



***Tel Aviv University at night, looking south. Photo by CLOUDVIEW  
courtesy of Israel Railways.***



• See page 23

## EDITORIAL.

This is being written in early March and the world seems gripped in panic regarding the 'Corona Virus' – flights cancelled to Iran, border crossings for railfreight closed on the China-Kazakhstan border, Saudi Arabia closing its borders even to pilgrims. Maybe by the time you read this issue things will have become clearer. The Editor is also planning to take part in a railtour of Israel, an opportunity to scratch those spots one cannot normally reach – a railtour to Jordan which was originally planned to be connected to this was cancelled due to lack of numbers. But contact has been made with a Tel Aviv-based travel agency which seems to have good contacts in Jordan. More of this maybe later.

In the meantime the electrification works continue in Israel as do finishing-off on the suburban line / junction near Herzliyya, and earthworks for the resurrected Inland Line. The AI line is settling down. Life is not just Politics, something one can so easily overlook.

Big news this time came almost as we went to press – from Jordan! Which in a near-Messianic vision is at last talking of a proper standard-gauge system integrated with (at least some of) its neighbours, a revival of the former narrow-gauge Hedjaz line (the fate of which now looks even more sombre) and the line to Aqaba. Let us see what develops here. Likewise Tel Aviv is now planning a multi-line Metro system to complement the Light Rail network. It looks as though there will continue to be a lot to report in the future.

Enjoy! The Editor.

[See page 16 for some late news](#)

## NEWS FROM THE LINE.

### (i). A HAPPY CHANUKAH!

From a press release of 23.12.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to the Chanukah holidays (24.12.2019 - 26.12.2019 & 29.12.2019 - 30.12.2019) which are characterized by lighting candles, eating jelly doughnuts, but above all by many festivals and entertainments for children in particular in the Jewish sector, as well as for Christmas in the Christian sector, and as a result with much overcrowding of trains, the railways have strengthened the teams at railway stations all over the network with particular emphasis on Tel-Aviv University and Tel-Aviv HaShalom stations, near which most of the events will take place.

There will be an increase in the number of trains, while many trains will be extended from Tel-Aviv to Beer-Sheva, Haifa and Nahariya; most of the trains will call at all intermediate stations; there will be many additional trains.

At Tel-Aviv University station a huge security check tent has been built in order to cope with the passenger flow en-route to the adjacent amusement park and Luna Park.



• Cab view 1 on AI Line, by Aharon Gazit on 11.02.2020

The following changes will take place:

The trains of 08:53, 09:53, 10:53, 11:53, 19:53 and 20:53 from Beer-Sheva Central northwards will terminate at Haifa Central instead of at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central; trains will call at Beer-Sheva North/University, Lehavim/Rahat, Kiryat-Gat, Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav, Mazkeret-Batya, Ramla, Lod, all Tel-Aviv stations, Netanya, Hadera West, Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, Haifa Bat-Galim and terminate at Haifa Central the 8.

The trains of 10:58, 11:58, 12:58, 13:58, 20:27 and 21.58 from Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central to Beer-Sheva Central will start instead back from Haifa Central the 8 and will call at Haifa Bat-Galim, Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, all Tel-Aviv stations, Lod, Ramla, Mazkeret-Batya, Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat, Beer-Sheva North/University and terminate at Beer-Sheva Central.

The train of 20:27 between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Beer-Sheva Central will start instead at Nahariya and will call at: Akko, Kiryat-Motzkin, all Haifa stations, all Tel-Aviv stations, Lod, Ramla, Mazkeret-Batya, Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim/Rahat and terminate at Beer-Sheva North/University.

A special train will depart from Lod at 15:00 and call at: Lod Ganei-Aviv, all Tel-Aviv stations, B'nei-Brak, Petakh-Tikva stations, Rosh HaAyin North, Kfar-Sava Nordau, Hod HaSharon Sokolov, Ra'anana South and terminate at Ra'anana West.

Jelly doughnuts ('Sufganiot') were also handed out to passengers at several stations.

### (ii). SERVICES RETURNING (BRIEFLY) TO NORMALITY FOR CHANUKAH.

Starting Friday December 27 trains from the south began running through to Tel-Aviv instead of terminating at Lod (as they have done since March 2018). Trains from Beit Shemesh terminated at Herzliya as on weekdays. The return to normal was only temporary, in connection with the festival.

### (iii). CHANUKAH TRAFFIC FIGURES.

From a press release of 01.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways published today the data on passenger traffic during Chanukah holidays (22.12.2019 and 29.12.2019 inclusive), in which traffic has significantly increased and can satisfactorily celebrate the daily record (of all times) of 329,599 passenger carried on 29.12.2018, compared with previous record of 325,687 passengers also achieved during Chanukah holidays but in December 2019; 1% higher....

Between 22.12.2019 and 28.12.2019 (Sunday to Sunday) the railways carried 1,809,533 passengers compared with 1,576,622 carried the previous week (08.12.2019-15.12.2019); up by 13%.

The daily average (excluding Friday and Saturday and the special record day of 29.12.2019) was 290,135 compared with 253,000 carried in the



previous week (08.12.2019-15.12.2019); up by 13%.

IR Ltd. General Manager Michael Maiksner said: "Apart from the railways' special preparations to increase services during Chanukah holidays, we celebrated last week the historical event of regular service start of electric trains between Tel-Aviv-HaHagana and Jerusalem Navon stations; I thank the railways' workers for their efforts and hard work done daily, and for the passengers for their trust in rail service".

The rise in traffic through Tel-Aviv stations during Chanukah holidays was as follows:

Tel-Aviv University station:

106,000 passengers used the station compared with 79,000 in the previous week; 34% more; the station served the many passengers who arrived to several events which took place at the nearby exhibition centre, of which part is used as adventure park and the nearby site on the other side Hayarkon Park used for many open air shows.

Tel-Aviv HaShalom station:

This all-round-the-year most active station of the railways became even more active during Hanukkah holidays due to its proximity to Tel-Aviv entertainment centres like theaters, cinemas, etc.; 199,470 used it compared with 168,000 in the previous week; up by 18%; works of \$14.5M (NIS 50M) are in progress rebuilding its new southern part which will include ticket vending machines, cashiers, toilets, escalators and an elevator, which when completed will save many passengers from needing to pass through the main station hall.

The Jerusalem Navon station:

This station with its platforms located 80m under street level achieved the highest rise in percentage though not in number of passengers; 61,000 passed through the station during Chanukkah holidays compared with 32,000 on previous week; up by 90%!

Many came to Jerusalem to festivals and other events.

It should be mentioned that due to only two active tracks between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations out of three; the latter occupied by electrification works, average punctuality was sometimes a little more than 81%; it is now well above 90%.

#### **(iv). MERKAZIT-HAMIFRATZ STATION FOOTBRIDGE OPENS.**

From a press release of 19.12.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Transport and Roads' Safety Minister Mr. Bezalel Smotrich, Israel Railways General Manager Mr. Michael (Micha) Maiksner and other VIPs inaugurated today the overhead pedestrian bridge at the upgraded (and Israel's biggest) transportation centre of Merkazit Hamifratz north of Haifa, which was built and is maintained by Yefe-Nof; it contains dozens of bus platforms, two railway main lines (one to Nahariya and Carmiel, and the Jezreel Valley Line, and soon a cable car to Mount Carmel will be added.)

In the ceremony Minister Smotrich said: "The bridge in the transportation centre which we inaugurate today is an example for how future transportation should look; connectivity which will significantly ease the life of users and support friendly public transport for everyone; developing the public transport systems is our horizon and future as a solution for the worsening transportation crisis (over clogged roads). I thank the railway employees and their General Manager for the good work, the mayor of Haifa Mrs. Einat Kalisch/Rotem whom I find a real partner for promoting important transportation projects in Haifa as well as in the north of Israel, and wish us all to participate in many further inauguration ceremonies of national projects to lead forward the transportation in Israel."

Israel Railways General Manager Mr. Michael (Micha) Maiksner said: "I am proud to inaugurate another tier of the transportation revolution which Israel is undergoing, of which the railways are the main component; I thank the railway employees and the implementation company, congratulate the citizens of Haifa and their mayor, and of course to my friend the Transport Minister for his devotion to promoting railway transportation in Israel."

The Merkazit Hamifratz railway station serves a monthly average of 270,000 passengers."

Aharon Gazit noted: Strangely, no municipality members participated in the ceremony.

#### **(v). MORE BUSES FOR SOLDIERS:**

From a press release of 02.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Due to the high demand, the railways will increase from Sunday 05.01.2020 the special bus services for IDF soldiers to/from the stations of Nahariya, Carmiel and Kiryat-Motzkin. The services are operated from/to 13 selected railway stations all over the network and were expanded about a week ago."

