route 431 would already be built to the European standard, and the railway would adjust the rest of the platforms, but this was a process that would take years. The decision was then made in coordination between the then Director-General of the railway, Boaz Zafiri, and the Ministry of Transport, headed at the time by Yisrael Katz.

The first line on which the new trains will operate, in September this year, will be from Ashkelon to Hod-Hasharon via Tel Aviv and Herzliya. IR is currently exploring the possibility of temporarily elevating the exit of the carriages, in order to cancel the step in the platform.

On the orders of Transport Minister Miri Regev this morning, Director General of the Ministry of Transport Ofer Malka appealed to Chairman of the Railway Moshe Shimon and Ceo Micha Meiksner, demanding the establishment of a review committee for the decision. "Alarming and disturbing information has been brought to my attention that the new Double Deck Siemens carriages do not match the height of the passenger boarding pad, the ramp. In light of the severity of the information and the economic and operational implications to the railway, I presented the information mentioned above to Transport Minister Miri Regev. Minister Regev immediately instructed me to establish an

investigation team headed by me. She also instructed me to complete the examination within 14 days and present her with the findings," Malka noted.

Israel Railways said in a statement: The train operates in accordance with the European standard for TSI PRM trains, including a standard that defines maximum distance and height between carriages and platforms. This standard, including the differences in elevation recorded therein, was approved by the Ministry of Transport's control company, which approves in real time all of Israel Railways' operations, including equipping trains.

Although the carriages meet the mandatory standards, and for the purpose of providing optimal service to all passengers, the CEO of the Railways (who took office three years after ordering the trains) instructed the professionals several months ago to find technical solutions for reducing the height differences and improving the service, despite meeting the European standard.

The issue of the heights of the platforms concerns most of the railway companies in the world, and in Israel this issue is sharpened as Israel Railways operates about 70 stations built in different decades and at different heights, some during the British Mandate. In addition, due to years of underbudgeting that have led to a shortage of mobile fleets, many types of trains are operated today, some of them outdated, in order to meet the growing demand for rail service."

Aharon wrote, slightly cynically: "The latest joke running in the social network is: Maybe an emergency call is needed to collect money for meters so that engineers will more accurately make the measurements; also maybe they need to travel more to Siemens....

By the way, I permit myself to tell the following: In 1980 I wrote a letter to the then General Manager Mr. Tzvi Zafiri (no connection with Boaz Zafiri) according to his request, describing everything that bothers me regarding Israel Railways; among the others I asked why is there no single height of platforms (at that time there were still stations without platforms and the other were with a variety of heights including 93cm; I enclosed a letter from the Dutch Railways saying that their standard height is 76cm; his answers explained everything: the height you mentioned is only a recommendation for height meaning that the Dutch Railways document is worth nothing; then he said: 'In Europe there are also varieties of heights'; My response was: 'How can you compare a 450,000 km network with thousands of stations in dozens of countries, each with its own tradition and ego, when we have a tiny network of 600km in the best case with 30 stations?' There was no response further on; But it seems not much has changed since and it may explain the last mistake."

see photo right.....

(xx). LATER TRAINS TO JERUSALEM.

From a press release of 05.05.2021 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

As per instruction of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, trains on the A1 (between Herzliya and Jerusalem Navon) will end services at 23:00 instead of the current 21:30 thanks to the improved pandemic situation. The railways are adding eight trains on this line.

There will also be trains on Fridays and Saturday nights as in the pre-Covid 19 period.

A distinct additional reason is also the "Jerusalem Day" which is celebrated every year by the Jewish population to commemorate the unification of the city which happened 54 years ago during the 6 Days War of June 1967.



•oops!

The trains will depart from Herzliya at 21:31, 22:00, 22:31 and 23:00.

In the opposite direction, trains will depart from Jerusalem Navon at 22:03, 22:33 and 23:03.

The trains will call at Ben-Gurion Airport station, all Tel-Aviv stations and Herzliya.

(xxi). SHAVUOT TIMETABLE.

From a press release of 06.05.2021 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"On Sunday 16.05.2021, the eve of the Shavuot holiday, between 06:00 and 14:30 trains will operate as per Friday timetable; however, services of trains between Nahariya and Haifa will be extended to terminate at Ben-Gurion Airport station calling at all intermediate stations including all those of Tel-Aviv; frequency will be 1 train/hour in each direction.

On Monday night 17.05.2021, the Shavuot holiday evening, trains will operate as per Saturday night timetable.

On Tuesday, 18.05.2021, trains will operate as per Sunday time table."

(xxi). FIRES ON THE LINE. (I)

On Sunday, 09.05.2021, at around 11:40 the railways announced that due to a fire along the line to Nahariya between Kiryat Motzkin and Hutzot Hamifratz (north of Haifa) the line northwards of Haifa Central the 8 was closed. It was later found that the reason for the fire was defective brakes on a freight train, which created sparks which lit the dry thorns along the line. The line was reopened at 16.31.

(xxii). Also on Sunday, 09.05.2021 at around 13:55 the railways announced that due to a fire along the line between Ashkelon and Beer-Sheva, caused by incendiary devices despatched by rioters in the nearby Gaza Strip, the line was closed. At 16:03 the line between Ashkelon and Beer-Sheva was reopened but on Monday, 10.05.2021 at 16:01

the line between Ashkelon and Beer-Sheva was closed again due to the clashes within the Gaza Strip.

On 10.05.21 it was announced "Amid Gaza tensions, train service halted in south. Israel Railways says it's stopping train service from the southern city of Ashkelon to Beersheba and temporarily closing the stops in Sderot, Ofakim, Netivot, amid heightened tensions surrounding the Gaza Strip. The last stop on the Herzliya-Beersheba route is now Ashkelon, it announces." Thirty or more rockets had been fired from Gaza towards Beth Shemesh and Jerusalem. Flights were also diverted to avoid the area.

On 20.05.21 Aharon wrote: "Since there is a war between Hamas of zjr Gaza strip and Israel, the liquid security situation often causes line closures and re-openings, so it is almost impossible to bring an up-to-date report; currently, the West Negev line between Ashkelon and Beer-Sheva and between Ashdod and Tel-Aviv through Holon and Bat-Yam, as well as around Lod are closed. Services on other lines are provided regularly for now. Due to the fluid security situation my report is late as we have to enter the protected space (a shelter within the apartment) once we hear a siren. Let's hope for quieter times!"

Then the "Return to Normality": From a press release of 23.05.2021 by both the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Good news for rail passengers: From Saturday night 29.05.2021 on (unless a rocket war restarts), operating periods on both Saturday nights and Fridays will be extended as per instructions of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev. The changes will be as follows:

On the Valley Line between Atlit, Haifa and Beit-She'an: train services will terminate at 22:30 Sunday - Thursday, instead of 21:30 currently.

On the line between Haifa Hof Ha-Carmel and Carmiel: train services will terminate at 23:00 Sunday - Thursday, instead of 22:00 currently.

On the Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central - Beit-Shemesh line: train services will terminate at 23:00 Sunday - Thursday, instead of 21:00 currently; the train of 21:55 from Beit-Shemesh will depart instead at 21:50; this line will restart operating on Fridays between 06:00 and 14:00 and on Saturday nights between 21:00 and 23:00 on both days at service frequency of 1 train/hour each direction.

Finally, services on the Herzliya - Jerusalem Navon line will return on Saturday nights to a service frequency of 1 train/hour each direction between 21:00 and 23:00."

An unpleasant "surprise" for the railways: it has been "suddenly" found that the entrance floor of the new Siemens Desiro DDEMU is 20 cm lower than platforms height; investigation started; 2 pictures attached by YNET transport correspondent Mr. Udi Etzion and his permission.

Train derailment in Saudi Arabia see page 22



TENDERS

A.

(i). Call for suggestions for running various sorts of Stores at the new Lod railway stations: Note: So far there were insufficient responses to the railways' several tenders for running stores; hence - the call for advice. Latest date for submission of proposals: 31.03.2021.

(ii). Calling No. 12047: Participation in a pilot scheme for implementing Accessibility Technologies for Visually-Impaired, Blind, Hearing-Impaired and Deaf people using rail services: Latest date for submission of proposals: 11.04.2021.

(iii). Tender No. 1204: Providing Cleaning Services for the railways' passenger rolling stock: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.04.2021.

(iv). Request for Information No. 12191: RFI: Providing services of Checking and Filtering of Data Transmission from external interfaces (multi-channel gateway): Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.04.2021.

(v). Request for Information: 12191: RFI: Providing services of Safety System Management; implementation of the European and Israeli regulations and directions' requirements as far as operational, project, and work safety is concerned: The requirements are: effective planning and managing of safety, hygiene, and environment procedures, information centre for safety and hygiene, preservation of history, and data documentation. Latest date for submission of proposals: 08.04.2021.

(vi). Tender No. 12036: Providing services of manufacturing of Diesel Fuel Tanks for EURO 3200 diesel-electric locomotives: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 04.05.2021.

(vii). International Tender No. 42007. ISR wishes to obtain bids for the Manufacture and Supply of Rail bound Heavy Vehicle for Tamping Plain Tracks, Turnouts combined with Dynamic Stabilizer. Tender Documents are available for review and download at ISR's website at the following address: <https://www.rail.co.il/tenders/pages/opentenders.aspx>. Any Request for Clarifications should be addressed in writing only to Mr. Netanel Kimchi, Coordinator of International Procurement and Contracting, no later than April 23rd 2021 by e-mail: netanelk2@rail.co.il. Bidders shall be responsible for verifying receipt by ISR of Requests for Clarification. All proposals must be submitted no later than June 1st, 2021.

(viii). Tender No. 21301: A taxi station at Herzliya railway station:

Taxi services from/to Herzliya railway station. The contract is for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 08.04.2021.

(ix). Tender No. 12087: Upgrading the Saloons of Bombardier double-deck cars: The tender refers to 45 of the oldest cars of series 400-500 with the aim to convert them from regular seating configuration into longitudinal seats with more space for standees and consequently without tables in the area changed, but not changing the number of seats.

The works required: Dismantling of carpets, seats and tables, repairing of car floor - if needed, installation of new carpets, seats etc. The project is to start sometime in April 2021; the winner has to supply the converted cars in a rate of one car within seven calendar days. The contract is for 18 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.04.2021.

(x). Tender No. 32102: Supply of 385 Ah lead/acid operation batteries for Bombardier double-deck cars: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.04.2021.

(xi). Tender No. 22012: Building the Sorek Rhombus Railway Station at section 7 between km. 4+695 and km. 4+963 on the line No. 431:

Note: the station is just south/east of Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan railway station on the line 431 between Rishon-LeZion, the A1 line to Jerusalem and the line to Modi'in adjacent to a business and high-tech centre and the Israeli Electric Company site. The work is planned for 18 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 03.05.2021.

(xii) Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 12035: Fire safety consultant;

The job requires among the others: Design, implementation, control, and regulation of regulatory requirements regarding the railways' real estates under Israeli Standard No. 5435, railway systems, etc. The contract is for 12 months with optional extension by up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.04.2021.

(xiii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 12083: Providing various Consulting Services regarding railways' Internal Audit:

The following services are required divided into 5 separate baskets:

Basket No.1: Internal audit in different areas and performing a follow-up Audit; the railways intend to select up to 4 winning bidders.

Basket No.2: Audit services regarding Information/Computerized Systems; the railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders.

Basket No.3: Audit services regarding Data Security and Cyber; the railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders.

Basket No. 4: Audit services regarding Civil Engineering; the railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders.

Basket No. 5: Audit services regarding Mechanical, Electrical and Electronic Engineering; the railways intend to select up to 2 winning bidders.

The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.04.2021.

(xiv). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No.22019: Providing Architectural Design Services for the railways: Description of the required services:

1. Design of railway stations and other buildings, planning of rebuilding and upgrading stations and other buildings, additional constructions and architectural/engineering solutions for operational needs of the various railways' units.

2. Treating the design aspects of various subjects including programs, instructions for stations design and business licensing.

3. Promoting standardized design regarding stations and buildings.

4. Any subject connected with architectural/engineering design as per request of the railways' different divisions regardless of the project size.

5. Representing the railways to the standards committees, design authorities or any other body included in the contract as needed.

6. Statutory plans.

The intention is to select up to 18 bidders divided between professional groups for the mentioned services. The contract is for 26 months with optional extensions of up to 36 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.05.2021.

(xv). Tender No. 210302: Running a 33.60 sq.m. Accessories/ Gaming/ Computers store at the new Lod station.

(xvii). Tender No. 210303: Running a 33.60 sq.m. Eyeglasses store at the new Lod station.

(xvii). Tender No. 210304: Running a 69 sq.m. Books & Toys store at the new Lod station.

The contract for each of the tenders consists of: An adjustment period of 6 months; A permission period of 62 months; An additional optional period of 62 months. Latest date for submission of proposals for each tender: 13.05.2021.

(xviii). Tender No. 191202: Running a café at the new Lod station: The contract consists of: An adjustment period of 6 months; A permission period of 62 months; An additional optional period of 62 months. Latest date for submission of proposals for each tender: 20.05.2021.

(xix). Tender No. 201202: Operating a Non-Food stand at the Lod new railway station: The contract is for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 31.05.2021.

(xx). RFI No. 12193: An automatic Testing System for Information Security Infrastructures: The system has to provide the following testing abilities:

- *Testing the protective systems infrastructures for the email networks.

- *Testing the applicative protective infrastructure (WAF) for internet sites environment.

- *Testing the protective infrastructures and content filtering while browsing the web.

- *Testing the protective infrastructures of the End Point systems.

- *Testing the protective infrastructures of the DLP systems.

Latest date for submission of proposals: 09.06.2021.

(xxi). Israel Railways Ltd. International Tender No. 42010: For the Supply of HVAC Air Filter for ISR's Locomotives and Coaches. "The supply of HVAC Air filters for ISR's Locomotives and coaches in accordance with and subject to the terms specified in these General Terms and Conditions and the accompanying Tender Documents. 1. Pre-requisites for Participation in the Tender (the "Pre-requisites"): 1.1 The Bidder has supplied, commencing from 2017 and up to the final submission date, at least 2,000 Air Filters to 1 Rolling stock and/or vehicle manufacturer on each year; * Rolling stock manufacturers = coaches, locomotives and trainsets manufacturers; * Vehicle manufacturer = Buses and/or Trucks manufacturers; The Air Filter's manufacturer must be certified for a Quality Control system in accordance with the ISO 9001:2000 or equivalent standards or in the process of achieving such certification; All proposals must be submitted no later June 17 2021 by 13:00 (Israel time) to: Israel Railways Ltd. Contracting & Procurement Division – Tender Box #8, Darchey Mosheh 3, 7130703, Lod...." The locos are G12 and JT42 types; for rolling stock: "The heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the locomotives is the important part, which intended to ensure the appropriate sanitary conditions for train operating teams and comfortable travel conditions for the travellers. This document specifies requirements for HVAC air filters of the Bombardier DD coaches and Siemens SD coaches in compliance with the requirements of the relevant international standards..." etc.

(xxii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 12038: Providing services of Management, Security, Maintenance, Cleaning, Pest Control, and additional services for the new Lod Station business

area: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 84 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 07.06.2021.

(xxiii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 12194: RFI for Safety and Environment Consultants:

Job requirements:

- *Writing a professional opinion regarding Fire Safety, Health, Ventilation, as well as writing programs or procedures accordingly.