#### **(vi). CHICKEN KILLER. (See 126:04:xvii).**

There is probably a long story to be told about the purchase by IR of a Swedish Kalmar 'T44' Bo-Bo diesel with its GM prime mover. It remained a solitary member of its type, known to one and all simply as 'T44' until one evening Evyatar Reiter crept into the depot and painted the number '131' onto its cabside - and thus it became! Now as reported it has been sold back to Sweden and thanks to Chen Melling we have the following report by the person who accompanied it.

"You may have heard of the recent sale of Israel Railways T44 locomotive No. 131 to the Swedish rolling-stock leasing company BLS Rail AB. Mr Magnus Sandgren of BLS, who was their representative during the negotiations, was kind

enough to send a written and visual (see attached photos) update:

"The ex-Israel Railways, locomotive, T44 No. 131, arrived in good order, to the port of Wallhamn, Sweden, 04.07.2019, with Grimaldi Lines. T44 131, was transported by truck from Wallhamn port to the harbour tracks of the Uddevalla Port. In Uddevalla, T44 131 was lifted again, and then placed on railroad tracks in the Uddevalla Port area.

On 14.12.2019 the locomotive T44 131, was pulled by the Great Northern locomotive T43 107 from Uddevalla to Kristinehamn. In Kristinehamn T44 131 was washed and cleaned. Here the ATC2 system (replacing the Indusi), the speedometer, the radio remote control system and the GSM-R MESA 23 8 W cab-radio telephones will be mounted. Also the locomotive will be repainted with a grey livery.

We will keep the number No. 131, even if we receive a brand new 12-digit EVN number from the ERA, part of EU (European Union)."



- T44 '131' being hauled by T43 107 in Great Northern livery from Uddevalla to Kristinehamn 14.12.2019. (Photos by Magnus Sandgren of BLS, courtesy of Chen Melling).



#### **(vii). NAHARIYYA LINE RELAYING.**

From a press release of 05.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

As an integral part of the annual infrastructure maintenance programme, works of track infrastructure strengthening, maintenance, upgrading and replacement will take place along a 600m section north of Kiryat-Motzkin (on the Haifa - Nahariya line) in addition to signalling and communication works, between Thursday night

09.01.2020 at 00:01 and about 16:15 on Friday 10.01.2020. As a result, the line section between the stations of Kiryat-Motzkin, Akko (Acre) and Nahariya, and between Kiryat-Motzkin and Karmiel (Carmiel) will be closed.

Trains between Nahariya and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central (including night trains) from the south will start/terminate at Kiryat-Motzkin; the railways will provide free bus services between Kiryat-Motzkin, Akko (Acre) and Nahariya, as well as between Haifa Hof HaCarmel and Karmiel (Carmiel); traffic will resume on Saturday night 11.01.2020 at about 18:00.

### (viii). AYALON ELECTRIFICATION WORKS.

"The electrification works are now advancing in full tempo and as a result there will be an overload of traffic particularly at Tel-Aviv HaShalom station, where between 06.01.2020 and 28.01.2020 only one platform out of two will be active; In order to keep passengers safe, the traffic will be regulated by operating strengthened bus services between Tel-Aviv HaShalom and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations; Passengers will be advised where to board/alight trains in one of these stations.

There could be delays on night trains too due to the electrification works taking place over 24 hours between Sunday and Friday."

See photos below

### (ix). RAIL DELIVERY.

From a press release of 07.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"IR has received 2000 rails from Trinecke Zelezarny Moravia Steel at a total value of \$2M (NIS 7M), which were unloaded at the port of Haifa. Such a quantity is sufficient for assembly of 17 km of track.

The current delivery consists of two sorts of rails: the UIC-54 are used for older tracks being upgraded; the UIC-60 are used for new tracks; both types are 18m long, and will be welded to the required lengths.

Once arrived at the port and unloaded, the rails were shipped to the railways' various logistic centres (mainly near to the Haifa Kishon/Ephrayim works), then sent to work sites according to the annual works programme.

The rails will be used among the others for upgrading the Lod operational site, as well as building the new electric trains depot site at Ashkelon."

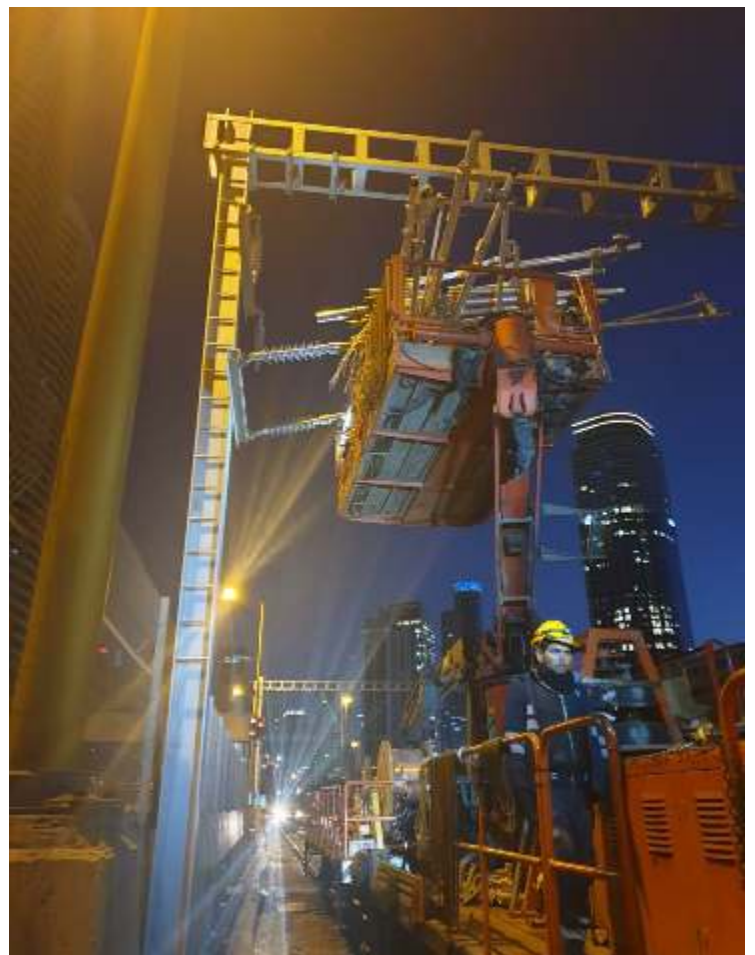
### (x). WEATHER DAMAGE.

The current winter started late, but the first week of January was the



• New Rails unloaded and placed on bogie flat wagons at the Haifa Port. (Photos: Courtesy Matan Berkovich, IR)

most rainy one during the last 50 years; This was welcomed, due to the extreme shortage of water in the aquifers; However it brought also damage and the railways, particularly in and around Haifa, suffered.





On Wednesday 08.01.2020 the railways announced at about 10:00 that the very heavy rains at Haifa had flooded several places at Haifa Central the 8 and rail traffic north of the station was suspended; trains on the Haifa - Karmiel (Carmiel), Haifa - Beit-She'an (Valley Line), Beer-Shev - Nahariya and Modi'in - Nahariya lines coming from/going to the south started/terminated at Haifa Central the 8.

Strengthened railway teams worked hard to drain the water and resume traffic as soon as possible.

At about 13:20 the same day the railways announced that traffic was being gradually resumed, but return to normal took time; the rains had damaged signalling equipment as well as point machines which had to be replaced.

achieved despite the stormy weather, and due to the high demands expected on a Sunday morning, the railways had decided to delay electrification works on Sunday 12.01.2020 between 04:30 and 10:30 (the rush hours).

This was implemented and between 04:30 and 10:30 all trains operated according to the regular timetable; i.e. all the three tracks along the Ayalon corridor were in service with all the platforms, and the Western Negev Line (Beer-Sheva – Ashkelon - Rishon LeZion Moshe Dayan -Ra'anana) was also fully operated as a through service, thus saving the need to change trains.

After 10:30 the electrification works restarted and only two platforms at Tel-Aviv HaShalom station has been since in service with the typical overcrowding; there were - and are - changes of active platforms at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Tel-Aviv University stations according to changes in overcrowding.

### (xiii). NEW CONTAINER TERMINAL AT HAIFA PORT.

From a press release of 13.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

Last weekend and despite the stormy weather, the railways started operating the "DEPOLOG" new cargo terminal of the port of Haifa. A train with 21 containers

entered the new terminal built at the rear of the port.

The terminal built in common by the railways and Ma'agan company, has three tracks with a total



- *Despite stormy weather (normally there is more water in the sea than on the quay....) the first train opened the new DEPOLOG container terminal at Haifa Port.*

*(Photo: Courtesy of Mrs. Yael Weitzman-Amram from the IR Press Office.)*

length of 1500m, of which two are used for loading/unloading, and one for operational needs.