- *Consulting and writing a professional opinion regarding health and environment regarding noise/smell/air and environmental hazards at work environment.

- *A professional safety consulting from the regulatory aspect for safety, environment, and managers regarding the professional, safety, and criminal subjects.

- *Providing current update regarding safety and environment regulations, laws, standards, and consulting.

- *Knowhow and experience in training on laws and regulations regarding electricity, railway electrification, work environment and work safety.

- *Knowhow and experience in work safety, hazardous materials, environmental legislation, and enforcement.

- *Performing control over risk surveys and hazard surveys regarding safety and environment.

- *Preparing plans of safety and environment management including recommendations for performing current health and environment monitoring.

- *Preparing passenger revaluation and analysis of escape for stations and buildings.

- *Consulting on Command and Control systems of buildings and tunnels.

- *SCADA-Consulting on ventilations of tunnels regarding fire regulations.

- *Knowhow and experience in preparing Fire Safety plans, and/or operation files, and/or field files as required.

- *Knowhow and experience in standards, emergency procedures, and hazardous materials.

- *Validating Environmental Procedures with emphasis on hazardous materials, fuels and ground contaminations, ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, and air pollution.

Latest date for submission of proposals: 24.06.2021.

(xxiv). International Tender No. 42012: For the manufacture and supply of W14 Rail Fastening Systems for concrete sleepers with SKL14 Clamps. Bids by 15th. July.

(xxv). Tender No. 200606: Establishing and Operating Kosher Coffee, Baked Goods and other drinks at railway stations all over the network: The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 01.07.2021.

(xxvi). Tender No. 12090: Supply of Detergents and Cleaning Materials for use at the railway depots of Haifa, and/or Lod, and/or Beer-Sheva, and/or Dimona: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.06.2021.

B. TENDERS AWARDED.

(i). Israel Railways Ltd. have announced on their website that the winner of Tender 21103: Permission to install and operate Cash Withdrawals at railway stations is: Checkpoint Software Technologies and Investments Ltd.

(ii). Israel Railways Ltd. have announced on their website that the winner of Tender No. 32002 - Annual frame agreement for supply of Bolts, Screws, and hardware at an annual value of around \$49,394.00 (NIS 163,000.00) is: Scope Metals Group Ltd.

(iii). Israel Railways Ltd. announced on their website 21.04.21 that the winner of Tender 2205 for double-tracking the Rehovot - Pleshet Junction line between km 120 + 000 and km 126 + 700 is the Israeli infrastructure company VANUNU DANNY.



LIGHT RAIL.



A. TEL AVIV.

- (*Works on electrification on the Red Line in progress on Friday 05.03.2021; Here a view in the median of Petakh-Tikva Jabotinsky Road west of the big Avnat Mall.*)

(ii). NTA Tender No. 843/2020: Supply and maintenance of a unified system for Management of Payroll and Attendance: The intention is to select one winning bidder. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to 24 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 21.05.2021.

(iii). NTA Tender No. 821/2020: Providing Management Services for subsection PLWI of the Purple Line Western section: The intention is to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract period is to be determined from contract signing until end of services providing. Latest date for submission of proposals: 25.04.2021.

(iv). NTA International Tender No. 105-2021: - Search for a System Manager for the Metro network. Bids by 31.05.2021. "NTA - Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. is an Israeli government owned company tasked with the development of the mass transit system in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, which includes, inter alia, a metro network (the "Metro Network").

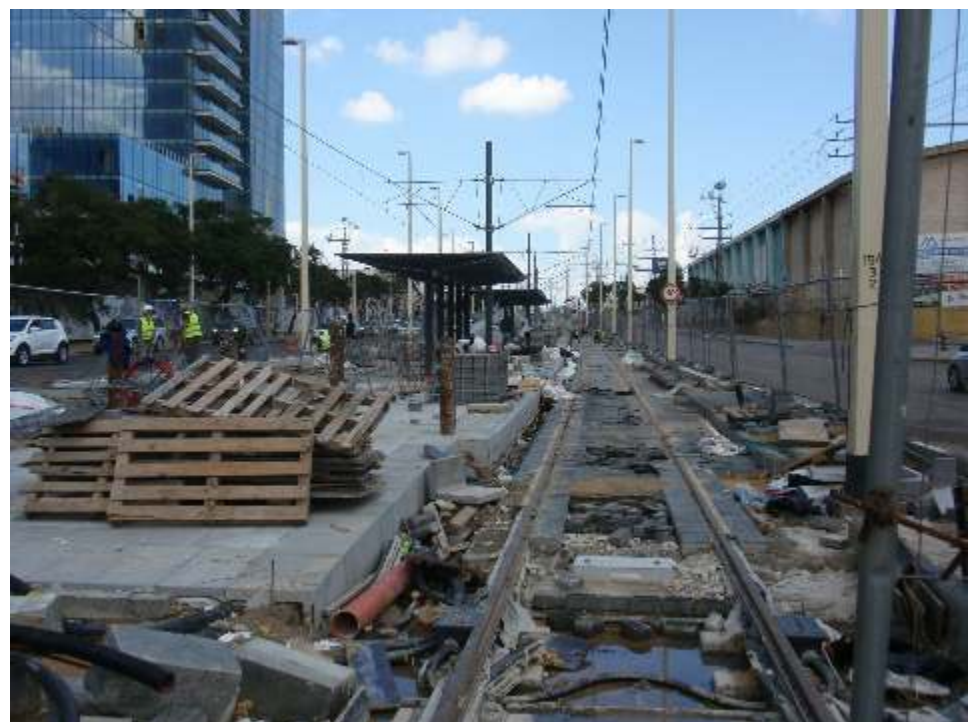
1. NTA, in accordance with its obligations under the Israeli Mandatory Tenders Law, 5752-1992, the Mandatory Tender Regulations 5753-1993 (the "Regulations") and further implementing regulations promulgated thereunder, invites companies worldwide, to participate in an international tender for the selection and appointment of a Network Manager for management of the Metro Network (the "Services"), all as detailed in the Tender Documents.

2. The Tender Documents will be available for review and download from NTA's website at www.nta.co.il ("NTA's Website") under the "Tenders" tab, as of 30 March 2021." etc.

8. "Bid Submission Date - The date for the submission of the Bids is on July 29, 2021. The Bids shall be deposited in the designated Tender box located at NTA's offices, as detailed in the ITB."

It is worth looking at the extensive documentation under: www.nta.co.il/en/tender/4169 which is, interestingly and significantly, also presented in Hebrew and Arabic, i.e. All three official languages.

(v). Tender No. 716/2020: Providing services of Mapping, Measuring and Registration in processes of lands expropriation, and stages of performing works: NTA's intention is to select up to 8 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.05.2021.



(vi). Tender No. 769/2020: Providing Legal Advice Services regarding Land Expropriations and Impairment Claims according to paragraph 197 of the Planning and Construction Law:

The contract consists of 2 bundles; NTA's intention is to select up to 10 winning bidders; 5 for bundle No. 1 - providing legal advice services regarding lands expropriations; 5 for bundle No. 2 - providing legal advice services regarding impairment claims according to paragraph §197 of the planning and construction law. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 18.05.2021.

(vii). Tender No. 024/2021: Providing services for Employees' Screening, Diagnosis and Placement: NTA's intention is to select up to 3 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of

additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 19.05.2021.

(viii). NTA Tender No. 154/2021: Providing services of External Legal Consulting in the field of Torts: NTA intends to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 02.06.2021.

(ix). NTA Tender No. 046/2021: Providing hotel services for residents who have to leave their homes temporarily due to works to be carried on lines the alignments of which pass through, under, or above their homes: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to optional additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 16.06.2021.

(x). TEST RUNNING COMMENCES.

Last week NTA, Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry, Dankal (short form of the "Dan-Greater Tel-Aviv Metropolitan Area") LRV management, and the Petakh-Tikva Municipality announced that next week at the beginning of May 2021 test runs of trains - without passengers at this stage - will commence along the streets of Jabotinsky and Orlov at the Eastern end of the Red Line in Petakh-Tikva.

(xi). NTA Tender No.080/2021: Providing services of Distributing Printed Material for NTA: NTA intends to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.06.2021.

(xii). EXTENSION TO ROSH HA'AYIN?

On 28.05 it was announced that Minister Miri Regev - Ministry of Transport - has asked the planning committee to change the design of the North-East section of the Tel Aviv Metro to include Rosh HaAyin city. This will involve extending the Red line (M2) further East and thus Rosh HaAyin will have its own station. Rosh HaAyin is 16.84 kms NNE of central Tel Aviv.

This is an expensive and complicated extra planning and building project. The extension is 6.5 kms. At present the thousands of workers in Rosh HaAyin need to use road 483 and highway 5 to get to Tel Aviv and these roads are heavily overloaded. The ministry is pushing to have this extension. The metro lines plans have however already been given over to the National Infrastructures' Committee and every change will need special legislation at the Knesset; also the financing sources for this extra expensive project are unknown as yet. The line crosses an important aquifer and any solutions will add enormous costs.

Mr. Ofer Malka of the Transport Ministry has suggested building the line as an elevated one.

B. JERUSALEM.

(i). CITY PASS ADIEU, BARUCH HABA KFIR.



• : Interior of a new Tel Aviv LRV and a computer simulation of trains on Jabotinsky Street near the Avnat Mall (on left). Courtesy of 'Dankal' and Aharon Gazit



From a press release of 13.04.2021 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"A new operating concessionaire to the Jerusalem LRV:

From Friday 16.04.2021 the new concessionaire Kfir (consisting of CAF and the Israeli company Shapir Engineering Ltd.) has succeeded CityPass which held the concession over the last 10 years; at the present stage, the operating hours and service frequencies are unchanged.

Kfir won two years ago the J-NET tender, in which it will operate the Red Line in its present configuration, will be responsible for extending the Red Line from Pisgat Ze'ev to Neve Ya'akov in the north and from Mount Herzl to the Hadassah Ein Kerem Medical Centre in the south; Kfir is also responsible for building the Green Line from the Gilo neighborhood in the south to Mount Scopus in the north with branches to Malha in the south and Givat Shaul in the west.

Once both lines are completed the Jerusalem LRV network will carry 400,000 passengers/day compared with 160,000 passengers/day carried currently on the Red Line; infrastructure works for extending the Red Line are currently being completed towards its full operation within 18 months; infrastructure works on the Green Line are in progress towards opening within 4 years.

Hand-in-hand with completion of the Red Line and the Green Line, preparations are taking place to complete the tender for building and operating the Blue Line with length of 31 km from Gilo in the south to Ramat-Eshkol and Ramot in the north with two branches: from Geula in the centre to Ramat-Eshkol in the north and from the Khan station (the historical railway station of the historical line from Jaffa/Tel-Aviv and which is now a recreation and leisure site exactly like the Jaffa historical station site) to Malha in the south.

The line will include the Purple Corridor linking Hadassa Ein Ein Kerem Medical Centre in the south and the Malha sport centre with Gonenim (Katamon) and the Talpiot Industrial Zone, and with an option of extending to Armon Hanziv neighborhood in the east (named after the British High Commissioner's Palace there, which later became the UN observatory headquarters in Jerusalem).

The design procedures for the line are being promoted and simultaneously a tender for infrastructure works towards track laying has been published; the line is expected to open towards 2030 and to carry 250,000 passengers/day.

Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev said: "Jerusalem was the first Israeli city to enjoy the LRV a decade ago; I thank CityPass for their good work during the concession which saw hard times; I congratulate Kfir for winning the concession; after completion of the three lines, Jerusalem will be the first Israeli city to enjoy a smart public transport system covering many parts safely and efficiently".



• Jerusalem tram with new Kfir logo

A further report with some new information:

"Kfir, which is jointly owned by CAF, the Spanish company & Shafir Engineering Israel, won the J-NET tender two years ago. As part of this, Kfir will replace CityPass in operating the Red Line in its current format, and will be responsible for extending the red line from Pisgat Ze'ev to Neve Ya'akov in the north of the city and from Mount Herzl station to Hadassah Ein Kerem Medical Centre in the south. The company is also responsible for establishing the Green route from the Gilo neighbourhood in the south of the city to Mount Scopus in the north, with spurs to Malcha and Givat Shaul.

Upon completion of the extension of the Red Line and the construction of the Green Line, about 400,000 passengers will travel on the light rail in Jerusalem, who will enjoy an advanced, safe and reliable public transportation system. The light rail will transport passengers from the neighbourhoods to the employment, academia, health, commerce, culture and leisure centers in the city comfortably and quickly. The infrastructure works are currently near completion to extend the Red route, ahead of its full operation in about a year and a half. The infrastructure works for the Green Route are also in progress and are expected to be completed within four years.

The Red route of the light rail in Jerusalem began operating in 2011 and created a transportation revolution and urban renewal in the capital. Every day about 160,000 passengers travel on the line, which has an average frequency of 6 minutes throughout all hours of operation.

The Red Line led to the revival of entire complexes throughout the city and to the flourishing of the city centre, thanks to the urban development that preceded it. Jaffa Street, which is considered one of the most polluted streets in Israel, has become one of the greenest streets in the country. The number of pedestrians on Jaffa Street has increased by 25% and the active businesses there have enjoyed business prosperity in recent years. In addition, 15% of private car owners who live near the Red line choose to leave the car in the parking lot daily and use the train to get around the city.



At the same time as completion of the works to extend the Red Line and the establishment of the Green Line, preparations are under way for completion of the tender for the establishment and operation of the Blue Line, which will cover over 31 kilometres from the Gilo neighbourhood south of the city to the Ramat Eshkol neighbourhood in the northern highlands with two branches to Redemption ('Ge'ula') and to Ramat Eshkol North, and from the Khan to Malcha South of the city.

The line will include the Purple corridor, which will connect Hadassah Ein Kerem and the sports complex in Malcha to Gonenim and the Talpiot industrial zone, with an option to extend to the Commissioner's Palace. The planning processes of the line are currently being promoted and at the same time the tender for the infrastructure works for the laying of the tracks has been published. The line is expected to start operating towards 2030. Upon completion, about 250,000 passengers will use it per day.

On Thursday Kfir will open a new service centre for Red Line passengers at the Cinema City complex in Jerusalem. The centre will operate Sun - Thur. & Fri & Holiday eves. The centre will replace the CityPass service centre.

The centre will provide detailed information on the route of the line, operating hours, schedules, fares and discounts for those eligible and will allow the purchase of tickets for light rail travel, the issuance of multi-line tickets and updating the profiles on the card. This, along with handling damaged cards, renewing cards in case of loss or theft and handling losses and realities.

Alongside the centre there will be a 2779* call centre, which includes a voice answering system and a team of telephone service representatives who will provide detailed information & service on a variety of topics including route routes, station locations, fares, schedules, points for purchasing & issuing tickets & real-time updates."

(ii). TRAM TRACKING CONTRACTS GIVEN.

From 'R.G.I.' 22.04.2021: "CAF has awarded GMV a contract to supply an automatic vehicle location and depot management system for Jerusalem's expanding light rail network.

Based on GMV's SAE-R software platform, the system will provide standard functions such as tram fleet tracking, driver communications and passenger information, and will be used to regulate services and ensure efficient management or movements and depot track occupancy. It will also provide capabilities for dynamic routing, junction priority requests, automatic flange lubrication and tunnel lighting management, as well as the ability for the control centre to manage the vehicle air-conditioning and passenger information equipment remotely.