Prior of the building and track laying, the railways performed a massive operation of removing hundreds of tons of contaminated soil along the nearby Salman street in coordination with the Ministry of Environment.

The "DEPOLOG" terminal joins the existing cargo terminal which underwent upgrading and expanding process, and both will significantly improve the services for customers."

### (xiv). ELECTRIFICATION WORKS MAKE SWIFT PROGRESS.

From a press release of 15.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways will resume all traffic along the Ayalon corridor from Sunday 19.01.2020 instead of Tuesday 28.01.2020 as originally planned; this includes reactivating all the platforms at stations and is thanks to significant progress on electrification works, now in full tempo not only between Tel-Aviv HaShalom and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central stations, but also further on to Tel-Aviv University and Herzliya stations.

From 23.01.2020 and until further notice, between Monday and Thursday between 22:40 and



- *On 08. January IR experienced heavy rainfall in the Haifa area which led to the infrastructure becoming waterlogged. Traffic had to be suspended until point motors like this near the Haifa East depot had been dried out. (Note on left one of the few remaining Palestine Railways buildings.) (Photo courtesy of IR).*

### (xi). HEAVY RAIN CAUSES WORKS DELAY.

On Thursday 09.01.2020 the railways announced that because of the heavy rains, infrastructure works planned to be carried out near Kiryat-Motzkin on Friday 10.01.2020 had been cancelled until further notice and therefore traffic would run as on a regular Friday.

### (xii). RUSH HOUR CONCESSION.

On Friday 10.01.2020 the railways announced that due to the significant progress on electrification works along the Ayalon Line between Tel-Aviv HaHagana, HaShalom and Savidor/Central stations,



04:30 and on Fridays the electrification works will take place and as a result the stations of Tel-Aviv HaShalom, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, Tel-Aviv University, Modi'in, Ben-Gurion Airport, Kfar-Habad and Lod Ganei-Aviv will be closed for traffic.

On these dates trains on all lines (excluding the Negev Western Line between Beer-Sheva, Ashkelon, Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan, Tel-Aviv and Ra'anana) will start/terminate from the south at Lod and from the north at Herzliya instead of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central.

Trains on the Negev Western Line only, from the south will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana; from the north at B'nei-Berak instead of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central.

The direct night trains between Beer-Sheva, Ofakim, Netivot, Sderot, Ashkelon, Ashdod Ad-Halom, Rehovot, Lod, Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv HaHagana will operate according to the regular timetable.

Night trains from the north between Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin, Haifa, Binyamina, Hadera West, Netanya, Herzliya and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central will terminate instead at Herzliya.

For passengers on Fridays, particularly soldiers returning home from their bases in the south, the railways will operate additional trains at 2-hour intervals between Lod and Akko, calling at Lod, Rosh-HaAvin North, Hod-HaSharon Sokolov, Beit-Yehoshua, Netanya, Hadera West, Caesarea/Pardes-Hanna, Binyamina, all Haifa stations, Merkazit HaMifratz, Kiryat-Hayim, Kiryat-Motzkin and Akko.

This saves the soldiers the need to change from trains to special buses; however, free bus services will operate between the following closed stations: Lod - Tel-Aviv HaHagana- Herzliya, Herzliya - Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central - Ben-Gurion Airport (during the whole night), B'nei-Berak - Tel-Aviv University - Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central - Tel-Aviv HaHagana, between Ben-Gurion Airport and Modi'in.

**A month later: From a press release of 18.02.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:**

"The railways continue accelerating the electrification; thanks to progress on these works Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central will open on Saturday night 29.02.2020, and each night (between 22:40 and 04:30) and on Fridays and traffic will resume according to the following:

-Trains on the Beer-Sheva - Lod line (through Lehavim/Rahat, Kiryat-Gat, Kiryat-Malachi-Yoav, Mazkeret-Batya) coming from the south, will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central instead of Lod.

-Trains on the Negev Western line (Beer-Sheva, Ashkelon, Rishon LeZion West (Moshe Dayan) -Ra'anana) coming from the south, will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central instead of Tel-Aviv Hagana; trains from the north-east will still start/terminate at Bnei-Brak.

-Trains on the Modi'in - Ben-Gurion Airport - Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central which did not operate during recent months will operate to schedule on Fridays only.

- Direct night trains between Beer-Sheva and the southern cities (Beer-Sheva, Ofakim, Netivot, Sderot, Ashkelon, Ashdod-Ad-Halom, Rehovot, Lod, Ben-Gurion Airport, Tel-Aviv Hagana) will operate to schedule, but will terminate at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central.

-Trains from the north on all lines (including night trains from Nahariya through Akko/Acre, Kiryat-Motzkin, Haifa, Binyamina, Hadera West, Netanya), will operate to the recent schedule thus starting/terminating at Herzliya.

The railways will continue the electrification works between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, Bnei-Brak and Herzliya, and therefore the Tel-Aviv University station will be closed each night (between 22:40 and 04:30) and on Fridays (characterized by low traffic) until further notice; alternative free bus services between the mentioned stations will be provided.

### **(xv). SPORTS EVENTS INTERRUPT ELECTRIFICATION WORK.**

On Thursday 13.02.2020 the final national basketball game of the Israeli championship took place at Menora Mivtakhim sport stadium of Tel-Aviv which is near both Tel-Aviv HaShalom and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations. Due to many fans being expected, Israel Railways decided to delay the electrification works performed each night, and instead added the following special trains:

The regular train departing at 23:08 from Herzliya to Nahariya started instead at 23:15 at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station, calling at all Tel-Aviv stations, Herzliya, Beit-Yehoshua, Netanya Sapir, Netanya, Hadera West, Caesarea/Pardes Hana, Binyamina, Haifa Hof HaCarmel, Haifa Bat-Galim, Haifa Central, Merkazit Hamifratz, Kiryat-Hayim, Kiryat-Motzkin, Akko (Acre) and terminated at Nahariya.

For the many fans who returned to Jerusalem, the railways operated a special train which departed from Tel-Aviv HaHagana station at 23:25 to Jerusalem Navon, while an additional train departed from Tel-Aviv HaShalom at 22:58 and arrived at Tel-Aviv HaHagana few minutes later.

For a similar reason - in this case the Tel-Aviv SAMSUNG race to take place on Friday 28.02.2020, with tens of thousands of participants, the electrification works would not be performed on that day, and trains would operate as on regular Fridays in order to provide convenient rail services.

But:- From a press release of 27.02.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"After an re-assessment prepared by the railways, and due to the ambition to advance with electrification, it has been decided that works will again continue every night (except Friday night) between 22:40 and 04:30 and on Fridays between Tel-Aviv HaHagana, Tel-Aviv HaShalom, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, Tel-Aviv University and on to Herzliya stations. The changes which start on Saturday night, 29.02.2020, are as following:

Trains on the Beer-Sheva - Lod line (through Lehavim/Rahat, Kiryat-Gat, Kiryat-Malachi/Yoav, Mazkeret-Batya) will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.

Trains on the Western Negev line (Beer-Sheva, Ashkelon, Rishon LeZion West/Moshe Dayan, Ra'anana) will operate a split service; trains from/to the south will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station; trains from north/east (Ra'anana) will start/terminate at B'nei-Brak station.

### **(xvi). THE EASTERN LINE LOD - HADERA EAST**

In mid-January rumours in the media suggested that the Transport Ministry is considering not to build two of the stations: Kfar-Sava North and Tira (one of the first two stations planned in the Arab sector; the other one Taibe-Kalansua will be built). The reason would be to save about \$29 Million (NIS 100M) per station totalling \$58M (NIS 200M) for both; another reason is to save time. The ministry's response was that the intention is to build both stations but at a later stage.

This of course caused an outbreak of anger from the mayors of both cities claiming that their cities are not inferior to the others, they also intend to appeal to court. We must wait and see.







- Initial earthworks on the Eastern Line northern section not far from Hadera East, (Photo courtesy of Mr. Nir Assis, Project Manager at Shikonubinui department of Solel Bone consortium)
- Photo 128-13
- Note the building - the remains of the original 1920 built Ahituv station to be revived with a new building; location: south/east of Hadera East.
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### (xvii). INITIAL SUCCESS ON THE AI JERUSALEM LINE.

During the first month (21.12.2019-20.01.2020) of operating the AI between Jerusalem Navon and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations, without the need to change trains at Ben-Gurion airport station, the number of passengers monthly jumped from 224,000 by 20.12.2019 to 395,000 from 20.12.2019 to 21.01.2020; up by 76%!