All of the light rail vehicles operating on the Red and Green lines will be fitted with onboard units and touchscreens, while a series of workstations will be provided for line operators."

(iii). ASSAULT ON A TRAM.

On 06.04 'Times of Israel' reported on an incident the previous day in which a 21-year old East Jerusalem resident slapped two teenage Haredi boys in an unprovoked attack which was filmed and posted on 'TikTok'. "Police overnight Thursday-Friday arrested a suspect from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Hanina who is suspected of filming himself slapping two ultra-Orthodox teenage boys on a train. The video, on TikTok, showed the suspect knocking the glasses off one of the boys and slapping the other in an apparently unprovoked assault on the Jerusalem light rail. A caption above the video in Arabic read: "You will continue to delete and I will continue to upload. It's either the Palestinian people or You." Police said the suspect, 21, will be brought before Jerusalem Magistrate's Court on Friday to extend his remand. A spokesperson for the police said the investigation is ongoing.

The video caused an uproar online, with many sharing a phone number they claimed belonged to the suspect, calling to flood him with messages over the assault. On Friday, the father of one of the boys told the Kan public broadcaster his 14-year-old son returned home "upset, humiliated and afraid" following the incident. "I told my son that from now

on, he won't take the light rail and we'll make sure someone takes him. Today it's a slap, tomorrow it could be something worse," he said.

The father of the arrested suspect told Army Radio his son had nothing to do with the incident, saying that he just "received the video and uploaded it to TikTok." "I am against violence, I worked with Haredim a lot. I contacted the police yesterday on my own accord because we received lots of threats," the suspect's father added."

On 05.05.21 came the follow-up: "State prosecutors filed an indictment Tuesday against a 17-year-old Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem who was filmed violently slapping a pair of ultra-Orthodox passengers on the city's light rail last month in a clip that went viral on social media along with several similar ones, and contributed to boiling ethnic tensions in the capital. The suspect was charged with racially motivated assault and invasion of privacy in the indictment, filed at the Jerusalem Juvenile Court.

According to the charge sheet, the defendant sought out the two victims due to their Jewish religious appearance and decided to attack them because of it. He was on the train with six of his friends and when it arrived at the Shuafat station, he approached the two victims and slapped them both in the face while one of his peers filmed the altercation. The two ultra-Orthodox young men suffered mild injuries, and one of them had his glasses broken.

The defendant then shared the video with several of his friends, one of whom posted it to the TikTok

an evening of Ramadan last month, leading to major clashes with police....."

C. HAIFA.

THE HAIFA CARMEL CABLE CAR ("RAKBALIT") PROJECT

The project is progressing rapidly; 60 cable cars are already under the cables making test runs (currently without passengers) over the section between the station of Dory Road and that of the Technion (Israeli Technical Institute), both on Mount Carmel; the \$100M (NIS 330M) project is to be completed and start operation in October 2021 together with opening of the new academic school year.

Israel Roads Ltd. is responsible for building the project, while the performer is the Swiss-Austrian company Doppelmayr Garaventa, which is also responsible for installing the new underground train of Haifa, the Carmelit. The company's employees are currently building and installing the command, control, and safety systems.

The 'Rakbalit' is the first Israeli commercial cable-car project not intended for tourism, but purely for public transport services.

The first station was built at Merkazit HaMifratz public transport centre with connectivity to the Tel-Aviv – Haifa - Nahariya, Haifa - Carmiel and the Valley Lines of Israel Railways, all bus lines, highway 22 and, in the near future, also the tram-train Haifa - Nazareth.

From the first station of Merkazit HaMifratz, the line will have a station at the Check Post



• the cars under the cables. (by courtesy of Israel Roads Ltd.)

social media site with the Arabic caption, "You will continue to delete and I will continue to upload. It's either the Palestinian people or you."

Upon filing the indictment, the prosecution also filed a motion to extend the travel restrictions that have been placed on the defendant since his release last month.

The video was one of roughly half a dozen clips that were shared on TikTok showing Arab Israelis assaulting Orthodox Jews and led to mass protests by the ultra-nationalist Israelis, including hundreds from the far-right Lehava group, whose members demonstrated near the Old City's Damascus Gate where hundreds of Palestinians were gathered on

junction just at the bottom of Carmel mountain (this is actually an historical name of a control point in the British Mandate times; today just a road junction); it will make a 90-degree turn and climb steeply up the Carmel mountain to the station of Dory Road, and from there to the two most important stations: the Technion (Israeli Technical Institute) and the Haifa University. It will take 10 minutes between Merkazit HaMifratz and the Technion and another 10 minutes to the Haifa University. A fleet of 150 cars will be able to carry 150 passengers at the same time; tariff will be the same as that of an urban journey by public transport and passengers will be able to use the multi-liner smart cards.

A. INTERNATIONAL.

(i). "Backed by China, the project is "one of the most important geopolitical measures that Israel has taken in recent years," says Globes.

The announcement last week by the Ministry of Transportation that plans were advancing for a rail link from Israel to the Persian Gulf may be the next big thing.

The concept of a rail connection from Israel's Med. Sea port of Haifa to the Arab states was raised 4 years ago by Finance Minister Yisrael Katz, who was transportation minister at the time & dubbed the project "Peace Railway." Last week, Transportation Minister Miri Regev announced the 3.5-bil. NIS project was moving to the planning stage. "The Gulf to Gulf project is a mega-project that will change the face of the regional economy in the ME & connect Israel to many countries in the region by rail, & will be a gateway to the Med. for them," Regev said in her announcement last week.

This is economic news that will turn the countries of the ME into an island of economic power & stability based on reciprocity & peace," Regev said.

With rail transportation making a comeback in the world, a ME "mega-railway project" would fit in with the Chinese government's plan for a "silk railroad" connecting Asia & Europe. China has invested hundreds/ bill of dollars in building a transcontinental railway over the past decade, the paper noted, adding that countries in the ME like Israel that have been rehabilitating their rail networks are looking eastward & realizing that integrating with the Chinese transport network could open up new trade opportunities.

Regev said Israel will extend its new rail line, recently opened from Haifa to the Jordan Valley, and lay tracks to the Jordanian border. However, once there, the outdated Jordanian narrow-gauge system will need to be updated – a serious challenge for cash-strapped Jordan, which wants to modernize but needs several billion dollars that it currently doesn't have. The Jordanian plan includes a new line going eastward to Iraq with an extension southward to Saudi Arabia, which would give Israel rail access to Arab Gulf states and in turn could send goods to Haifa, thereby bypassing the Suez Canal and the extra transit charges involved in using the Egyptian shipping channel.

Globes noted that although the Egyptian government is not commenting on the rail project, in part due to its close economic collaboration with China, Egypt's main media outlets have called the railway project "economic colonialism of the Zionist State."

As well, the Saudis still have not recognized Israel, but with the project still years away, that would not yet cause a diplomatic hurdle.

At the same time, Turkey is pushing to have the Chinese run a rail line to its border as an alternate Asian route to Europe that could also involve Iraq and Iran. It is known that China has a strong economic interest in Israel's transportation infrastructure and is investing in a new cargo port in Haifa.

(ii). EURASIA RAIL, billed as "ONE OF THE TOP 3 RAILWAY EXHIBITIONS IN THE WORLD" is due to be held at the TÜYAP Fair & Congress Centre, Istanbul from 25-27th. November 2021. The website states: "It's the main route into Turkey's massively lucrative railway sector - the meeting place for the sector's buyers and decision makers. Hosting 229 exhibiting companies and 12,322 visitors, is the main networking and business event for the Turkish rolling stock sector, featuring innovative engineering, products and services from both the public and private sectors.

Eurasia Rail is the direct route into Turkey's massive lucrative railway sector, being the key meeting place for important decision makers and rail technology buyers."

B. EGYPT.

(i). RATP TO OPERATE CAIRO LIGHT RAIL LINE.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 5.3.2021: "National Authority for Tunnels has selected RATP Dev Mobility Cairo to operate and maintain the 'light rail' line linking Cairo with 10th Ramadan City and the New Administrative Capital.

Signed at a ceremony on March 3 under the patronage of Transport Minister Kamel Al Wazir, the contract will run for 15 years, with an optional five-year extension. The group had already been selected to operate Cairo Metro Line 3.

Currently expected to open in the fourth quarter of 2021, the electrified line is being developed as part of NAT's integrated multimodal transport strategy. It is being built by a consortium of China Railway Group and AVIC International under a US\$1.24Bn contract awarded in August 2017. Last year the contractors selected a joint venture of TSO and Orascom Construction to undertake the tracklaying, awarding a US\$112.5M subcontract to be completed by mid-2021. CRRC Qingdao Sifang is supplying a fleet of six-car EMUs which will operate at up to 120 km/h.

The first phase of the project covers 65 route-km and 11 stations. Running largely at-grade, the railway will start from an interchange with Cairo Metro Line 3 at Adly Mansour station, just north of the city's international airport, and head east alongside the Ismailia Highway for 28.6 km through Shorouk and New Heliopolis City to a junction at Badr City. One 14.6 km branch will run north to serve 10th Ramadan City, while a second would turn south for 30 km, looping around the Regional Ring Road to reach the New Administrative Capital.

Services would initially operate at 12-min headways on each branch, increasing to a planned 5-min interval in the longer term. The line is projected to carry around 340,000 passengers/day when fully operational.

RATP Dev Mobility Cairo anticipates that at least 90% of the staff will be recruited locally and it plans to establish a dedicated training centre to encourage knowledge transfer, drawing on its experience in other cities such as Doha, Casablanca, Manila, Hong Kong, London and Paris. It has committed to focus on 'punctuality and regularity, top quality customer service and strong expertise in asset maintenance'.



• A new line under construction.
• (Photo from I.R.J.)

'It is a great honour for the RATP group to have been selected by NAT for this exceptional contract', said Laurence Batlle, President of the RATP Dev Management Board. 'The Egyptian authorities have an exciting vision for urban transport, and 10 Ramadan – New Administrative Capital is a central part of it. In addition to our mobilisation on Line 3, RATP Dev is committed to providing Egypt with its first-rate technical and human expertise as we deepen our relations with the authorities, our employees and our passengers.'

(ii). NEW ENR COACHES DELIVERED FROM HUNGARY.

From 'R.G.I.' 10.03.2021. "DHL Global's complex logistics subsidiary DHL Industrial Projects is managing the delivery of 676 coaches which are being built in Hungary for use by Egyptian National Railways. The 24.5m long and 4.5m high coaches weighing 43.5 tonnes are being built by the Dunakeszi Járóközlekedési Zrt joint venture of

TMH International and Magyar Vagon, with production to reach a peak of 25 vehicles per month by mid-2021.

They are to be delivered over a period of 32 months, with DHL Industrial Projects facilitating end-to-end transport including packaging and customs clearance. The coaches are being transported by rail to the Slovenian port of Koper, and then by sea directly to the rail-connected port of Alexandria.

'This extraordinary project clearly demonstrates the depth of our expertise in complex multimodal bulk transportation', said Kapil Grover, Head of Industrial Projects, DHL Global Forwarding, Middle East & Africa, on March 1. 'I'm incredibly proud of our teams in both Hungary and Egypt, who will be working seamlessly in collaboration with Dunakeszi J  rm  jav  t   over the next two years to see to the project's success.'

(iii). CAIRO METRO CONTRACT.

From 'I.R.J.' 18.03.2021 by Oliver Cuenca:

"Egypt awards Cairo operator contract. The contract also covers the maintenance of the 65km 10th of Ramadan/New Administrative Capital (NAC) line.

Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels (NAT) has awarded a 15-year contract to RATP Dev, a subsidiary of the Paris Transport Authority (RATP), for the operation and maintenance of the 65km, 11-station Adly Mansour – 10th of Ramadan/New Administrative Capital (NAC) line.

The contract will run until 2036 and includes an option for a five-year extension until 2041. RATP Dev was previously awarded a separate 15-year contract by NAT to operate and maintain Cairo Metro Line 3 in September 2020.

The line, which is split into two phases, is due to be commissioned in the fourth quarter of this year. The line will run east from an interchange with Cairo Metro Line 3 at Adly Mansour station in Al Salam City along the Ismailia Highway, through Shorouk, New Heliopolis City, Badr City and Robaikey, from where it continues south to the NAC. A branch east of Badr will serve 10th of Ramadan City.

The planned Phase 3 will extend the line to 90km, running from the NAC south via the State Strategic Command Centre, Olympic Games City, to a new interchange with the planned Alamein City – Ain Sokhna high-speed line."

(iv). COLLISION KILLS 19.

The following appeared in 'New York Times' for 26.03.2021: (However it appeared that the casualty statistics were too high):

"Trains Collide in Egypt, Killing at Least 32. Officials said emergency brakes were activated on one train, which was hit by another behind it. The country's railways have been plagued by poor maintenance and mismanagement. (By Mona El-Naggar). Two trains collided in southern Egypt on Friday, killing at least 32 people and injuring more than 160 in the latest disaster to strike a railway system that has long been plagued by accidents, poor maintenance and mismanagement. It was not



• New carriages for ENR being unloaded at Alexandria





immediately clear whether the authorities suspected sabotage or an accident. But the Egyptian National Railways said someone had activated the emergency brakes in some cars on one train and another train coming from behind crashed into it, causing two passenger cars to overturn. Tens of ambulances rushed to the scene near the city of Sohag on the Nile, about six hours' drive south of Cairo. A video shot by a passenger and posted online showed a frantic scene inside one of the cars, where people appeared to be trapped. "Save us," one of the passengers is heard screaming. "We can't get the people out."

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt promised in a post on his official Twitter page to penalize those responsible. "The pain in our hearts today will only increase our resolve to end such disasters," he said. The collision came as Egypt was dealing elsewhere with a major crisis on the Suez Canal, where a cargo ship that ran aground has halted traffic for days on one of the world's main shipping routes. Egypt's creaking railways have a terrible safety record, with deadly crashes, fires and collisions at signal crossings a frequent occurrence. In 2002 the country's worst rail disaster claimed more than 300 lives when a fire erupted on a speeding train travelling to Cairo from southern Egypt. At least 20 people were killed and dozens were injured in 2019 when a train crashed into a platform at Cairo's main rail station, setting off a fire. A year earlier, a passenger train and a cargo train collided in the Nile Delta north of Cairo, killing at least 12 people. In 2017, two trains crashed near the port city of Alexandria, killing at least 37 people and injuring more than 150. The government statistics agency reported 10,965 railroad accidents between 2008 and 2017. The 1,793 railway accidents reported in 2017 was the highest number the country had seen for at least 15 years. While investigations and inquiries are often ordered up after crashes, little has been done to solve the longstanding problems. After one crash in 2018 Mr. Sisi said the government lacked the roughly \$14 Billion needed to overhaul the run-down rail system.



"The last fatal accident happened a while ago so this is not necessarily a sign of negligence or a recurring problem," said Reda Abou Harga, a former deputy head of safety and former spokesman for the Egyptian National Railways authority. But Mr. Abou Harga, who retired shortly after the 2017 crash, acknowledged that the train system was in need of an overhaul. "The state is undertaking a comprehensive railway development plan," he said. "They know it's an absolute necessity and are finally putting money into it." Some of that money comes from the World Bank, which approved a \$440M loan to Egypt this month aimed at modernizing the signalling system, upgrading track work along hundreds of miles and improving safety and service quality. According to the World Bank, however, the project is an extension of an earlier one that concluded last year and failed to achieve many of its targets. Instead of slashing the average number of fatalities from railway accidents by half over the last decade, for example, that number more than doubled.