60 trains are operating daily in both directions, calling only at Ben-Gurion airport station; from Jerusalem to Tel-Aviv (downhill) it takes 32 minutes, while on the opposite direction (uphill) it takes 34 minutes; the originally-promised time was, however, 28 minutes.

The railways are currently accelerating the electrification works in order to reach Tel-Aviv HaShalom, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, and later Tel-Aviv University and Herzliya stations."

### (xviii). VEHICLE ON THE LINE.

An embarrassing event for the Railways' security services happened on Sunday evening 19.01.2020 near Dimona.

A Wrangler jeep of the IDF Reserve soldiers tried to cross the railway line at a point where it is not permitted to do so, during an evening land navigation training; the vehicle remained stuck on the single track and blocked it.

The soldiers immediately left their vehicle and contacted all those involved, including the military, the police and the Railways' security services, but for more than 8 minutes communication with an IC3 train with 15 passengers on board was not possible; the train driver eventually saw the stuck vehicle, tried to brake, but collided with it - luckily without casualties. The whole event is under investigation.

### (xix). EMERGENCY INCIDENTS.

(a) From a press release of 26.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

On Wednesday 22.01.2020 around 14:00, while Mr. Idan Melamed, a service steward was accompanying 2 passengers with impaired vision along the platform of Tel-Aviv HaHagana station, he suddenly saw a female passenger going down to the tracks in order to catch her dog who had escaped with his leash. Being aware of a train about to enter the station on the same track he updated immediately the shift manager Mr. Assy Avrahami who was on routine patrol on the platform, and he together with another railway worker Mr. Avraham Madar who was at the station contacted immediately the central Control who stopped the train traffic.

Mr. Avrahami then started chasing the passenger and the dog who ran on the tracks, the passenger and the dog were brought safely onto the platform and thus saved the lives of both.

But this was not yet the end of the drama; the passenger then said that while running after her dog she had lost her bag with all the belongings: money, identity cards, cellular phone, etc.; Mr. Avrahami went back onto the track, found the lost belongings and returned the bag to the lady.

The lady explained the dog was tied to the leash but had succeeded to get free; she has been advised how severe was the case.

(b) From a press release of 27.01.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

On Wednesday 22.01.2020 there was another emergency event, this time at Beer-Sheva Central station. While on a routine patrol on the train, inspector Mr. Roi Amar saw a woman passenger who had lost consciousness, on a seat of a car already empty of passengers. The passenger, a citizen of Beer-Sheva, was on her way back from a visit to relatives and used the fast rail service from Tel-Aviv. He immediately suspected that she was suffering a stroke, reported immediately to the relevant staff on the railways, started rescue measures by himself and organized the rescue teams who evacuated her to the Beer-Sheva Soroka Medical Center.

### (xx). COMPENSATION SETTLEMENT.

The railways have announced a compromise settlement regarding a representative action by a citizen named Avner Gabai, suing the railways for compensation for passengers holding monthly free tickets, due to delays exceeding 30 minutes between 14.02.2000 and 11.11.2015, and for not informing the passengers of their rights to

compensation; since it is almost impossible to trace all the passengers who suffered from the delays, the railways are proposing NIS 10 million compensation in the form of financing projects, particularly improving guidance boards and information systems in Arabic and for passengers with impaired hearing and seeing.

## **(xxi). IC3 UNITS : CURRENT SITUATION. AS AT 27.01.20120.**

### **SCRAPPED**

6, 9, 13, 14, 19, 21, 25, 31; 24 (Cannibalised)

### **OUT OF SERVICE**

1, 3, 7, 8.

### **RECEIVING ATTENTION**

18, 27, 29, 30, 35 (recent collision at Dimona with army vehicle), 38, 41.

### **CURRENTLY WORKING**

2, 5, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 23, 26, 28, 33, 34, 37, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50.

In general, there are more sets available relatively speaking due to an improvement in the quality of the maintenance by the subcontractor, Alstom. (Set Nos. 7 & 9 were advertised for sale only a few months ago; clearly there have been no takers.)

## **(xxii). TU BI'SH'VAT.**

Towards what is called in Hebrew "Tu Bishvat", which is a Jewish celebration day of trees and shrub planting, and thanks to a very rainy winter so far, as well as after a decade of landscape rehabilitation, the A1 line currently provides us with spectacular blossoms of almond trees, cyclamens, anemones, squills, narcissus etc.

Works include replanting of 25,000 geophytes on 250 acres at a cost of about \$2M (NIS 7M) which have been taken out of the ground 11 years ago with the beginning of works on the A1.

Mr. David Shkolnik, manager of environment of the A1, explained that from the beginning of the project, the concept was of co-existence between rail and nature. In addition to the A1, the railways are planting trees and shrubs every year along new and rebuilt lines, sidings, and stations as can be seen from the following examples:

Between Ashkelon and Netivot (the Western Negev line), about 25,000 trees and shrubs in addition to smaller plants have been planted; on the line between Lod and Beer-Sheva, 1,000 trees and 30,000 different bushes have been planted in addition to 2 ton of seeds have been spread; north of Ashdod road interchange at the junction of the lines from Rehovot and Rishon LeZion West

(Moshe Dayan) - called Pleshet Triangle landscape rehabilitation took place.

## **(xxiii). THE LAST TRUMP TERMINUS**

After several months of work by the Minister of Transport Bezalel Smotrich and in cooperation with Housing Cabinet Chairman Zeev Bielski, who agreed to find a solution, an agreement was reached on a solution to reach the Western Wall in the National Planning and Building Council's decision. The Council accepted the Minister's position and declared the route of the railway under sections 76 and 77 of the Planning and Building Law. It was further stipulated that a condition for granting a permit to carry out the section from Navon station to the Khan complex would be the approval of a rail solution for mass transit to the Old City and the Western Wall.

In March 2019, we announced for the first time that the municipality approved a NIS 20M budget for the continuation of the route, which will pass through the tunnel to the Davidka Square, and from there to a complex near where the historic Jerusalem railway station, near the Khan, is located. The planned route would have to be underground, as it is a crowded urban area with no space for a surface railway alignment. In fact, the existing inter-city station at the entrance to the city is 80 meters below the ground, so the continuation of the line will be excavated along the existing tunnel.

Minister of Transport Bezalel Smotrich: "Our feet are standing at your gates, Jerusalem. A great and exciting day. The ministry I head is an executive office that touches every citizen of the State of Israel and we work night and day to find solutions to the transportation crisis from which the State of Israel suffers.

"A rail solution to the Western wall is great tidings for the residents of Israel and the millions of tourists coming to the gates of Jerusalem. This is an exciting moment for the State of Israel and for generations to come. Making Zionism!"

From Y-Net 18.02.2020: "Jerusalem to get Old City train station named after Trump.

Transportation Ministry says new stop will be extension of high-speed line from Tel Aviv to the capital, taking passengers almost directly to the Western Wall; project also involves construction of 1.8 mile-long tunnel under centre of Jerusalem. (i24NEWS | Published: 02.18.20.)

Israel is moving ahead with a rail project that will include a new station in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, transporting tourists to the Western Wall directly from Ben-Gurion Airport.

The station will apparently be named for U.S. President Donald Trump. The plan means a new

terminal for the current express line that links Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in 32 minutes.

The project will involve the construction of two new stations and a new 1.8 mile-long tunnel under downtown Jerusalem and the Old City.

The route, which has not been announced publicly, has been approved by the Knesset's Planning and Construction Commission. (Apparently geologists are however concerned it could affect water flowing to the Gihon spring.)

The Transportation Ministry said in a statement that the project was initiated in 2017 by Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who was at the time the transportation minister and who in April 2019 confirmed that the station would be named for the president: "Here, in the Old City of Jerusalem, we will build the Western Wall & Temple Mount train station. It will be named after @realDonaldTrump, who made history and recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The official announcement will take place on Israel's Independence Day."

Current minister Bezalel Smotrich has hailed the plan as an "historic" development." He called it "very good news for Israeli residents and the millions of tourists who come to Jerusalem." A budget of \$700M was suggested when the initial plan was presented.

The new line between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv was inaugurated in December 2019, 11 years after it was due to open and at more than twice the original cost."

From BBC News website 18.02.2020 (predictably):

"Jordan has condemned a decision by Israel to advance a plan to build a railway line and station underneath the heart of Jerusalem's Old City.

The Israeli transport ministry said on Monday that a new route had been approved for an extension of the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem high-speed railway.

A 3km (2-mile) tunnel will lead to the Western Wall - one of Judaism's holiest sites - in the city's occupied east.

Jordan called the move a "flagrant violation of international law". Foreign ministry spokesman Daifallah al-Fayez urged the international community to "assume its responsibilities to resist the illegitimate and illegal Israeli steps". Jordan has special responsibility for overseeing the Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem - including the compound behind the Western Wall, known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and to Jews as the Temple Mount - via an Islamic trust called the Waqf.

The status of Jerusalem goes to the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel regards Jerusalem as its "eternal and undivided" capital, while the Palestinians claim East Jerusalem - occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war -



as the capital of a future state. The Israeli plan to extend the Tel Aviv - Jerusalem high-speed line to the Western Wall, which attracts millions of visitors and worshippers a year, was unveiled in 2017 by then Transport Minister Israel Katz. He also said the station underneath the Old City would be named after US President Donald Trump, who controversially recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital that year.

On Monday, the Israeli transport ministry announced that the National Planning and Building Council had approved a new route for the railway extension following a directive from Mr Katz's successor, Bezalel Smotrich, according to Israeli media.

It did not provide any details about the route, but it will reportedly involve building two underground stations and digging a tunnel beneath central Jerusalem.

Mr Smotrich described the plan as "historic" and said it was "very good news for Israeli residents and the millions of tourists who come to Jerusalem". "We are also succeeding in promoting the Zionist and Jewish agenda," he added.

Last November, the Israeli authorities approved a plan to build a cable-car network that would ferry visitors 1.4km from West Jerusalem to the Western Wall. Officials said the project would reduce traffic congestion, but critics said it would damage the historic landscape of the Old City - a Unesco World Heritage site."

## **(xxiv). GENDER SEPARATION ROW.**

Perhaps it was to be expected, once IR began using double-deck carriages..... someone would start to think the women should sit up in the 'Gallery'.... On 17.02.20120 this appeared on the Israel Religious Action Centre site:

*"At first I was shocked by the request to move from my seat on the train. The shock turned into insult that my presence, just because I am a woman, disrupted others from praying and the only solution was that I would move."*—Maya Melitz

In December 2018, Maya took the train from Jerusalem to Ben-Gurion Airport. While she was sitting and reading her book, a group of men in the car began to pray. She continued reading, and even enjoyed the prayer in the background. 15 minutes later, an Israel Railways attendant approached and asked her to move to a different railcar because "her presence in the railcar was disruptive during prayer." Maya didn't understand why it fell to her to move, and refused. She reminded the employee that this was a public place and not an Orthodox synagogue, and that she had the right to sit wherever she chose.

Maya felt humiliated and could not let the incident go, so she turned to us for help. After sending numerous letters of complaint to Israel Railways on her behalf, they finally answered denying the incident. As a result, we decided to sue Israel Railways. Last week, together with the Israel Women's Network, we filed a lawsuit for gender discrimination and demanded \$20,000 in

compensation. This was not the first incident in which an Israel Railways employee asked a woman to change seats because of men praying, so in addition to monetary compensation, we are demanding that the court instruct Israel Railways to publish guidelines that make it clear that employees are forbidden to ask passengers to change their seats because of their gender.

It is time for Israel Railways to train its employees that it is their responsibility to stop gender exclusion, not encourage it. We made sure that Maya's story was prominently featured in the domestic and international news. See coverage in the Jerusalem Post, the Times of Israel, and YnetNews.

It is unacceptable that in 2020 we still have to fight to be present in the public domain. We will continue to work towards gender equality on trains, planes, and buses to make sure it becomes a thing of the past."

## **(xxv). GAZA STRIP PROBLEMS AGAIN.**

Due to the clashes around the Gaza Strip, the security bodies have instructed the railways on 24.02.2020 not operate trains on the Western Negev Line between Ashkelon and Beer-Sheva until further notice.

On 25.02.2020, thanks to a ceasefire and some calm, the security bodies allowed the line to reopen; the railway teams inspected the line; the first train from Ashkelon to Beer-Sheva (train 627) departed at 10:10; in the opposite direction, the first train from Beer-Sheva to Ashkelon (train 638) departed at 10:20.

## **(xxvi). TRACK WORKS**

From a press release of 24.02.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

As an integral part of the annual track maintenance and upgrading programme the railways will carry out in the area of Haifa Central railway station upgrading and replacement works over 1 km of track as well as signalling and communication works.

Therefore the section to be worked on will be closed between Thursday 05.03.2020 at 23:00 and Friday, 06.03.2020 at about 17:00.

During this time there will be changes to rail traffic in the north and the following stations will be closed: Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Hayim, Hutzot Hamifratz, and Merkazit Hamifratz.

Trains between Herzliya and Tel-Aviv (including night trains) coming from the north will start/terminate at Haifa Central the 8 railway station instead of Nahariya.

For passengers using night service only the railways will operate free of charge special bus services from Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin to Ben-Gurion Airport, and between Haifa Central the 8, Akko (Acre) and Nahariya.

Trains on the Carmiel - Haifa Hof-Hacarmel and Atlit - Beit Shea'n (Valley Line) will not operate; regular buses will provide alternative services.

The Friday additional trains between Lod and Akko (Acre), bypassing the Greater Tel-Aviv Area will start/terminate at Haifa Central the 8 railway station. Traffic will resume on Saturday night 07.03.2020 at about 18:30.

## **(xxvii). VIRAL SCARES.**

Israel Railways Ltd. General Manager Mr. Michael (Micha) Maiksner has announced that the railways employees will use protective clothing against the Corona virus only according to the Ministry of Health instructions.

## **(xxviii). IN HARMONY.**

From a press release of 23.10.2019 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In an exciting cooperation between the railways and the social initiative "Beyond the Voice", a new version of the song IMAGINE has been performed by dozens of singers with limited abilities at nine different stations at the same time; the railways placed dozens of pianos at the stations; the aim was to forge a link between all sorts of people with the emphasis on social equality and tolerance towards people with limited abilities through music and songs.

At the end, all the 60 singers met at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station for an exciting concert."

## **(xix). CYCLIST ACCIDENT.**

Israel Railways Ltd. announced that at about 12:50 on 02.03.2020 a bicycle rider who rode illegally on tracks near Beit-Yehoshua station was hit by a passing train and at least injured; according to police instructions the line section between Herzliya and Netanya was closed for traffic; trains from the south started/terminated at Herzliya station, while from the north at Netanya station; the stations of Beit-Yehoshua and Netanya Sapir were also closed. Rescue teams meanwhile treated the injured person. It was not before 14:50 that according to the police instructions first one track was opened and later the other one and traffic resumed gradually.

## **(xx). ELECTION SERVICES.**

From a press release of 27.02.2020 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways have completed their preparations for the general elections on Monday 02.03.2020. Unlike on former elections days, on which there were reduced services, both the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. have decided that in this case all the regular 580 daily trains will operate in order to make it possible for each citizen to vote. Travel will be free; passengers will receive special paper tickets from automatic vending machines between Sunday, 01.03.2020 at 20:00 and Monday, 02.03.2020 at 23:59, as well as from stewardesses at selected stations."

# TENDERS.



(i). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 1197: Providing Maintenance Services for the railways' Diesel Fuel and Oil/Grease facilities in the South: Lod, Ashdod classification yard, Ashkelon, Beer-Sheva North, Ramat-Hovav and Tzefa: The intention is to select one winning bidder. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.01.2020.

(ii). Tender No. 11821: Providing Maintenance Services for Air Conditioning Systems at control centres, structures, stores, passenger stations, offices, etc.: Work is to be divided between the northern and southern administrative areas; one winning bidder can win both. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.01.2020.

(iii). Tender No. 21959: Construction of Overhead Bridges and Reinforcement works on section C of the Eastern Line; near Kessem road interchange (near Rosh HaAyin station) and near Nakhshonim; km. 89+850-90+170 and 96+320-96440 (measured from the Zero point at Haifa East): Works include: a 65m long overhead agricultural road bridges both near Kessem road interchange and near Nakhshonim (south of Rosh HaAyin), sloping ramps and conical earth structures at both sites as well as at five existing bridges, reinforcement works at a total length of 340m, changes at the parking area of Rosh HaAyin North railway station, paving agricultural lanes along the railway line, infrastructures for water irrigation systems, development of gardening and natural scenery. Implementation time: 16 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 17.02.2020.

(iv). Tender No. 41912, for Manufacture and Supply of KS Rail Fastening System. Proposals by 16.03.2020.

The manufacture and supply of KS Rail Fastening Systems Sets with SKL 12 for Wooden Sleepers and Bearers and also its various separate Components thereof (Fastening System), all in accordance with and subject to the terms specified in the General Terms and Conditions and the accompanying Tender documents.

(v). Tender No. 21936: Providing Consulting services regarding Expropriations: The intention is to select up to 4 competing bidders. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.02.2020.