At a news conference, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly reiterated the government's plan to



develop the railway system, saying that billions had been spent but that progress had been modest. "There are tens of thousands of trips and millions of passengers moving each day," he said. "We are developing the facility but it will take time and one challenge is that these accidents could happen."

'abc news' had the following report: "TAHTA, Egypt -- Rail traffic resumed Saturday in southern Egypt, authorities said, a day after two trains collided, killing at least 19 people and injuring 185 others.

The collision of two passenger trains in the province of Sohag, about 440 kilometers (270 miles) south of Cairo, was the latest in a series of deadly accidents involving the country's troubled railways. Egypt's Minister of Health Hala Zayed said at a news conference Saturday in Cairo that the death toll was fewer than the 32 initially released. She said the ministry had tallied 19 dead but also collected three bags of human remains that could not be immediately identified or counted. She accounted for the higher toll released Friday by saying that some unconscious victims were wrongly pronounced dead.

Video from the scene Saturday showed twisted piles of metal with passengers covered with dust trapped inside — some bleeding and others unconscious. Bystanders removed bodies and laid them on the ground nearby.

An Associated Press video journalist at the scene saw the reopening of the railway early Saturday. Authorities had replaced the rail track in the area where the collision took place. The damaged tracks and wrecked train cars were on the side of the railway. The two trains had collided Friday at the town of Tahta, causing two carriages to derail and flip on their side.

Rail officials initially said someone activated the emergency brakes on one of the trains, which was headed to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria. Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly however said no cause has been determined...."

Later Chris Capewell, who is an expert on railway cranes, noted: "The Sohag incident was dealt with by four cranes - initially two Kirow 500s to clear a single line; then two Gottwalds to lift the loco and coaches."

(v). FINANCING.

From 'R.G.I.' 26.03.21: "Russia's Sberbank has structured 4Bn Roubles of export financing to support TMH Tver's 2018 contract to supply 1,300 coaches to Egyptian National Railways. 'The supply of passenger coaches to Egypt is TMH's contribution to the development of non-commodity exports, which has been given great attention by the President and the government of Russia in recent years', said Dmitry Amelin, Director for Economy & Finance at Transmashholding. 'I am sure that the positive experience of co-operation with Sberbank within the framework of the Egyptian contract will allow us to operate in other countries.' "

(vi). AND MORE FINANCING: AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK APPROVES LOAN FOR EGYPTIAN NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS.

From 'I.R.J.' Apr 10, 2021, by David Burroughs: "The African Development Bank (ADB) board of directors has approved €145m loan to finance reliability and performance upgrades to Egypt's rail system under the Egypt National Railways Modernisation Project (ENRMP). The funding will be used to enhance operational safety and increase network capacity on national rail lines.

Rail transport is central to Egypt's economy and competitiveness, with rail expected to carry 15% of passengers and 10% of freight by 2029 as a result of the bank's loan and other investments in the project, up from the current 8% and 6% respectively.

The planned upgrades are expected to benefit 40% of the population on low-incomes who rely on rail as an affordable mode of transport. Increasing rail freight is also projected to have a positive impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

"Safe, accessible, convenient and green transport systems will be crucial to achieving sustainable development," says Egypt's minister of international cooperation, Dr Rania Al-Mashat. "The improvement and expansion of Egypt's rail system through the ENRMP allows for active mobility and enables the urban and rural development through an inter-modal linked system. Technology and innovation, and a robust commitment to public transport will all be vital components of building back better."

The government of Egypt has committed significant investment to upgrade the country's railway infrastructure through rail renewals, signalling modernisation and the purchase of new rolling stock. Under the ENRMP a state-of-the-art, cost effective train protection system will be installed on 950km of line along the busy routes connecting Alexandria in the north to Negh Hammadi in the south, and Port Said in the east.

"The newly approved project will enhance the multimodal transportation environment in Egypt, and the efficient movement of people, services and goods," says Ms Malinne Blomberg, the ADB deputy director general for the North Africa region. "This operation is fully aligned with the bank's strategy for interventions in Egypt, contributing to sustained and inclusive economic growth, and more specifically, developing infrastructure that supports expansion of the private sector and job creation."

(vii). RAIL LINK TO SUDAN PROPOSED.

From 'I.R.J.' 02.04.21, by David Burroughs: "Egypt and Sudan have agreed to construct a line from Aswan, Egypt, to Halfa, Sudan, to connect the two countries' rail networks. The first stage would run for 283.5km from Aswan to Toshka and Abu Simbel, with the second stage extending the line to Halfa. The project is expected to improve passenger and freight transport options particularly agricultural products. The two lines are currently connected by the Aswan – Wadi Halfa ferry, which operates along the Nile River.

The project was approved by the governor of Aswan, major general Ashraf Attia, and officials from the Egyptian Ministry of Transport. The line was also included in a bilateral meeting between the president

of Egypt, Mr Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, and the prime minister of Sudan, Mr Abdullah Hamdok, which was organised last month to discuss the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)."

(viii). MORE ON NEW ALEXANDRIA TRAMS.

From the NVBS newsletter 2021-4, thanks to Marc Stegeman; Translation by Editor:

"The tram manufacturer Tatra-Yug has been established in a former rocket factory in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro. An order has been received for twenty 3-section low-floor trams for Kyiv. The firm was established in 1993 in order to build Tatra trams in licence and after a lengthy period has now begun to find some success in the market with its own models. These include ten low-floor trams (of a different type) for Kyiv and fifteen high-floor vehicles for Alexandria as well as seventeen for Craiova."

(ix). YET ANOTHER MAJOR ACCIDENT.

This was an online AP report on 18th. April, repeated almost word for word in 'The Guardian' online. "A passenger train derailed north of Cairo, killing at least 11 people, Egyptian authorities have said, in the latest in a string of rail accidents to hit the country in recent years.

Four train wagons [sic] ran off the railway track by the city of Banha in Qalyubia province, just outside Cairo, the railway authority said in a statement on Sunday. Videos on social media showed wagons overturned and passengers escaping to safety along the railway. The train was travelling to the Nile delta city of Mansoura from the Egyptian capital.

The health ministry said that at least 98 people were injured, with most of them suffering from broken bones, cuts and bruises. At least 60 ambulances were sent to the scene and the injured were taken to nearby hospitals.

Salvage teams could be seen searching for survivors and removing the derailed wagons. It was not immediately clear what caused the train to derail and prosecutors said they were investigating the causes of the crash.

The state-run Ahram daily newspaper reported that authorities have detained at least 10 railway officials, including the train driver and his assistant, pending an investigation.

At Banha University hospital, people lined up to donate blood for the crash victims. Families were also present looking for loved ones who had been travelling on the train.

Sunday's accident came three weeks after two passenger trains collided in the province of Sohag, killing at least 18 people and injuring 200 others, including children. Prosecutors said they found that gross negligence by railway employees was behind the deadly 25 March crash, which caused public outcry across the country."

see photos on pages 17 & 18

(x). HYUNDAI ROTEM GETS RESIGNALLING CONTRACT.

From 'I.R.J.' 28.04.21: "Egyptian National Railways (ENR) has awarded Hyundai Rotem a Won

122.5Bn (\$US 110.1M) contract to resignal the 118km Nag Hammadi – Luxor line as part of the Egypt National Railways Modernisation Project (ENRMP).

Hyundai Rotem will supply the signalling for the line including automatic train protection, which will control the speed of a train relative to the distance to the train in front of it, and an electronic computer controlled interlocking system. Other infrastructure including the train control, machinery and power facilities will also be upgraded under the three-year contract.

The Export-Import Bank of Korea provided \$US 115M in foreign economic development cooperation funds for the ENRMP. Hyundai Rotem says it is continuing to expand its signalling business and plans to be involved in future rail project in Egypt.

ENR is expected to release more tenders relating to the ENRMP in future, including resignalling the 225km Luxor – Aswan line after 2022."

(xi) EGYPT DEVELOPMENTS.

In Fahrplancenter News' 62 p.8 (and congratulations to Samuel Rachdi for continuing to publish despite the many difficulties) is a brief overview of developments, some of which we have already mentioned but the summary is useful:

"The ENR is currently experiencing a major modernisation boost. The population has grown over the 100 million mark, whereby the vast majority are concentrated in the Nile Valley and Nile Delta, which together make up only a small proportion of the ca. 1M sq.km. of the country's area. The way the population is growing, by 2050 it could be 50% more, all squashed up together. This creates not just shortages of water, living accommodation and food, but also the need for transport grows exponentially, since due to shortage of space in the great centres of (Cairo (over 10M inhabitants), Alexandria (over 5M) and Gizeh (over 4M) the people move to other cities, since the distances are not very great, and so here further large new towns develop which soon reach and cross the 1M inhabitants mark. At the same time the overburdened road network also needs to be relieved of some of the strain, whilst environmental issues become ever more urgent.

Since a railway system already exists, which serves to convey the main transport load on specific routes, the only solution is to expand it as soon as possible. The ambitions are enormous. In January 2021 the State President announced that all 10,000km of the national railway network should be overhauled before the end of the year; in addition by this time all older locos and railcars should have been replaced by new vehicles! Probably the President has a great vision, but the national development plan 'Vision 2030' seems a little more realistic. Even before the Pandemic the ENR belonged to the worldwide largest passenger carriers with approx. 1.4M passengers per working day.

Thanks to orders placed in 2016 100 new Diesel locos of type ES30ACi of GE-Wabtec are being delivered and the Russian builder Transmashholding is building 1,300 new passenger carriages, whose delivery has also already begun. These include 500 3rd. Class carriages, 500 of a new air-conditioned

3rd. Class, 180 air-conditioned 2nd class, 90 air-conditioned 1st. Class and 30 Buffet Cars. Since December 2019 35 new carriages arrive each month from Tver (Russia) and Dunakeszi (Hungary). The French Turbotrains will be replaced from 2022 by six new 160km/h Talgo train sets from Spain. These will mainly cover the fast services between Cairo and Alexandria. In a contract with Progress Rail ENR received 50 other new locos before 2020 and 40 existing locos were modernised. These locos are to be employed primarily on goods traffic, for at present rail conveys just 1% of the national freight volume. By 2030 this share should have risen to ca. 15%.

The rolling stock orders alone have cost the country well over \$US 2 Billion. In order that not all this money should flow overseas the existing firm SEMAF in Helwan is being expanded and strengthened. This will initially be involved in construction of goods wagons, but Talgo has signed a contract with SEMAF for technology transfer, whereby other railway vehicles will also be built in the country. In addition on a site of some 300,000 sq.m. East of Port Said a new factory is to be built which will begin with the licensed production of locomotives.

A further urgent problem is safety on the railway lines. A new signalling system should be urgently installed and the railway routes should be better secured so that they are used less as footpaths and rubbish tips.

In addition the long-planned international railway routes should be built, meaning first the line from Aswan to Wadi Halfa in Sudan (planned for 30 years already). Not much newer is the plan to extend the existing line to El Sallom further to Tobruk in Libya. The treaty between the states for the construction of this line was signed in 1991. Nor should be forgotten the reconstruction of the line along the northern coast of Sinai to Gaza and further on to Israel, for which all concerned have expressed interest."

(xii). AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH HYUNDAI ROTEM.

From 'I.R.J.' 2.5.21, by David Burroughs: "Egypt's National Company for Railroad Industries (NIRC) and Hyundai Rotem have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to share expertise and knowledge, and increase the localisation of production in Egypt. The MoU was signed by NIRC managing director, Dr Ahmed Fikri Abdel-Wahab, Hyundai Rotem CEO, Mr Yong-Bae Lee, and witnessed by Egyptian minister of transport, Mr Kamel El-Wazir, minister of planning and economic development, Ms Hala El-Saeed, South Korean ambassador to Egypt, Mr Hong Jin-Wook, and chairman of Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels (NAT), Mr Essam Wali.

The agreement was signed as the Egyptian government pushes for further localisation in the rail industry, especially relating to the manufacture of new metro fleets over the next six years. The president of Egypt, Mr Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, has directed that 25% of the industry be localised within two years, 50% within four years, and up to 75%

within six years. As well as the domestic market, Egypt is targeting export to the wider African region.

Hyundai Rotem is currently supplying a fleet of 32 eight-car trains for the phase three extension to Cairo metro Line 3 under a Won 433.3Bn (\$US 352M) contract awarded in 2017. Under the MoU, 10 of these trains will include 25% localised manufacturing. The Korean manufacturer has also been awarded a contract to resignal the 118km Nag Hammadi – Luxor line as part of the Egypt National Railways Modernisation Project (ENRMP), and could be awarded the contract to resignal the 225km Luxor – Aswan line.

Al-Saeed says the agreement comes as the government launched the National Programme for Structural Reforms, which focuses on expanding and localising industries across Egypt while supporting the private sector, two goals supported by the MoU."

C. DUBAI.

(i). CANCELLATION:

"The Upcoming Edition of the MENA Transport Congress and Exhibition will not be taking place. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has brought a great deal of change to many sectors during this past year.

UITP has made sure to regularly consider all relevant developments with international travel and what potential restrictions mean for our events calendar. Therefore, with the ongoing developments for international and regional travel, together with our co-host Roads and Transport Authority Dubai (RTA), we have reached the decision that it is not feasible to hold the upcoming edition of the MENA Transport Congress and Exhibition (Dubai, 29-31 March 2021).

We thank you for your ongoing interest and support of our event. We especially take this opportunity to thank our sponsors and exhibitors for their understanding and continued engagement.

We are always committed to meeting their expectations and maintaining the highest standard they expect from us for this international event. We will in due time announce the timing and details for the new dates.

Please stay connected to the UITP website for regular updates on our 2021 events calendar. UITP has a strong presence in the Middle East and North Africa region."

(ii). JOINT VENTURE SELECTED TO OPERATE RAIL NETWORKS.

From 'I.R.J.' Mar 22, 2021, Written by Oliver Cuenca

"Keolis-MHI will operate the combined metro and light rail networks for up to 15 years. Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) announced a Keolis-Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) joint venture as the winner of a contract to operate the city's metro and light rail networks for nine years on March 20. The contract is worth approximately €125m per year and includes three two-year options to extend the contract until 2036.

The joint venture, which is led by Keolis alongside railway system integrator Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Engineering (MHI) and Mitsubishi Corporation, will take over operation of the network in September for an initial term of nine years, replacing Serco, which has run the network since the opening of the line in 2009.

The contract covers operation of Dubai's 90km, two-line, 53-station metro network, as well as the city's 10.6km, 11-station light rail network. This includes the planned 3.4km Metro Route 2020 extension of the Red Line to Al Maktoum International Airport following its completion.

The contract also includes the provision of maintenance services for all assets on both networks, including trains, control centres, stations and associated infrastructure.

Keolis says that the joint venture will combine its knowledge of automated metro operations with MHI and Mitsubishi's knowledge of the Dubai metro network, following their heavy involvement in its construction and development.

Keolis-MHI will also:

employ and train around 2000 staff members and work with local businesses to develop local expertise; implement real-time passenger information and optimised timetables;

manage and improve rolling stock and infrastructure life cycles through predictive maintenance and data-led processes, digitalisation and visualisation; and

support and exchange knowledge and best practice with other metro networks.

The metro is operated using 79 driverless four-car Kinki-Sharyo trains delivered in 2009 and 50 Metropolis trains supplied by Alstom, 15 of which were introduced to support of operation of the 15km Red Line extension to the Expo 2020 site, which opened in July 2020. Services on the light rail network, which opened in November 2014, are operated using a fleet of 11 catenary-free Alstom Citadis LRVs.

Dubai has the longest fully-driverless and automated metro network in the world, and the city's combined metro and light rail networks carry around 210 million passengers every year."

(iii). DUBAI AIRPORT.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 14.04.21: "Alstom has signed a five-year extension to its contract to operate and maintain the 1.5 km Innovia APM 300 automated peoplomover at Dubai International airport."

D. U.A.E.

(i). From 'R.G.I.' 11.03.2021: "More than 300 animals including Middle Eastern short-fingered and Baluch rock geckos, saw-faced vipers, Cheeseman's gerbils, scorpions and the rare Persian wonder gecko have been relocated away from the future rail alignment in the Misanad Protected Area by national railway developer Etihad Rail and the Sharjah Environment & Protected Areas Authority.

Etihad Rail has also formed partnership with Emirates Nature-WWF, Fujairah Environment Authority and Fujairah Adventures to implement an environmental conservation and habitat rehabilitation project in Al Bithnah, Fujairah."

(ii). Also from 'R.G.I.': Tracklaying on the Package A section of Stage Two of the national railway network has been ceremonially launched by Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in Al Dhafra Region, during a visit to Etihad Rail's railhead in Ruwais.

The 1.5Bn dirham Package A covers 139 km of double-track route running west to connect Ruwais with Ghuweifat on the border with Saudi Arabia.



• Tracklaying begins (Photo from Railway Gazette)

A joint venture of China State Construction Engineering Corp and South Korea's SK Engineering & Construction began work last year, and construction is now 59% complete. This includes half of the ground preparation works and 79% of the sand and rock excavations.

Sheikh Hamdan said the rail project was important part of the UAE's preparations for the next 50 years, as a sustainable transport sector would be a major contributor to the growth of the national economy. During his visit he met Emirati employees working on the project, including the first graduates from Etihad Rail's railway diploma programme, and stressed the importance of training nationals to lead the evolution of the rail sector.

(iii). ETIHAD RAIL SIGNS CONTRACT FOR 500 TRAINS FOR QUARRY COMPANY.

From 'R.G.I.' 2.4.2021: An agreement for the transport of construction materials from Ras Al Khaimah to Abu Dhabi was signed by Etihad Rail and quarrying company Stevin Rock on April 1.

Etihad Rail said the agreement was of 'considerable significance' as it is the first in a series of commercial agreements for Stage Two of the national rail network.

An estimated 3.5M tonnes/year of construction material will be carried from Stevin Rock's Al Ghail quarry in Ras Al Khaimah to Industrial City of Abu Dhabi. This will require 500 trains/year, each being 1 km long with 70 wagons.

'By connecting with quarries in the northern emirates, Etihad Rail will ensure faster and more cost-effective delivery of construction materials', said CEO of Etihad Rail, Shadi Malak. 'We continue to deliver on our commitment to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions by decreasing truck movement on the roads, supporting our overall ethos of a sustainable future and the UAE's wider sustainability targets.'

General Manager of Stevin Rock, Naser Bustami, said rail would 'provide a sustainable alternative to road transport, contributing significantly to Stevin

Rock's continuous efforts to reduce its carbon footprint. Moreover, rail transport will allow us to be more competitive on pricing our products in Abu Dhabi."

IRJ reported in addition: "Etihad Rail says the deal is significant as the first in a series of commercial agreements for Stage 2 of the UAE rail network, a network of more than 605km that will stretch from Al Ghuwaifat on the border with Saudi Arabia in the west to the port of Fujairah in the east.

An estimated 3.5 million tonnes of construction material will be carried by 500 annual services from Stevin Rock's Al Ghail quarry in Ras Al Khaimah to Abu Dhabi. Each 1km-long train will consist of 70 wagons with a carrying capacity of 7000 tonnes. This will remove 100,000 lorry journeys annually, with significant environmental benefits. Stevin Rock, which has been operating in Ras Al Khaimah since 1978, is one of the largest quarrying companies in the world, with an annual production capacity of more than 80 million tonnes of limestone, dolomite and gabbro from three quarries.

The signing was attended by UAE Supreme Council member and ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Transport and Etihad Rail board member, Falah Mohammad Al

Ahbabi, chairman of Ras Al Khaimah's Public Service Department, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saud Al Qasimi, and director-general of Ras Al Khaimah Municipality and Etihad Rail board member, Munther Mohammed bin Shakar Al Zaabi.

"By connecting with quarries in the Northern Emirates, Etihad Rail will ensure faster and more cost-effective delivery of construction materials, which in turn, we continue to deliver on our commitment to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions by decreasing truck movement on the roads, supporting our overall ethos of a sustainable future and the UAE's wider sustainability targets," Malak says."



• Etihad Rly. freight train

The two railways will initially focus on locomotive and wagon leasing arrangements, the purchase of spare parts, special volunteer groups and shared services initiatives. The agreement is also intended to support future initiatives in technology and procurement, ensuring training curricula are up-to-date, optimising maintenance and exchanging information. It also facilitates the leasing of locomotives, exchange of spare parts, and training engineers and students in operational processes and technical subjects.

Etihad Rail CEO Shadi Malak said expanding the close relationship between Etihad Rail and Saudi Railway Co would shape the future of rail transport and the logistics sector across the GCC region.

'Our agreement with Saudi Railway Co is aligned to Etihad Rail's strategic role in the development of the UAE's logistics and mobility sector', he said on March 17. 'Our expertise in rail operations, coupled with the strong presence of UAE talent across our company, will foster and enhance the transfer of knowledge with our colleagues in Saudi Arabia. Through this partnership, we look to enable our mutual development, further aligning to the requirements of this ambitious project.'

The partnership with Etihad Rail demonstrates Saudi Railway Co's 'integral role' in the development of Saudi Arabia, 'working to achieve the targets of Vision 2030 and provide a global logistic service for the kingdom', said SAR CEO Bashar Al Malik. 'It further indicates how we seek to provide safe and reliable transport, as well launching shared procurement services. Leasing of trains and vehicles, and the provision of spare parts, contributes to further development opportunities.'

(iv). SAFETY PERMITS.

From 'R.G.I.' 26.03.21: "UAE's Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure has signed an agreement to collaborate with Etihad Rail on the issuance of safety permits for Stage Two of the national rail project."

E. SAUDI ARABIA.

(i). Israeli press reports on 15.03.2021 referred to an outline scheme for construction of a new standard gauge railway from the current end of the line from Abu Dhabi via Jeddah to Mecca up the west coast of Saudi Arabia then by a bridge across the Red Sea to Eilat (presumably in this manner avoiding both Aqaba and also the Egyptian enclave) and from Eilat to Ashdod. An alternative but parallel scheme would see shipping use a new Chinese-built port at Eilat and containers etc. then being taken by rail to Ashdod. The cost would be \$10 Billion and the Investment Fund of Abu Dhabi would meet it.

Such a railway scheme would have the enormous advantage for international shippers of avoiding the Straits of Hormuz, the coast of Yemen, the piracy-infected Red Sea.... and of course the Suez Canal.

(ii). ETIHAD RAIL AND SAUDI RAILWAY CO. SIGN CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT.

From 'R.G.I.' 17.3.2021: "UAE's Etihad Rail and Saudi Arabia's Saudi Railway Co have signed an agreement establishing a framework for the exchange of services, training and knowledge.

of torrential floods that went opposite its regular path. "This caused the train to go off course and carriages were separated from each other, and one train car overturned," it said.

Heavy rains have lashed Saudi Arabia for several days, causing severe flash floods throughout the Kingdom and at least one death in southern Asir province.

Flooding can be politically sensitive in the country, where previous incidents — notably in the second city of Jeddah — have prompted anger over the government's perceived failure to build suitable prevention systems.

Saudi Railway said in a statement that as soon as the accident took place, an emergency situation was declared, and relevant authorities were notified according to the protocol for these situations. A reserve train was operated to transport all the passengers and the crew members. As soon as passengers reached the Dammam railway station, first aid was administered to 18 passengers who suffered minor injuries.

The head of the organization, Dr. Mohammad Al-Rmeih, said the damaged line has been closed since then, and on Friday morning, the organization started to mend the damaged sector in order to continue services after checking the safety and readiness of the line.

The SRO expressed its sorrow for this accident and apologized to the passengers for inconveniences. He praised security and medical bodies who followed up on the accident, and for the efforts of the organization's team."

Another link on 'Researchgate' referred to an article in 'Sustainability' in October 2019, "Integrating Remote Sensing and Hydrologic Modeling to Assess the Impact of Land-Use Changes on the Increase of Flood Risk: A Case Study of the Riyadh - Dammam Train Track, Saudi Arabia" by four authors; "The current study aimed at measuring the impact of the change in land-use morphology on the increase of flood risk through its application to the case of the Riyadh - Dammam train track in Saudi Arabia. The track was exposed to drift on 18 February 2017, over a length of 10 km, in the district of Dhahran in the capital of Dammam. Flooding caused the derailment..."

'Raily News' of 19. March 2017 reported rather idiosyncratically (this website has interesting news but in a language somewhere between English and Bavarian): "Train accident in Saudi Arabia, 18 injured: 193 people were reportedly injured in the train, which had 6 passengers and 18 officers as a result of the overturning of a wagon of the train that derailed in the east of Saudi Arabia.

According to the news in the Saudi Arabian official news agency SPA, a written statement from the General Directorate of Railways noted that the flood caused by heavy rains near the city of Dammam in the east of the country caused the rail line to displace. The statement, the train line due to the displacement of the passenger train of Riyadh-Ed-Dammam derailment as a result of derailment of the wagons separated and the 5 wagon was overturned, on the train 193 passengers and 6 officials, 18

(iii). RAIL ACCIDENT RUMOURS

On 22.03.21 Leonardo wrote: "Today a Mekka - Medina trial train Talgo derailed at full speed.

For now the news is secret, but the reservation to the trains for tomorrow are all deleted." Nothing more seemed to be heard of this but a look at past news items showed:

'Arab News' of 17.02.2017 reported:

"A Saudi train derailed near the eastern city of Dammam on Friday, injuring 18 people, after flooding from heavy rains caused the rail line to drift, the Saudi Railways Organization (SRO) said in a statement.

The 193 passengers and six crew members were transferred to another train and taken to Dammam after the incident that occurred at about 1 a.m., it said, adding that all injuries were minor.

Giving details about the incident, the SRO said the train went off course because part of the railway track drifted at Kilo 10, near Dammam, as a result

people were injured in the accident was expressed. Passengers injured in the accident were reported to be in good health."

Interesting also were references to previous and under-reported accidents on the Saudi system; this is from 'Arab News' of 6th. July 2012:

"One of the causes of Wednesday's train accident was broken communication and control cables between Riyadh and Dammam, according to a source. Thirty-five people were injured when the Saudi Railways Organization (SRO) train from Dammam to Riyadh carrying 332 passengers derailed near Al-Khuraish junction, about 70 km from Riyadh.

Railway authorities ordered an investigation shortly after the accident occurred.

"Some unidentified people stole the optical fiber cables that link the special control system of the railway tracks between Dammam and Riyadh, causing the damage to the system that resulted in the failure of the switching devices to respond to commands," Al-Eqtisadiyah daily quoted a source, who did not want his name published, as saying. President of the SRO Abdul Aziz Al-Hoqail cancelled his vacation in the United States to supervise the official investigations.

In another development, Hamed Al-Abdul Qader, acting SRO president, said in a statement on Saturday that the SRO meted out severe punishments to negligent drivers who had caused accidents in the past. "The punishments of train drivers, assistant drivers and other officials who are responsible for accidents included dismissal from job, imprisonment of varying durations and salary cuts," Al-Abdul Qader said. The severity of the punishment depended on the gravity of the negligence or mistake, he added. "The violations for which officials are punished include speeding beyond the prescribed limit and negligence of instructions about tracks," he said.

All train drivers, assistant drivers and other officials related to the movement of locomotives are subjected to intense training programs. They are also supplied with handbooks on the train operations for ready reference, Al-Watan daily reported yesterday. The SRO provides cash incentives to workers who operate the trains in an ideal manner, he added.

The official attributed the cancellation of two trains running between Dammam and Riyadh to malfunctioning of two power supply coaches. The coaches were damaged in the latest accident, he said. SRO technicians are trying to fix the damage and put them back on track, which he hoped would be accomplished in two days.

Ten people were killed and dozens injured in eight train accidents in the Kingdom since May 2006. In an accident in October 2010 five workers were killed. In January 2007, three passengers were killed in an accident. The other accidents occurred on Feb. 10, 2010; Jan. 26, 2010; Dec 12, 2009; April 9, 2007; and May 21, 2006."

It would appear that there are still many geological and stability issues to be overcome.

(iv). MORE ON MERGER AND PLANS.

In our last issue (132:07:H:(ii)) we reported on the merger of the different railway administrations in Saudi Arabia. A little more information is given in 'Fahrplancenter News' No. 62 p.17:

"The SAR, formed in 2006, runs the 2,400km railway system from Riyadh to Al Haditha (1,242km) not far from the border to Jordan, with freight and passenger services, as well as the freight-only line from Az Zabirah to Ras Al-Khair on the Persian Gulf and in the North to Hazm Al-Jalamid (where there are phosphate mines, near to the border with Iraq) and to Al Baseeta. The separate Al 'Haramain' High-Speed line Medina – Jeddah – Mecca is also run by the SAR. The SAR has also already been entrusted with the planning of future lines. These include:

The 'Saudi Land Bridge Line' Riyadh – Jeddah with 950km, whose construction should begin soon and will be mainly intended for freight traffic but at least during the Pilgrim season will also be used for passengers.

A further strategic project is the so-called 'Gulf Corridor' from Kuwait via Ras Al-Khair and Dammam in the Arab Emirates, with branches to Qatar and Bahrain. Here both passenger and freight services will be offered.

Only later will there be connecting lines, so along the Red Sea from Jaizan (near the border to Yemen) via Mecca, Jeddah, Yanbu and then into the interior via Medina to Buraidah or Hail (both on the line Riyadh – Al-Haditha); Medina – Tabuk – Halat Amar (roughly along the route of the former Hedjaz Railway with a branch from Tabuk to Doha on the Red Sea; From Al Moyah (on the Landbridge line) to the centres of Taif (near Mecca) and Abha (in the south). In order to link Um Riyadh better with Qatar and the Emirates, branches should be built from the line to Dammam to Salwa and Al Batha. In terms of international lines the extension of the existing railway to Al Haditha on to Mafraq in Jordan and further to Haifa has the highest priority, whereby the diplomatic contacts have already begun to be developed. In addition Saudi Arabia is indicating that it is getting ready to electrify its railways, so as to prepare for the time after Oil, or to use alternative energy sources such as solar energy. As everywhere else, here too the Corona crisis has pushed all projects one or two years back; the state budget of this once so fabulously-rich country has fallen into a massive deficit which now means that petrol now costs almost half of what it cost in Europe (before it was 90% cheaper) and the population have had to start paying Value Added Tax and Income Tax.