(vi). Tender No. 1199: Building, Delivery, Responsibility, and Maintenance of Business Process Management/Business Process Automation System: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 13.02.2020.

(vii). Tender No. 200102: Operating a Taxi service station at Binyamina railway station: The contract is for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.01.2020.

(viii). Tender No. 516/2019: Providing external Legal Advice Services regarding tenders, projects follow-up, and litigation: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 17.02.2020.

(ix). Tender No. 264/2019: Providing Consultancy services regarding Fire Safety: The intention is to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 10.02.2020.

(x). Tender No. 21951: Performing works of laying a siding link to Ashdod Southern Port between km 01+616 and 02+337: The intention is to select one winning bidder. Implementation time: 27 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 26.03.2020.

(xi). Tender No. 11925: Providing services of Consultation, Follow-up and Monitoring for Purchasing and Procurement procedures: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 20.02.2020.

(xii). Tender No. 11952: Providing services for Renting Equipment for the Railways' Ceremonies: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.02.2020.

(xiii). Tender No. 200201: Operating Taxi services from/to Petakh-Tikva Kiryat-Arie railway station:

(xiv). Tender No. 200202: Operating Taxi services from/to Netivot railway station:

(xv). Tender No. 200201: Operating taxi services from/to new Lod railway station: The contract for each tender is for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals for each tender: 27.02.2020.

(xvi). Tender No. 200204: Permission for Installation and Operation of ATM cash machines at railway stations; The contract is for 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.02.2020.

(xvii). Tender No. 41913 for the Manufacture and Supply of Heat Treated Rails. Rails with profiles of, 60E2 & 54E1 which following a heat treated process having the steel grade of R350HT

Pre-requisites for Participation in the Tender (the "Pre-requisites"):

For the interpretation of Section 1, the following definitions shall apply: The Bidder is a rails manufacturer, or a Mother Company that fully owns and controls (100% ownership) of Rail Manufacture's Company. The Manufacturing Plant manufactured and supplied from 2015 until the Final Submission Date at least 2,000 tons of 54E R350HT type of Rails and at least 2,000 tons of 60E R350HT type of Rails. The Manufacturing Plant must be certified for a Quality Control system in accordance with ISO 9001. Bids by 20. April 2020. (There is a 44-page accompanying document).

(xviii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 200301: Operating a Non-Food Stand at Ra'anana South railway station: The items to be sold are: Jewellery and watches, eye glasses, bags and leather products, books and newspapers, cosmetics. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 16.03.2020.

(xix). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 11937: Providing Uniform Leasing Services - including Laundry - for those railway employees who need wear them: The tender is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.03.2020.

(xx). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 1191: Providing services within a frame agreement for Computerization, Information Systems and Additional Services of professional subjects: The tender consists of the four following clusters of services for information systems: Cluster 1 - Information Systems; 4 winning bidders will be selected. Cluster 2 - Infrastructures and Technology; 4 winning bidders will be selected. Cluster 3 - ERP; 5 winning bidders will be selected. Cluster 4: Consultants; 5 winning bidders will be selected. There will be separate frame agreements for each winning bidder. The contract is for 24 month with optional extensions of up to additional 72 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 12.03.2020.

Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 11838: Supplying Diesel Fuel for all Israel Railways Ltd. refuelling facilities: The intention is to select two winning bidders; one for the north, one for the south. The anticipated quantities are: 99,200 litres of diesel fuel for 2020; 104,200 litres of diesel fuel for 2021. The railways will also need (for the Haifa Kishon workshops only) 12,000 litres of kerosene for 2020; 15,000 litres of kerosene for 2021. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to 36 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 07.04.2020.



# LIGHT RAIL NEWS.

## A. TEL-AVIV LRV/METRO PROJECT.

### (i) BROWN LINE PLANNING ISSUES.

During the last weeks of 2019 there was a cloud covering this project; the Greater Tel-Aviv Area Design and Building Council has decided that, for the time being, building 250,000 apartments along the alignment of the Brown Line which is to run between Rishon LeZion, Beer-Ya'akov, Ramla and Lod is on hold; this programme was based mainly on operating the LRV Brown Line, 28 km long.

Additionally, the Transport Ministry has decided that instead of LRV this line should be served by BRT-METRONIT style buses; NTA claims that this is significantly inferior to an LRV; we must see what develops.

### (ii). LRV CAR PROBLEMS.

A safety report ordered by NTA from CRRC (CRC), the Chinese manufacturer of the LRV trains, unveils a list of severe potential safety failures on cars which require immediate correction prior to their shipment. These include: uncontrolled acceleration, train movement while passengers are boarding/alighting trains, faulty braking command, doors opened when trains are on the move, failures of fire extinguishing systems, failure of door-opening in emergency situations.

The potential solutions offered by CRRC have been described by NTA as both unacceptable and even primitive.

NTA has announced that correctional work will be fully paid by the manufacturers and are to be performed prior to start of operations at the end of 2021.

Meanwhile, five cars have already arrived in Israel and are performing test runs at Petah Tikva depot on NTA's only currently electrified section.

The service start date is also uncertain due to difficulties with construction at some stations and may be delayed by up to five months.

### (iii). PLANNING ISSUES.

Steve Sattler wrote:

"The Red Line in TLV will be ready in 2-3 years. (Mostly underground -with above ground at the ends.) The purple line (Segol) is planned but the (poor and crowded) southern village of Kfar Shalem - (an old Ma'abara about 8.7 kms SE of central TLV) is planned to be cleared of her residents within 2 weeks; This will not happen ! - ... because of the



- *2b or not 2b? Or what 2b come? Trackworks on the Red Line along Jabotinsky Road, near Beilinson Medical Centre, Petach Tikva. (Photos by Aharon Gazit, 02.03.2020).*



elections; and it would be violent and the 'compensation' discussions are not yet over. (They will need 1000 police - with riot gear). The RED line alone is basically a white elephant, because without the Purple and Green lines the TLV mega-city [Gush Dan] is just a symbolic single line - of North and South. They need the input from the EAST - and thus the interchange stations - to be useful.

So, in spite of the promises - the Purple Line may only start in 2026 - at best.

Similarly, the Green line is all planned, but work has just barely started - so anytime up to 2030 is a good date!!

*\*\* A new report - just out - by the Government planning office - (that actually planned the whole project) - shows that the Petah Tikva [red line] and the Bnei Brak [purple line] stations are too small and cannot handle the capacity of the future [10 year ahead] usage by the local populations.*

*The whole project was planned on trams arriving at busy stations once every 6 minutes - but this is not enough. (They are now thinking of once every 3*

*minutes - but the technology for this to work [and the occasional problem, or security issue] is not good enough."*

(iv). NTA Tender No. 2019/558: Providing consulting and control services regarding Electricity: The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.01.2020.

(v). NTA Tender No. 407/2019: Selecting a subcontractor to build the Overhead Road & Pedestrian Em Hamoshavot bridge:

The 117.8m long bridge will be built over highway 4 (north/south) near Em Hamoshavot road interchange and will link between Kiryat-Arie business, industrial, and high-tech zone of Petach-Tikva on the east side of highway 4, and the foreground of Em Hamoshavot LRV station at Bnei-Brak on the west side of highway 4. NTA intends to select one winning bidder only. Works are to start on June 2020. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.02.2020.

Attached herewith a computer generated simulation of the bridge provided by courtesy of NTA.

Coronavirus which has caused hundreds of CRRC's Chinese workers to be stranded in China until further notice.



(vi). NTA Tender No. 425/2019: Providing services for packing, transportation and storage of belongings for building/apartments' owners along the LRV/METRO lines whose property is to be expropriated by NTA: The intention is to select one winning bidder. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 10.02.2020.

(vii). Expropriation of Lands in favor of building the various LRV lines: The intention is to select one winning bidder. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.02.2020.

(viii). NTA Tender No. 555/2019: Providing services of estimation for final account for NTA:

This tender is for two clusters:

Cluster 1 for providing services of estimation for a final account on one project.

Cluster 2 for providing services of sample control for final accounts which an external control company performed for NTA on 2 projects.

NTA intends to select 2 separate bidders for the clusters-one per each.

The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 12 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 27.02.2020.

(ix). NTA International Tender No. 275/2019 for the Design, Build of Holon – Roads, Bridges and Traffic Underpasses G1-3, G1-6 of the Green LRT Line Project. Bids by 05.07.2020.

### **(x). DELAY.**

In early January NTA reported unofficially that due to problems with the electrification, signalling, and safety systems, the opening of the Red Line will be delayed to somewhere in 2022. No further details available so far.

### **(xi). GOING VIRAL.**

According to unofficial information given on 30.01.2020 by NTA, the opening of the Red Line is to be further delayed; the reason now is the

### **(xii). NEW METRO PLANS.**

Subject: The Greater Tel-Aviv Area Metro lines:

In April 2019 the National Infrastructures Committee decided to publish the preparations of 4 plans for 3 Metro lines and promote the first stage, and now this has been presented for approval; this is only the first hurdle in the planning programme which is to be completed by the end of 2020; the three Metro lines which will be underground, will link the whole Greater Tel-Aviv Area including Lod, Ramla, and Rehovot in the south, Ra'anana and Kfar Sava in the north, and Petakh-Tikva in the east, thus being a "Game changer" to ease the overcrowding on the roads and increasing investments in public transport.

The total length of the lines will be 145 km with 100 stations while running through 23 different authorities.

The plans for the northern part of M1 and for M2 which will start at Holon and end at Petakh-Tikva will be handed over to the different committees at the end of March 2020; the aim is to start operation in 2030, which experts define as over ambitious for project at that scale.

The cost of the project is estimated at \$45 Bn (NIS 155 Bn), but experts estimate it at \$58 to \$73 Bn (NIS 200 to 250 Bn). The following is from Ynet with their permission.

From the following table the data for the M1 & M3 lines are as following:

Line M1: Length: 44 km; 31 stations; starts at Holon and terminates at Rehovot; main stations: Tel-Giborim of Holon, Asaf Harofe medical centre at Tzrifin, Weitzmann Institute and Kaplan medical centre at Rehovot, and Bilu centre near Rehovot.

Line M3: Length: 38km; 24 stations; starts at Herzliya and terminates at Bat-Yam; main stations: Pi-Gliot, Asuta Ramat Hakhayal medical centre, Sheba medical centre and the Yoseftal axis of Bat-Yam.

'Railway Gazette Metro Report Intl.' 27.02.2020 reported thus: "Tel Aviv metro promoter NTA expects to start consultation next month for the first stages of three proposed underground heavy metro lines, for which plans were announced last year. Totalling 145 route-km with around 100 stations, the metro network is provisionally expected to cost around US\$45bn. It would interchange with the Red light rail line now under construction between Petah Tikva and Bat Yam, as well as the planned Green Yellow and Purple LRT lines. The 44 km Line M1 would run from Kfar Safar in the northeast to Rehovot in the south, with branches to Ra'anana and Lod, serving 31 stations in total. The east-west Line M2 would link Yafo with Rosh Ha'ayin, while the 38 km Line M3 with 24 stations would connect Herzliya with Bat Yam via Petak-Tikva. Consultation for the northern sections of lines M1 and M3 is due to start in March, when documentation will be presented to the local authorities. These two routes are expected to be ready for operation by 2030. No timescale has been announced for the start of consultation on Line M2."

## **B. JERUSALEM.**

### **(i). CHURCH COMPLAINTS.**

A problem has suddenly arisen: The southern extension of the Red Line to Hadassah Ein-Kerem Medical Centre passes near a Russian church, the authorities of which have submitted a violent objection, backed up by Russian President Mr. Putin, claiming that the LRV will create waves of vibrations which may endanger the church building; they suggest that instead of the planned underground road and the LRV on the surface, this should be reversed and the LRV should run underground.

This is described as a diplomatic crisis; we hope for a speedy solution.

### **(ii). FURTHER SUDDEN OBJECTIONS.**

An unexpected set of objections to the LRV Yellow Line has been unveiled recently, coming from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Museum, each with its own reservations; while the Prime Minister's Office says that the traffic with a lot of visitors to the Israel Museum will cause regular traffic interruptions, also creating security problems in this sensitive area, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that in addition to the security problems it will cause disturbance to the many ceremonies which take place at the foreground; The Israel Museum management fears that the planned LRV terminus at the nearby sensitive area of Monastery Of The Cross Valley will cause irreversible damage.

The Jerusalem Municipality responded: "We wonder about these objections; all the data and facts have been well known from the first moment of publishing the plan; everything has been taken into consideration and each re-planning and any changes will cost a lot." Meanwhile, no alternative plan has been suggested and we'll have to wait and see.



### (iii). GOLD LINE APPROVAL.

128:07.

## OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.

From Steve Sattler:

The New Jerusalem Light Rail Golden Line Is Approved

The planned line expansion of the Jerusalem light rail continues, with the approval of the new Gold Line, which will span approximately 1.2 kms. and operate between Rabin Blvd. and the Israel Museum.

A: The Jerusalem Planning & Construction District Committee headed by the Planning Administration this week decided to advance the plan to establish the Gold Line for the light rail system in the capital. This is a plan that is part of an overall move to develop the mass transit system in Jerusalem. The route of this leg of the light rail will be in the western part of the light rail system as the eastern part is due to arrive in the Old City and will be a part of a separate plan. The extension connects to the Green Line and the Red Line of the light rail, and it will serve many public institutions and tourist centers. The Gold Line will have three stops; the High Court of Justice, the Knesset and the Israel Museum. It will pass Sussman Street, Kaplan, Weiz and the last stop will be at the Israel Museum. The beginning of the actual construction is set for 2024.

B: In addition to this new Gold line, it has been decided to advance an underground parking lot at the Israel Museum, and to turn the current Museum parking lot to a city square which will host events and cultural festivals. The committee noted in its decision that, in contrast to the other lines of the light railway approved to date, which pass through residential areas, this line passes through the National District, which has a concentration of public-sector institutions and government offices, and it is a centre of employment.

C: In the interim, the committee has begun work to plan a light rail maintenance and operation centre (depot) in the Malcha area, which is planned to contain about 102 cars (51 two-car trains) of the light rail system. This will be south of Gilo, between the Begin Highway and Benvenishti Street. The area of the planned depot will be about 72 dunams. The plan also includes treatment and restoration of the Nahal Refaim Route that runs alongside the depot, which was previously diverted when the railroad construction took place in the area. Both plans were submitted by the Jerusalem Municipality and initiated by a master plan for transportation.

D: The Gold Line will join the 65 kms of light rail already approved for the Red, Green and Blue lines of the system. The light rail currently transports 160,000 passengers daily.

### (iv). ISSUES IN JERUSALEM.

Steve Sattler writes: "The government bought out the local CITY PASS consortium - for lots of dollars - and now they will pass this concession onto a Spanish consortium that will FINALLY complete the rails to Hadassah hospital - Ein Kerem and to Neve Yakov. The route is ready and cleared - but the rails need to be set in place and then the trams can run.

The Red Line will be extended 3 Kms to the North - into Neve Yakov and about 10 Kms to the SW - to Hadassah hospital. The Red Line works great - and the drivers, staff and security are all excellent."

### A. TURKEY.

#### (i). HEAVY HAUL HAULED BACK.

The Turkish loco builder Tulomasas built the Co-Co Heavy Haul and sent one to Innotrans and had hopes of it being acquired by a German purchaser, who was also potentially interested in a further nine. Now the attempt has been given up and the locos have been brought back to Turkey. TCDD has 20 of these and a further five are owned by a private operator.

#### (ii). NIGHT TRAIN TO ISPARTA

In 'Today's Railways Europe' 288 p.45 is a note that "After an absence of several years the 'Goller Express' has started running again, providing a daily overnight service in each direction between Izmir and Isparta. A bus connection is also provided between Gümüşgün station and the sizeable city of Burdur. At the time of writing the service is operated by a DMU rather than a traditional long-distance train with sleeping and restaurant car facilities."

#### (iii). ISTANBUL AIRPORT METRO: TRACKLAYING BEGINS.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 21.01.2020: "The start of tracklaying on metro line M11 to Istanbul's main airport was officially marked when President Erdoğan attended the welding of a ceremonial first rail at the future Gayrettepe terminus on January 18.

The 37.5 km line is being built by a consortium of Kolin and Enbay under a December 2016 contract valued at €999.8m.

Civil works are largely complete, including the construction of tunnels using earth pressure balance tunnel boring machines, cut-and-cover techniques and the New Austrian Tunneling Method. Fitting out of the nine stations and the installation of track, CBTC and telecoms equipment is now underway.

The line will be equipped for GoA4 (unattended) automated operation, with an operating speed of 120 km/h and a minimum headway of 300 sec. This will provide a 35 min journey time from Gayrettepe to the airport.

The opening of the line had originally been planned for November 2019, but is now expected in August 2021.

Three lines

The airport, which opened last year, is designed to handle up to 200 million passengers/year and will eventually be served by two metro lines and a main line rail link.

Construction of a five-station metro line connecting the airport with the terminus of the Marmaray suburban corridor at Halkalı began in September 2019 and is expected to be completed in 2022. A consortium of Özgün Yapı and Kolin has been awarded a €756m contract to supply the electromechanical systems for the line.