But now the railway sector should be streamlined under the new SAR with a reduced administration overhead, standardised operations and joint administration of vehicles, exchange of vehicles, through tariffs and goods trains in order to reduce the deficit, and the government would then use the money saved to invest in the new routes, to build at least the most urgent lines."

F. TURKEY.

(i). ESKISEHIR TRAMWAY EXTENSION.

From 'R.G.I.' 12.03.2021: "An extension of Eskisehir tram Line 13 from Şehir Hastanesi to Sultandere and 75 Yıl District opened on March 12, taking the metre-gauge Etram network to a total of 45 km. The initial section of Line 13 between Opera and Şehir Hastanesi opened in 2019, but completion of the extension was delayed owing to a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and financing issues caused by the depreciation of the Lira, Mayor Yılmaz Büyükerem said.

The city plans to open a further extension to Kumlubel from Opera at the other end of Line 13 'as soon as possible', he said. This would take the network to 55 km. Future plans including extending the line further into north to the Eskisehir Technical University Campus and on to the outer suburbs."

(ii). FREIGHT THROUGH THE MARMARAY.

From 'R.G.I.' 15.03.2021: "Turkish private operator Omsan Lojistik has begun transporting new Dacia Duster cars from Europe to Asia via the Marmaray tunnel. 'During the current pandemic, rail has been a reliable and direct means of transport of increasing importance and will develop into one of the preferred alternatives in our country in the future', said Managing Director Cömert Varlık. 'I am firmly convinced that the Marmaray route will make significant contributions to Turkish exports and imports.'"



• Turkish freight train

(iii). SUBSIDIES EXTENDED TO END OF 2023.

From 'R.G.I.' 22.3.2021:

"Parliament has passed legislation extending state support for infrastructure manager TCDD and national train operator TCDD Taahhüt ve İşletme until at least the end of 2023, with a clause allowing the President to extend subsidies for up to a further 10 years without recourse to parliament.

The legislation passed on March 10 will see the state continue to provide direct funding for some of TCDD's infrastructure investments and to cover any deficit in the operating budget caused by the 2016 transfer of operations to the newly established TCDD Taahhüt ve İşletme, as well as funding any revenue shortfall at the operator.

The subsidies were deemed necessary because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has forced TCDD Tas?mc?l?k to suspend most passenger services and make only limited numbers of seats available on those high speed services which have been able to run. This had caused a loss of revenue for both the operator and the infrastructure manager.

Turkey's rail liberalisation plans allow private companies to bid to start offering passenger services in competition with TCDD Tas?mc?l?k from this year. However, none has so far announced plans to do, owing to general uncertainty over how the market will operate and the problems caused by the pandemic. The extension of state subsidies for TCDD Tas?mc?l?k until at least 2023 makes it less likely that private operators will submit bids before then.

The continued subsidies are likely also to impact the freight sector, where private companies have been operating since 2018. In 2019, the last year for which data is available, private operators accounted for 12.5% of the 33.54 million tonnes carried."

(iv). FIRST PRIVATE PASSENGER SERVICE TARGETS JAPANESE TOURISTS.

From 'R.G.I.' 14.04.2021: "A license has been granted for the operation of the first regular private passenger train service in Turkey, a luxury night train which will operate between Istanbul and the Cappadocia region tourist destination. The service will be operated by a joint venture of Japan's HIS Global travel agency and Turkey's Sun Group. It will be aimed at high-end Japanese tourists, with the target of reaching 200,000 passengers a year.

The partners plan to invest around €40M in the project, with the lease or purchase of least two locomotives and six coaches. No date for the start of the service has yet been announced. Further routes in Turkey are planned, but details have not been confirmed.

State operator TCDD Tas?mc?l?k has previously run limited luxury sleeper services to tourist destinations in Turkey and occasionally similar services have run to Hungary and Iran.

Under Turkey's rail liberalisation programme, private companies have been able to operate passenger services from this year, including bidding to take over existing services from the state operator whose subsidy was due to end. However, most TCDD Tas?mc?l?k services have been suspended since early last year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the government has extended its subsidies until 2023."

(v). BAKU FREIGHT FLOW.

From 'R.G.I.' 14.04: "The Turkuaz joint venture of Azerbaijan's ADY Container and Absheron Lojistika, Turkey's TCDD and Pasifik Eurasia and Georgia's GR Logistics & Terminals has launched a twice-weekly container block train service from Baku to Mersin and Istanbul."

(vi). AUSTRIAN LOCO MYSTERY.

In 'Lok Magazin' 05/2021 p.29 is a reference to a "planned sale of fifty electric locomotives of class 1144 which has fallen through for un known reasons. Numerous engines had already been gathered at Linz ready for the transport as they had been sold to a construction firm in Turkey where they were to be rebuilt to 25kVAC/50Herz traction for use in Africa. Twelve of the locos had even been returned to service within Austria."

(vii). MORE FREIGHT NEWS.

VTG EXPANSION. From 'R.G.I.' 9.5.21: "VTG has announced a 'sharp expansion' in the Turkish market, bundling the activities of VTG Rail Europe, VTG Rail Logistics and VTG Tanktainer under local subsidiary VTG Nakliyat.

Offices have been opened in Halkal? and Pendik on the European and Asian sides of the Bosphorus to handle rail and tanktainer business. The business will be headed jointly by Sinemis Özden, Managing Director of VTG Nakliyat, and Zoltán Potvorszki, Head of Region South Eastern Europe for VTG Rail Logistics.

"We will be able to offer integrated rail, container and multimodal project logistics as well as customs handling and asset hire services in Turkey and the surrounding region, locally and all from a single source", Potvorszki explained on May 3. "We see huge potential in this region, especially for rail and multimodal transport", added Özden. "By pooling VTG's expertise under the aegis of VTG Nakliyat, we will be better placed to respond to customers' needs in this highly promising market environment."

and: from 'R.G.I.' 10.05.21: "ÖBB's Rail Cargo Group is to combine its new TransFER Budapest – Brno service launched on May 5 with its existing service from Budapest to Köseköy in Turkey, making it possible to ship freight from Turkey to Hungary and on to the Czech Republic twice a week."

G. IRAN.

MORE METRO STATIONS IN TEHRAN.

From 'R.G.I.' 17.03.2021: "Two stations at the northwestern end of Tehran metro Line 6 were opened for revenue service on March 13, along with an isolated section of the route.

The short section of Line 6 serving Yadegar-e Emam and Shahid Sattari is being operated as a separate shuttle from the interchange with Line 7 at Tarbiat Modarres University. It will be connected to the southeastern part of the route which opened in 2019 with the completion of the cross-city core, bringing Line 6 to a total length of 38km and 31 stations.

Inaugurating the Line 7 station at Milad Tower on December 17, Tehran Mayor Pirouz Hanachi committed to completing 10 stations before the end of the Iranian year on March 20, as part of an expansion programme aimed at encouraging modal shift and reducing the capital's traffic congestion. His priority is to complete lines 6 and 7 which will add 70 route-km and bring the metro network to around 240km.

December 17 also saw the commissioning of the Line 6 station at Amir Kabir, on the eastern section of that route. The intermediate stations at Ghiam Square and Doolab on the southern part of Line 7 were put into service on March 4.

The 22nd station on Line 6, Shahid Sattari has been developed by Behro Consulting Engineers. Located beneath Behnam Square at the intersection of the Sattari and Hakim highways with Payambar Street, the station is 21m below ground, with 140m platforms.

Hanachi told local media that the coronavirus pandemic and travel restrictions had seen metro usage slump during 2020, with Tehran Metro carrying around 10% of its normal 5.2M passengers/day. Nevertheless, the mayor remains committed to doubling the size of the network. Last September he attended a ceremony to mark the start of work on Line 10, which will eventually run for 43km from an interchange with Line 5 at Vardavard to the west of the capital to the Ghanat Kowsar district in the east, serving 35 stations."

More on this came with 'R.G.I.' 19.05.21: "On May 15 two infill stations were opened on the Tehran metro at Aghdasiyeh on Line 3 and Marzadaran on Line 6."

H. LEBANON.

As we know, there are no railways in Lebanon at present; This lengthy, informative and essentially rather sad article by Peshia Magid appeared in 'Atlas Obscura' on 4. May 2021 and puts much into the context of the issues dividing contemporary Lebanese society but ends with a bit of hope for the (very-) long-term future:

"The course of Elias Maalouf's life changed in 2005, when he saw Syrian soldiers burning the archives of Lebanon's railway system in an abandoned train wagon. He dashed to the wagon and thrust his hands into the fire to save whatever he could. It was the beginning of a life's work. Maalouf had gone to the train station in his hometown of Riyaq to film for a documentary the Syrian military's withdrawal from its 29-year occupation of Lebanon. Maalouf's family had fled Riyaq for Ecuador during Lebanon's civil war, which had broken out in the 1970s and lasted for 20 years. The Syrian military entered the country around the same time, leading to a long and bitter occupation.

When he was a child abroad, Maalouf's parents had told him stories of a glittering Riyaq, where there was a cinema, a cabaret, dancing, and music, all sustained by the trade brought by the train station. But by the time he moved back to Riyaq as a young man in the 1990s, the station had been repurposed as a Syrian military base, and civilians were forbidden from entering.

In 2005, Maalouf, as a young journalist, was expecting to film the departure of the Syrian soldiers, but instead he saw them destroying the records of a heritage he'd dreamed about. He could not resist acting. "It became very emotional for me," he says. "It was my dream of entering into the train station that I was never allowed to."

It's not clear why the soldiers were burning the archives, although the Syrian military has been accused of stripping and selling parts of the Lebanese rail system on their way out of the country. Maalouf managed to rescue a couple of documents, scorching his hands and his shirt in the process, but then he heard gunshots.

"I didn't notice that they [the soldiers] were still in the train station.... They took their shotguns and they [shot] up into the sky to scare me," he recalls. He hid between the wagons and watched as they returned to finish the job and destroy the remaining archives.

That moment compelled Maalouf to figure out a way to preserve his country's and town's rail history. He changed the subject of his documentary to that, and went on a trip to Europe to track down archives from the Lebanese diaspora living abroad. As he interviewed former railway workers, he realized their deep love and attachment to the railway, and he, too, became more invested. "I was waking up in the morning thinking of trains, I was sleeping thinking of trains, everything I talked about was trains," he says. "I started making a documentary about the rails and rails became the story of my life."

In the years since, Maalouf has founded an NGO called Train, Train and through it gathered a group dedicated to returning railway travel and transport to Lebanon. But they soon encountered obstacle after obstacle from the government, which, despite a bloated public sector, provides almost no public services.

The traces of Lebanon's rail history are everywhere. Tracks still traverse the country, silently wending their way past the seaside, forests, and mountains. Steam engines that were once among the best in the world are now more like wildlife preserves, with foxes and owls making homes of frozen locomotives and unused cars.

The system had been initially built in the 1890s, through the efforts of local and French businessmen. The trains were engineering marvels, with special gears that allowed them to ascend the country's steep slopes. They made Beirut and Tripoli into centers for trade and linked Lebanon to Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Europe. They also provided a vital public service to Lebanese citizens, who had never really been able to move around the country for work, studies, or leisure.

The Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975 and ravaged the country for 15 years. During that time, most trains were stored in their stations for safety. The ruling class that emerged from the civil war was composed of some of the same people who had led militias during the war. They divided up the government among themselves, and the Lebanon they rebuilt was privatized for their profit.

"We are one of the oldest countries in the Levant to have railway networks ... unfortunately ... every public service and every organized service ... has died because the whole concept of state and public service is dying," says Albert Kostanian, a Senior Policy Fellow for Economics at the American University in Beirut Issam Fares Institute, and a consultant on public transportation and infrastructure.

This collapse of public transportation has had repercussions. Across the country, roads are so crowded with cars that the congestion has grown infamous. Getting in and out of Beirut often means a nightmare of bottlenecks and interminable waits in choking traffic. "You have an abnormal number of cars per capita, in Lebanon," says Konstanian. "If you don't have a car, you don't have any means of economic or social integration."

A semi-formal private network of minibuses has filled the public transportation vacuum for people who cannot afford private vehicles. Petra Samaha, a researcher at SciencesPo who has studied transportation in Beirut, explains that the minibuses are run by syndicates that are linked to political parties that have profited from privatization of the transportation sector. "It's like a web of interests that got really tight," she says. "It's really a system that's got its hand like an octopus on the public assets of the state."

According to Samaha, the governing political parties use transportation networks to both strengthen their political bases and turn a profit. This leads to a situation in which there is no incentive to invest in public transportation. The same applies to both the failing electricity grid and polluted water, both of which force citizens to rely on generators and private water trucks. "They killed the public system," Kostanian says, "to have a private system."

Maalouf still smarts from the governmental obstacles he says have stymied 'Train, Train's' efforts to preserve and revitalize the railways. The group first tried to build a museum about the history of the railway in now-quieter Riyaq. The museum would honor that history, and bring to life trains still rusting in Riyaq's station. But the government denied permission. Maalouf does not know exactly why, but he blames "personal reasons."

It may be linked to Maalouf's disdain for the head of Lebanon's Public Transport and Railway Administration, Ziad Nasr, whom he accuses of being completely ignorant about transport and obtaining his position through political connections.

"When we went and we approached him, he was really confused," Maalouf seethes. "Up until now, I assure you, he doesn't know the names of the trains that we have, the numbers of the stations, the difference between one and another, the differences of transportation networks."

The Public Transport and Railway Administration runs a small fleet of semifunctional buses and has authority over the abandoned rail stations. Its employees reportedly have very little to do, and the situation appears symptomatic of the larger issue of public sector corruption and waste in Lebanon.

The refusal to permit a museum only led Maalouf to escalate his plans. "We'll make the project bigger," he remembers thinking. "So we asked for the railways back."

Most of the railroad's tracks remain in place, lacing through the country, according to Train, Train's research. However, any restoration would have to deal with small encroachments on the tracks, ensuring that tunnels and bridges are safe,

and refurbishing Lebanon's remaining trains. The government has blamed a lack of funds for their inaction.

Nevertheless, in 2015 Maalouf managed to raise enough funds to build a "prototype" rail line to show that bringing back railways was possible. They chose a line with tunnels, bridges, and encroachments on the tracks: all the physical obstacles to railway renewal. "In order to prove a point ... we decided to make a prototype of everything that's not allowing the railway to happen ... in a very difficult stretch of line," he says. "I say give me three months and I can restore [it]." He gathered engineers and investors, all he needed was government permission. Once again, it was refused.

Despite these setbacks 'Train, Train' has expanded, as more people have latched onto the idea of restoring the country's railways. "The NGO started becoming bigger without me understanding how it is growing, but it was like a message that everybody was waiting for," says Maalouf. Carlos Naffah, who currently leads Train, Train, was converted to an ardent train lover through the group's meetings. "I see it as a chance to reconnect the country, to reconnect it internally, to the region, and to the world," he says.

When Naffah took over leadership of the NGO, he took a more conciliatory approach with the railway authorities. He was able to get many politicians to promise to commit to rebuilding the railway in their political campaigns ahead of the 2017 parliamentary elections, but this did not result in substantive action. He does credit the campaign with spreading awareness about the trains.

Naffah has a better relationship with Nasr than Maalouf did, but he also mourns how the rail administration has treated Beirut's rail stations, where bars and pubs were built in and among the remaining trains, capitalizing on their haunting beauty. It hurts Naffah to see the train station treated like this, like the trains are dead and will never run again. "We don't want to see it as a graveyard, we want to see it as a space for life," he says.

'Train, Train' has continued to lay the groundwork for a future return of the railways. For now, the dream to bring back the trains remains at a standstill. Naffah and Kostanian believe this is because such a project would take time and investment, while many politicians are after more immediate political wins.

Under Naffah's leadership the NGO studied the surviving train tracks and created a publicly available "master plan." They work with universities in Lebanon, offering lectures and trainings on transportation and getting more young people invested in transportation. "Even if we didn't bring back the railways yet," says Maalouf, "we've been able to make people become transportation planners."

(i). Re. 132:08: VAN PAASSEN & THE MYTH OF T. E. LAWRENCE.

Steve Sattler comments: "Your presentation of Pierre Van Paassen's work about the fake myth of the Arab revolt [from 1916-1918] is very correct and fully represents the history as we know it from other sources.

Captain Lawrence - the great liar and make-up artist, in his two books about that era, writes fiction and amongst other things builds himself up as some magical glue that was able to unite the Arab tribes to fight the Turks. But - It was never true.

Then, in 1917/18 the various Arabian tribes and the ten or so Bedouin clans hated each other, had no discipline, and they objected to any military training. They rarely worked together, took gold as payment for no services and fled at the return of Ottoman units.

Their effect on the war was tiny.

From the end of 1917..... The Ottoman Empire got hit in the face three times - and then died.

1... One week after they lost Beersheba [31st October 1917] - their fortress in Gaza got taken.

2... Over 6 days from 19th September 1918 - three Ottoman armies were decimated by Allenby and his Australians. (With Australian troops in Damascus at 6am on 1 October 1918);

and 3... the (passive and rather stupid) Sultan and his three main ministers [who were real murderers and war criminals (The Armenian, Assyrian and Greek massacres)] saw that their main armies in the Near East [the Caucasus] were being neutralized by the Russians. So this Empire was now just a vacuum with no real force.

It will take years for the West to see the real story of the Arab Revolt for what it was - 'not very much'.

Obviously - the Arab World will never give up their picture of their brave, holy and very successful horsemen attacking train after train, destroying the tracks and capturing 5 million Ottoman soldiers and capturing Damascus [at 2pm on 1st October] by Prince/General and Field-Marshal Faisal and his band of only 60 million brave soldiers - in two stolen German touring cars."

And Tony George in Perth, WA wrote: "This report adds further weight to Lawrence's rôle in the British Secret Service, which seemingly planned the whole part that Lawrence was to play in the myth. Much the same thing happened when he was installed as John Hume Ross in the newly-formed RAF. According to Lawrence's own account in his book "The Mint", he fronted up to the recruiting office as penniless and unemployed. The Recruiting Officer happened to be Lieutenant W. E. Johns, the later author of the 'Biggles' series of novels, and when he checked birth records he found Ross/Lawrence's information false and rejected his application. Within an hour Lawrence was back, accompanied by an Air Ministry messenger who handed Johns a letter ordering Ross's immediate

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

enlistment, signed by a high-ranking government official. In Johns' own words (taken from "Biggles, The Life Story of Capt. W. E. Johns" by Peter Ellis & Jennifer Schofield): "...More rubbish has been written about that than anything else I know. The old story of how Lawrence was recognised by a particularly observant officer some time after he had joined the service has been told so many times that it has become legendary. Don't believe a word of it."

The identity of 'Aircraftman 2nd Class Ross (No. 352087)' who spent weekends with Cabinet Ministers was no secret to those who counted in Government circles."

(ii). WAR DEPARTMENT LOCOMOTIVES.

The Editor has just been reading Mike Christensen's excellent and very comprehensive two-volume history of the 'Melbourne Military Railway', situated south-west of Derby - the books cover the earliest 'plate' tramroads and canals in the area around Ashby-de-la-Zouch, the construction and development of the Midland Railway line through Chellaston, Melbourne, Tonge and Lount to Ashby, the way part of this line became a training railway for the Royal Engineers during the war, supplementing Longmoor, with schools (British and American) for teaching Bridging Skills, and also an immense storage park for WD and USATC locomotives and rolling stock before they were sent overseas following the invasion of Europe in June 1944 - and then the subsequent run-down and return to civilian control. Relevant to Harakevet is only a very tiny snippet: Vol. 2

p.362 shows WD Locomotive 70244 (Baldwin 0-4-OST o43120 of 1916) which was later in store at Kings Newton sidings. "It had last been used as a works shunter for 19 Railway Workshops Squadron in Egypt. As MEF (Middle East Forces) locomotive No. 36 it had acquired the name 'Haren'."

On p.363: "Andrew Barclay 0-6-OST 1769 of 1921) had worked as MEF 32, named 'Karour', at Ataka and Suez before becoming a works shunter for 169 Railway Workshops Squadron." Both photos are by Harold Bowtell in early 1949 and are in the Manchester Locomotive Society collection.

(iii). THE SUWEIDA LINE IN SYRIA.

The German 'Drehseibe' chatline in April showed some recently-discovered views of Ghazale station and a small loco on the 60cm line to Suweida with several queries. To this can be stated:

"There is no mention of this in Tourret's 'Hedjaz Railway' though it shows Ghazale as the station north of Deraa on the HR line, at km. 106.1 (Deraa is 123.0). Also not in Hughes.

From: 'The Hedjaz Railway' by James Nicholson, (pub. by Stacey International of London, sponsored by Chevron) which has a very good coverage of some of the political machinations of all these periods even though it looks like a coffee-table album.... on p.172:

"Following a revolt by the Druze against the French in 1925, a 45-kilometre line was built between Ezra and Suweida. The narrow-gauge track of 60cm was the only one of its kind in Syria. From Ezra, the line proceeded south-east across the Hauran to the first of two intermediate stations at Herak (15kms). It then turned east to Um Waled (at 33 kms) before heading into the foothills of Jebel Druze and on to Suweida, the mountain stronghold of the Druze." That's all it says.

In the British "Naval Intelligence Handbook - Syria" of April 1943 p.383 is, under the chapter on Railways:

"EZRAA TO SUWEIDA: 28.2 miles; 45.5 kilometres.

This is one of the two branches of the Hejaz railway which have been built since 1918. It was built after the Druze rebellion in 1925, and is the only line of 60cm (1ft 11 1/2 in) gauge in Syria. The line strikes south-east across the Hauran to Herak, where it turns east and starts to rise gently into the foothills of Jebel Druze. The ascent is easy and few engineering works were needed. From Um Waled the railway turns north-north-east to its terminus at Suweida, the capital of the Mohafazet of the Jebel Druze.

Ezraa altitude 1,940ft. Herak at km. 15.0; Umm Waled at k. 33.0. Suweida at km. 45.5, altitude 3,018ft. Capital of Jebel Druze. Terminus."

On p. 218: "SUWEIDA. Suweida lies on the western slopes of the Jebel Druze, about 60 miles south-east of Damascus, 3018 feet above sea level., The population is 7,831 (1942), almost all Druses. It is the capital of the Jebel Druze administration and an important military centre.

The name Suweida (class. Dionysius), like the old name Soada, means 'the little black' and is derived from the black stone of which all the buildings are built. It was inhabited in the Roman period and in the fifth century AD was the seat of a bishopric.

There are many ancient ruins in Suweida; a large reservoir, a temple, and a Christian basilica are chief of these. The small Druze town has a modern hotel, restaurants, Turkish baths, Post Office, garages, libraries and schools. The railway station is on the south side. There are a few native industries: silk weaving, tobacco, carpets and embroidered articles. The water supply is piped from the hills and also drawn from wells.

Suweida is the terminus of a narrow-gauge railway branch line from Ezraa on the Damascus - Deraa line. There is a good road north-east to the main Damascus - Deraa road at Sheikh Meskin. There are local roads leading south-east to Salkhad and south to Bosra eski Sham."

Also see:
https://media.lonelyplanet.com/shop/pdfs/181-Syria-Lebanon-AroundDamascus_Chapter_.pdf

and this:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Syrian_Revolt.

But we have no idea what stock was used on the Suewida line or its fate and as you see these sources all speak of Ezra or Ezraa and not Ghazale as the starting point."

structure (MacDonald et al 2016, Site 294) on a low hillside south of the Hwaleh junction where the curb stones of the Roman road are still traceable. The structure consists of internal units and is built of regular limestone blocks. It may have a direct connection with the road or may have been a farmstead as it lies within an agricultural area. Another structure (MacDonald et al Site 296) can also be seen on a low hill east of both the modern and ancient roads. Both sites have Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine potsherds.

(Editor comments: This branch was actually built during the first world war, probably 1916, to acquire wood for fuel for the locomotives since it was no longer possible for the Turks to import coal due to the British naval sea blockade.)

(v). RAILWAY CLOSURE IN PALESTINE.

Not for the first time we refer to Palestine, Texas! In 'Rail Group News' / 'IRJ' 19.04.21 is:

"Union Pacific is laying off 57 employees from its car shop in Palestine, Texas, and announced that the shop will close on June 14.

Robynn Tysver, UP's communication manager, said "While Union Pacific is closing our main car repair facility in Palestine, limited car repair activities will continue in the Palestine area. We did not take today's step lightly but we are determined to do the right thing for thousands of customers, employees, and communities who rely on us to help build sustainable economic growth across the western two-thirds of the United States. We appreciate the support we have received over the years in the communities of Palestine and Anderson County, as well as the hard work and dedication of our employees. We are working with those impacted to help them with job placement activities."

Rep. Cody Harris (R-Palestine) said "It's incredibly disappointing that Union Pacific has announced their intention to shut down the Palestine car shop after telling us for years how much they care about our community and their employees. Obviously, they never meant it. I will continue to work hard to bring economic opportunity to take the place of this huge loss to our community."

(vi). SOUTH-WEST AFRICA SNIPPET.

The British Overseas Railway Historical Trust has published a book of reports on the military railways built for the campaign against the Germans in South-West Africa (now Namibia) in 1914-15. I noticed the letterhead: "From the Officer Commanding South African Engineer Corps, Old Jewish Synagogue, Joubert Street, Johannesburg." The railways, largely demolished by the retreating German troops, passed through places named Gibeon, Rehoboth and Beersheba....

(vii). A P.R. COACH SEGMENT AS A CAFÉ AT ELI.

From Aharon Gazit come these pictures of a remarkable find. He writes: "The carriage in the pictures is the remains of half a body of one of the 9 metal PR vehicles with open saloons, some of which served until 1965 (the end of PR carriages in service); Eli is north of Jerusalem near Beit-El in Samaria; the original walls were covered with wood both internally and externally to suit the restaurant's needs; yet it still can be identified as a PR carriage, mainly thanks to the roof typical of the steel-bodied carriages." The Editor had noted in the past some half-coach-bodies mounted on road



(iv). AN OBSCURE HEDJAZ RELIC?

In 'PEF Quarterly' Vol. 153 No. 1, March 2021, in an article by Fawzi Abudanah, Mansour A. Shqiarat, Adeeb al-Salameen and Mohammed B. Tarawneh on the few remaining traces and relics of an ancient Roman road, the 'Via Nova Traiana' (VNT) between Petra and al-Khirbet al-Samra in Arabia Petraea, of which only a few foundations and curb stones and flagstones and so forth remain in the Jordanian landscape where first the passage of time and later modern developments have not destroyed them further. (For background: p.6: "The Romans annexed the Nabataean kingdom in AD 106. The VNT was constructed to connect the capital of the new (Roman) Province of Arabia, Bostra, with the port of Ayla (Aqaba) on the Red Sea, a distance of approx. 430km. On the basis of information derived from inscribed milestones found along the highway it appears that the VNT was constructed in segments, the earliest of which was finished in AD 111; However the whole project, initiated by the Emperor Trajan, was completed in AD 114.")

From this article: (p.15)

"The next site that appears to have been deliberately located along the VNT is a medium-size

were noticed, particularly on the south-eastern side of the structure. The stonework of the structure does not resemble the Nabataean or the Roman masonry, and therefore it is highly likely that it was not associated with the VNT. The field upon which this structure was built is annually ploughed and consequently dateable material cannot be seen on the surface. Meanwhile the same spot is locally called Ras al-Hadydeh (the 'head of iron') in reference to the railway track from the Ottoman period. According to historical, local and documentary narratives, the Ottomans built a branch of the Hedjaz railway starting at Unaiza going through Nejil and terminating at Ras al-Hadydeh. The function of this branch was to carry wood from the oak forest of al-Hisheh to be used in building the main line of the railway. Therefore, the authors tentatively suggest that the six-unit structure may have been used in association with the function for which the branch of the railway was built.

Aerial investigation of the same spot indicates that two more structures, of the same dimensions and plan, may have existed east of it. The two other structures appear to have been destroyed due to agricultural activities. No other structures were found along the VNT from the Hwaleh junction to the southern limits of the al-Fjaij plains where the road can be seen again...."

trailers and used as mobile offices at construction sites, to which Aharon adds: "The offices you mentioned were also made from wooden bodies of PR carriages; I saw such one many years ago north of Netanya near Bitan Aharon next to highway 2."

- *Railway Carriage cafe at Eli in Samaria*

To this, Chen has written:

"Regarding the identification of the PR carriage remains at Eli: As only about a half of the body remains, and this has been much modified and covered with modern material, it is difficult to fully identify it. However, its window arrangement, with pairs of windows reaching all the way to the end doors, means it belonged to a Metropolitan product of the 1921/2 batch, specifically either a 2nd or a 1st/2nd. It is probable that measuring the windows furthest from the doors will solve this dilemma, as the 1st/2nd version had wider window opening at that position. The wooden (half) carriage body is carried on a short road semi-trailer, as were several other halves, such as the one in the attached photo, which apparently was originally part of a BRC&W 1st. Another of this sort now resides, in a very dilapidated state, at the Israel Railway Museum. Ours appears to have been part of a 2nd, and could, theoretically, be the other half of the Eli body."

(viii). NEWS FROM 1887.

Greg Martin sent this snippet from 'The Engineer' of 1887, p.405:

"The first line of railway in what is called the Holy Land, which is to be constructed by a Belgian company under a concession from the Sultan, will run from Jerusalem to Jaffa. It is reported that sleepers, telegraph wires and rolling stock have already arrived. The notions of this land will not be the same with our children as with us."

It is an intriguing item since work on the line that was eventually built – from Jaffa to Jerusalem and not the other way around – did not really begin until 1890! There were many previous plans, proposals and attempts. It would be good to know more about what stock and materials had arrived and from where.

(ix). RESCUING A HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL WAGON.

At Netanya at the Gan LeBanim Park stands a former German G10-type goods van. This was a private initiative of Ronny Dotan and Tatyana Matanya-Ruge and Ronny has described some of the problems thus:

"The task of searching for an authentic goods van that transported Jews during the Holocaust requires first and foremost determination and an unlimited aspiration to overcome all difficulties. The determination depends on the personal intention; in my case it was a late personal exposure to my family's direct connection to the Holocaust, a story that had been silenced and kept hidden from me as long as those involved were still alive. Only in retrospect did it become clear to me that my grandmother's two sisters were taken by train from



the Grunewald platform at Berlin to be shot at the Rumbula Forest near Riga.

The search required a professional contact person who could explain what the characteristic signs of a van built before WW2 were. We also reached out to a number of non-commercial associations active in the field of railws. Some of these also had scrapyards with a large number of railway vehicles of all types. It sometimes took long hours to tour these sites and inspect what was there.

Eventually after tests (including laboratory tests) a 'G10' freight van was found suitable for our purpose, from 'Eisenbahnfreunde Grenzland' at the Aachen railway museum. Then we needed to find a workshop for the wagon as found was virtually scrap, without floor or roof and only a small part of the wooden sides and ends. Following original plans, the work too over two months. After the initial renovation the van could be loaded onto a road truck that took it to the port and from there by sea on a 14-day cruise to Israel. Here restoration was completed and painting using stencils with the original type lettering. It is now used as an historical memorial site and is recognised as one of 23 such around the world. It has received visits from hundreds of different groups."



- *Here is a photo of a different wagon that Ronny and Tatjana have had restored, here being loaded at the Dieringhausen Railway Museum*



BOSPHORUS TRAIN FERRIES.

By John Krijgsman.

This article was published in 'Op de Rails' 2-2021, pp.84-88 and Part 2 ... Courtesy of Marc Stegeman who sent the text and clarified permission from the author. Translation by the Editor.

The European and Asiatic (Anatolian) parts of Turkey are divided by the Bosphorus, 700-1200m wide, the important international strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. On both sides lies Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, with ca. 15 million inhabitants, currently the largest city in Turkey and in Europe. Until in 1958 a railway ferry was introduced the Bosphorus formed the dividing line between the two sections of the Turkish railway network.

The first railway line reached the banks of the Bosphorus in Constantinople – then the capital of the Ottoman Empire - in 1872. The terminus was established on the European side at Sirkeci, whereas on the Anatolian side the terminus was at Haydarpasa. The railways were largely laid by foreign companies – Belgian, British, German – as part of a network of routes that should eventually reach from Western Europe through to Baghdad and Mecca. In 1891 the first train from Paris arrived at Sirkeci. Whoever wished to continue the journey onwards had however to cross the Bosphorus by ferry boat. Freight also had to be transhipped onto boats for the transit across the waters.

In 1923 the state of Turkey was founded within what are still its current borders. The individual private railways were gradually absorbed into the state railway organisation TCDD (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryolları). The railway lines on the European section of the country from the Greek and Bulgarian borders to Istanbul, and the branch lines, comprised some four hundred kilometres, only a small proportion of what in 2020 was a total network of some 10,000 route km.



• Locomotive DH 7001 shunts at the ferry quay in Istanbul Sirkeci on 27th. May 2010. Photo by John Krijgsman

The majority of railway traffic was and is carried on the Anatolian network and it was here that almost the entire motive power and rolling stock was to be found.

Since Turkey did not possess its own railway industry until a few decades ago, the rolling stock had to be imported from elsewhere. This was naturally frequently transported by freighter and landed at a quay, but items produced by European manufacturers could also come by rail to Istanbul. In order to transport these items from the European to the Anatolian side in the 1920's the first pontoons with rails built on were brought into use. There are some (poor quality) photos of 1925 that show a loco of TCDD class 3700 (built by Henschel of Kassel) being carried on a 3-track pontoon. In order to adapt to the (very small) tidal changes this pontoon had extendable rail sections.

Undoubtedly much more railway rolling stock was conveyed over the Bosphorus in this way. In photos of the 1970's a three-track pontoon can still be seen moored at the quay in Sirkeci.



• Ferry 'Demiryolu III' approaches quay at Sirkeci with in the background visible Karaköy and Galatatower on 27th. May 2010. Photo by John Krijgsman.

Ferry Service.

The construction of new railway lines continued in the 1920's, In 1912 Aleppo in Syria had been reached. In 1940 the line was finally completed through to Baghdad in Iraq. A railway link with Iran was completed in 1971. In order to gain a position in the transit freight traffic between Europe and the Middle East the TCDD decided to introduce a railway ferry service between Sirkeci and Haydarpasa. In 1958 the first railway ferry 'Demiryolu' ('Railway') was

brought into service; this was built at the Haliç shipyard in Istanbul. This had three tracks, of which the middle one ended halfway along as it met the superstructure for the machinery and the bridge. The ferry was driven by two steam engines and the transit time over the four kilometre route was roughly half an hour. In contrast with what was normal practice elsewhere, the ferry in Istanbul did not make use of adjustable access piers. The tracks ended at the edge of the quay and the adaptation to the changing level of the tides was met by the judicious 'sinking' of the ferry itself through flooding of ballast tanks.

The rail ferry service was such a success that in 1966 a second ship was built with the name 'Demiryolu II'. In 1982 followed the 'Demiryolu III'. These two ships have a flat deck and the machinery is below deck. The oldest of the boats has been once thoroughly rebuilt – on the basis of photos this must have taken place around 1970. The steam engines were replaced by motors so that the machine room on deck could be removed and the centre track could then be extended over the entire length of the ship; the three ferries were therefore all of identical capacity: three tracks each of 70m length on a deck that was open at each end.

Access to the three tracks was from the bow end, and three buffer stops were mounted at the stern end. It has happened at least once (on 23rd October 2004) that due to some rough shunting a goods wagon was pushed through the buffers and propelled into the water. On several photos one can see that the ballast tanks were so filled or emptied that the bow was higher than the stern, which gives an impression of greater speed.

It was not just transit freight traffic that ran in the 1950's, thought was also given to a through sleeping car from London to Bagdad. For this purpose in 1958 another railway ferry was built but according to newspaper reports of the period it proved unsuitable for it proved impossible for it to attain the correct height to moor at the quay. What happened later to this boat, I have not been able to find out. The plans for a through sleeping carriage to Baghdad were never carried out. With a journey time London – Baghdad of some 140 hours it would probably not have been a very lucrative service in a period when the aeroplane was already gaining ascendancy. It does not seem that any other international links were considered worth exploiting and making it worth the services of a ferry for carrying carriages. Whoever comes from Europe and wishes to travel on to the Middle East always had to change at Istanbul and still does so. From here there are indeed through trains to Teheran and Bagdad. Due to the unstable political situation in Syria and Iraq the trains to Bagdad have not run for several years. Whether the train to Teheran operates is dependent upon the political climate.

The train ferry link between Sirkeci and Haydarpasa was therefore in all the years it has run been used only for the exchange of rolling stock and the transfer of goods wagons. There were no additional safety features for the transport of passenger trains; the front of the deck was wholly open without any structural fittings to prevent ingress of water onto the deck or the rolling-off

into the waters of any railway vehicles; on the stern side there were only the previously-mentioned buffer stops and in addition railway vehicles were fixed to the deck with steel hooks.

Insofar as any passenger vehicles made the crossing, this was limited to military personnel; in photos one can see that the military were not permitted though to remain within the vehicles but had to stand on the upper deck in the open. In addition new or second-hand passenger carriages were conveyed, such as those German and Danish carriages which were sold to Iran or the high-speed trains built by CAF in Spain in 2007-2011 for TCDD. Other notable 'visitors' in the form of passenger rolling stock on the ferry were the suburban e.m.u.'s that were used from Sirkeci, which had to make the transit across and back on occasion when they needed to use the wheel profiling lathe.

Rise and Fall.

The 1980's and 90's were the busiest years for the ferry service; at this period it was still common to import items from Europe to Turkey, Syria or Iran from Europe by train. Things did not always go well. From the history of the Nederlandse Spoorwegen tales are told of goods wagons whose contents never reached their destination or which were only returned after several months, if at all. For European railway administrations there was the basic rule: the further east a wagon goes, the higher the chances it will have to be sought again.

In 1973 the first road bridge across the Bosphorus was opened followed in 1988 by a second. With the improvement and expansion of the road network in Eastern Europe and Turkey and the quality and capacity of road lorries the importance of the railways declined. At the beginning of the 21st century the oldest of the ferries 'Demiryolu' could be dispensed with; it was withdrawn and in 2007 sold for scrap. The ferry service was normally performed now by one ship with the second held in reserve. The number of crossings per shift was initially dependent simply upon the demand. Due to works on the lines to Istanbul in neighbouring countries not only the passenger traffic but also the freight traffic was significantly interrupted for lengthy periods; what remained for the ferries was, apart from the limited freight traffic from and to the EU, mainly inland goods traffic and also TCDD's own internal needs. In consequence the ferries were still needed to some extent and continued making their crossings.

Marmaray.

In 2004 work began on the construction of the first fixed rail link beneath the Bosphorus. This enormous project with the name 'Marmaray' (a composite from the Marmara and the Turkish word for rail) includes two single-track tunnels 13.5km in length between the stations of Kazhçeseme and Ayrilik Çesmesi and the modernisation and expansion of the above-ground approach routes on both the European and Anatolian shores over a length of 63km. The majority of the tunnels were bored but between Sirkeci and Üsküdar the tunnel segments were sunk to the bottom of the Bosphorus to a depth of 60 metres. This undersea section of two times 1,387 metres is therefore the deepest such 'sunken tunnel' in the world. The tunnels meet the strongest demands in terms of safety and security against earthquakes. In October 2013 the Marmaray trains began operation on the intercontinental section between Kazhçeseme and Ayrilik Çesmesi; then the work began on modernisation of the connecting railway lines which were closed for this purpose. This meant the



• Ferry 'Demiryolu III' at quay at Haydarpasa and shunter locomotive DH6 class, 1988. Photo by Kees Wielemaker.

- Railways and ferry routes around Istanbul Map by Dick van der Spek.



end of the rail ferry service, for the stations of Sirkeci and Haydarpaşa now lost their rail connections.

Replacement Ferry Service.

In order to retain a rail link between the two sections of the Turkish railway network in 2013 a 220km train ferry service had to be created between the harbours of Tekirdag in European Turkey and Derince in Anatolia. In 2010

The rail ferry 'Erdeniz' was employed on this new service; this had been acquired from Denmark in 2004, where until 2000 it had worked on the DanLink ferry services under the name 'Trekroner'. It was rebuilt in Turkey, the lifting bow was sealed and a connection with three tracks built at the stern. From 2004 this ferry had served an industrial complex near Zonguldak on the Turkish Black Sea coast which was itself isolated from the national rail network.

The 'Erdeniz' is 198m long and can convey 60 goods wagons on five tracks – seven times as many as the older ferries on the Bosphorus. Since the demand for such transit rail traffic remained modest, not many trips were sailed. In 2016 it was decided to make the ferry public and to seek a greater market for its use. Sailings were also to be established between Tekirdag and Bandirma on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara, which should mean a great gain in time and distance for serving Southern Turkey. The Negmar shipping line, which operates ferries for road traffic on the Sea of Marmara, was the only bidder. The 'Erdeniz' was repainted in the red livery of Negmar but otherwise not much was changed.

In the port of Bandirma a new quay was built and in September 2019 the first trial sailings were undertaken. In the meantime the TCDD had been considering a plan to restore ferry services between Sirkeci and Haydarpaşa as soon as rail links to the quays on both sides had been relaid. The TCDD wished to retain the two termini of Sirkeci and Haydarpaşa as starting points for regional and long-distance services. Other groups in what to us seems a rather grey and vague political landscape in Istanbul wanted instead to build upon these two attractive pieces of real estate on the shores of the Bosphorus; near Sirkeci illegal construction had already taken place near the quay for the ferry services. This however did not hold TCDD back from announcing at the end of 2019 the refurbishment of the two train ferries. In January 2020 they were sent to the Tuzla shipyards with the intention of their re-entering service as from March 2020. But at the same time there were suddenly other developments regarding the intercontinental train workings in the Istanbul region.



- Fully loaded ferry 'Demiryolu III' traverses the Bosphorus on its way to Haydarpaşa on 20th August 2006.
- Photo by Marco Moerland.

a railway line was built to the port of Tekirdag and this was electrified in 2013; in the harbour itself a pier with three tracks was constructed. The port of Derince already had a rail link to the Anatolian network and also a quay for the broad-gauge train ferry of UkrFerries which conveyed wagons to and from Illichivsk in the Ukraine. For the ferry service to Tekirdag a new pier Istanbul ferry route and Marmaray. Map by Dick van der Spek. with standard-gauge connecting tracks was constructed in Derince.

Goods Trains through the Tunnel.

The modernisation and expansion of the existing railway lines on both sides of the Marmaray Tunnel suffered delays through the great recession in the Turkish economy, whereby several large infrastructure projects were cancelled or suspended and only resumed several years later. It was only in March 2019 that the Marmaray trains could begin to traverse the whole route from Halkalı and Gebze. On this line of 76 kilometres with forty intermediate stations a theoretical maximum of thirty trains per direction per hour could be operated, with a capacity of 75,000 passengers. The reality however remained below this: in peak hours the trains run twelve times per hour and outside the peaks every ten to fifteen minutes.

The Marmaray line was designed for high-frequency operation to convey a large number of passengers in the Istanbul conurbation, a sort of 'S-Bahn'. As the project was developed it was considered that during the night hours a limited number of other trains could be allowed through, such as long-distance passenger trains, internal transports and maintenance trains. Not earlier than the construction started, a studies was made of the (im)possibility to allow regular freight trains. This seemed possible if a maximum gradient of 1.77% and a sharp curve of 300m radius near Üsküdar would be taken in account. In addition the tunnel is not suitable for the transport of hazardous goods, open wagons with inadequate covering of their loads are not permitted through and in any case freight trains could only be run at hours when the Marmaray passenger service was not operating. These were reasons enough to retain the Tekirdag – Derince ferry service even after the tunnel's opening. In March 2019 the first high-speed trains from and to Ankara and Konya a began to traverse the tunnel – three train pairs daily were extended to and from Halkali on the European side.

In 2019 the (political) wind began to blow in a different direction. The statement, often made by politicians, that the Marmaray Tunnel was an important link in the new Silk Road between China and Europe was concretised in a decision to allow freight trains to traverse the tunnel after all.

On 7th. November 2019 the first container train from China ran under the Bosphorus on its way to Prague. Following this further trial runs were undertaken with freight traffic through the tunnel whereby in Spring 2020 the Marmaray was opened to all forms of rail traffic from both sides of the Bosphorus. In principle these may only run during the night hours, when the Marmaray intensive service is paused; on the other hand exceptions may be made to this regulation, for example when trains have already suffered delays.

The contract with the Negmar Line was cancelled and the train ferry service Tekirdag – Derince was suspended in March 2020, while that between Tekirdag and Bandirma had never really started in the first place. The investments in the new port facilities therefore amounted to a waste of money. It is not clear what is to happen to the ferry 'Erdeniz'; it has lain still in the port of Tekirdag since the end of July 2020. The transport of hazardous goods by rail has been temporarily suspended; transport of such goods from the EU is only possible to destinations west of the Bosphorus. The same applies for 'out-of-profile' loads. In the first half of 2020 the timetable indicates that per day two high-speed train pairs and the night train from and to Ankara begin and end in Halkali, all between 22.00 and 07.00, which indicates that the hard time limitations are dealt with a little more flexibly. Due to the Corona pandemic most rail traffic in Turkey has been suspended for a great deal of 2020 and so there is no firm information on the current passenger timetable.



• Loading of ferry 'Erdeniz' in Tekirdag on 25th. November 2013. Photo Negmar, Rail Turkey.