Tenders have not yet been called for the planned railway from Halkalı to the airport. This would form part of an outer city bypass running over the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge across the Bosphorus and connecting with the Asian rail network at Gebze."

#### (iv). IZMIR: FINANCING FOR METRO WORKS.

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 16.01.2020: "The European Bank for Reconstruction & Development is to provide Izmir Metropolitan Municipality with a loan to finance the €754.5m construction of civil works for the planned Üçyol - Buca driverless metro line serving the southeast of the city.

Approved by the municipality in 2018, the line would run for 13.5km, serving 11 underground stations. Interchange will be provided with the city's existing metro line at Üçyol and with Izban suburban services at İrinyer. There would also be a 6km link between the main line and the depot and workshop site."

### B. AFGHANISTAN

#### (i). IRAN LINK.

From 'R.G.I.' 12.12.2019: "A contract for the design and construction of the first phase of the fourth section of the railway being built to link Khaf in Iran with Herat province has been signed by

the Afghanistan Railway Authority and Kazak company Integra Construction. The contract was signed at the presidential palace in Kabul in the presence of President Ashraf Ghani on December 12.

Being built in four sections, the 1,435 mm gauge line will provide landlocked Afghanistan with a rail route through Iran to the sea and the Turkish rail network.

Work has been completed on the first two sections covering the 76 km from the Iranian railhead at Khaf to Sangan and the border with Afghanistan at Shamtqi. The 62 km third section from the border to Ghoryan is reported to be 95% complete. These sections of the route have been funded by Iran. The latest contract covers the 43 km from Ghoryan to Rabat Paryan via the Zenda Jan and Enjeel districts of Herat province.

Construction is expected to take 16 months, with the US\$58.5M cost to be funded by the Afghan government, supported by a grant from Italy.

The planned second phase of section four would extend the route a further 20 km to an industrial area near Herat airport.

Transport Minister Yama Yari said the complete line was expected to carry 6.5M tonnes of freight in the first five years and generate revenue of US\$64m a year."

#### (ii). RAILWAY STAFF VISIT CHINA FOR TRAINING.

From 'R.G.I.' 19.01.2020: "Staff from the Ministry of Transport recently travelled to China to be trained in railway management, signalling and operations. This included a visit to a high-speed rail training centre.

The Afghanistan Railway Authority said the engineers had acquired a wealth of technical skills during the visit, which they would pass on to other Afghan staff to help support the country's railway plans.

AfRA staff have previously visited countries including Iran and Tajikistan for technical training, as part of the authority's work to develop domestic railway capabilities."

### C. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES.

(i). From 'Railway Gazette Intl.' 19.12.2019: "National railway developer Etihad Rail has awarded the fourth major contract for its Stage Two expansion programme to a joint venture of China Railway Construction Corp and local partner National Projects & Construction.

Valued at 4.6Bn dinars, the Package D contract covers the civil works and construction of 145 route-km running northeast from the border of Dubai through Sharjah to the ports of Fujairah and Khorfakkan on the Gulf of Oman.

The agreement was signed by Etihad Rail Chief Executive Officer Shadi Malak, CRCC representative Zhao Dianlong and NPC Managing Director Hamad Al Amri at a ceremony on December 18, attended by Etihad Rail Chairman HH Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed and CRCC Vice-President Wang Wenzhong."

The northeast extension will require the construction of 15 tunnels through the Hajar mountains with a total length of 16km, together with 35 overbridges and 32 underpasses.

Connecting the two east-facing ports to manufacturing, production and population centres will enable the rail network to carry up to two million TEUs per year, helping to support international trade. Package D will also serve quarries in the northern Emirates, allowing up to 30 million tonnes of building materials to be moved by rail each year to distribution hubs in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. According to Etihad Rail, this should eliminate around 2,000 lorry trips per day from the region's roads.

Under its Stage Two expansion programme, aimed at developing a 1,200 km network, Etihad Rail had previously awarded three major design and build contracts. Package A was awarded to a joint venture between the China State Construction Engineering Corp and South Korea's SK Engineering & Construction, while Packages B and C went to a joint venture between CRCC and Ghantoot Transport & General Contracting Co.

'The awarding of this contract is a highly significant achievement as Etihad Rail follows its path to progressing one of the most important and economically strategic projects in the UAE', explained Sheikh Theyab. 'We continue to provide a safe, modern, and sustainable national railway network that meets the aspirations and expectations of our nation and its leaders, supporting the UAE's position as a major link in the regional and global supply chain, and as a key player in the logistics system.'"

#### (ii). NEW FREIGHT FACILITIES.

From 'R.G.I.' 11.02.2020: "Etihad Rail has awarded a joint venture of L&T Construction and Power China International a 1.876bn dirham contract to design, build and commission seven freight handling facilities on Stage 2 of the national rail network. The freight facilities will be built in Industrial City of Abu Dhabi, Khalifa Port, Dubai Industrial City, Jebel Ali Port, Al Ghayl, Siji and Fujairah Port.

This completes the contract award process for Stage 2, which will connect Fujairah and Khorfakkan on the east coast to the border with Saudi Arabian at Ghufeifat.

Indian company L&T said winning the contract against stiff international competition was a major breakthrough for its Metallurgical & Material Handling business.

The contract was signed on January 29, when Chairman of Etihad Rail Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan formally launched construction of Stage 2 Package A, which covers the 139 km section of line connecting Stage 1 at Ruwais with Ghufeifat.

'We are witnessing a remarkable day for Etihad Rail as we witness the transition from planning and design to actual implementation of the project on the ground, following in the footsteps of our founding fathers as we implement one of the nation's most strategic projects, one that contributes to the

economic development of the country by providing a safe, reliable and integrated alternative mode of transport', he said.

The freight facilities would promote the UAE's position as a global logistics hub and an active and key player in the field of logistics, he added."

#### (iii). 38 NEW LOCOS ORDERED.

From 'R.G.I.' 27.02.2020: "National railway developer Etihad Rail has awarded Progress Rail a contract to supply a further 38 heavy haul diesel locomotives.

These will add to the seven 4 500 hp EMD SD70ACS locomotives delivered in 2013 for the opening of the 264km first phase of the network. The locomotives will be capable of hauling 100-wagon trains, equivalent to 5,600 on-road lorry trips per day. They will be designed to withstand the region's high temperatures and humidity, with the air intakes being equipped with sand filtration systems.

The latest order announced on February 26 follows the award of the civil works contracts for construction of the 605 km Stage 2 of the network, which will connect Fujairah and Khorfakkan on the east coast to the western border with Saudi Arabia at Ghufeifat.

'The cutting-edge fleet of locomotives will raise the bar in the transportation system and logistics services in the country and increase the network's annual capacity to more than 60 million tonnes, compared to the current annual capacity of approximately 7.2 million tonnes', said Etihad Rail Chairman Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed when the contract was signed."

### D. ERITREA.

In 'Lok Magazin' 1/2020 p.36 is an item on how a group of five apprentices from the 'h'vle' ('Havelländische Eisenbahn AG' based in Berlin-Spandau) - together with some trainers spent three weeks in the Eritrean capital of Asmara as part of a project for expanded worldwide training opportunities sponsored by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry for Education and Research). Their aim was to restore 'Littorina' railcar No. 2 to a presentable appearance. Indeed by the end they had not only repainted it in two-tone grey with red highlighting but even managed to get it to work again, albeit with only one of the two motors. Nevertheless this enabled a special run to be made in the presence of the German ambassador on 27th. Oct. 2019 as far as Shegereni. There is also a more extensive article in 'Fern Reisen' written by the organiser of the scheme.

### E. SAUDI ARABIA.

(i). MEDINA. In December 2019 there was some correspondence on the Continental Railway Circle chat concerning the accessibility to non-Moslems of the surviving railway relics and museum at Medina. It began with Ray Schofield asking: "Does anyone know whether the Hejaz Railway Museum in Medina and near the Holy Mosque is within the Haram area



and/or can be visited by a non-Muslim? Any information on the current situation re the restored No. 105, and/or the High Speed line from Mecca to Medina (yes - I know about the Jeddah fire and current 5-day operation) and whether an agnostic can travel to Mecca Station even though all Mecca is Haram." John Bennett wrote: "In 1977, I went in a shared taxi from Amman (Jordan) to Jeddah. The taxi had to go into Medina but the driver wouldn't take me in with them & I was left standing on the Medina bypass while the taxi went into town." He adds that several photos had appeared in 'Continental Railway Journal', "I think I remember the first ones came from America, taken by a Moslem friend of a USA enthusiast, at his request..." The Editor wrote: "I cannot answer the question but at one point in the 1900's anywhere south of Medain Saleh was closed off even to Meissner Pasha and his non-Moslem engineers. He had to train people to go beyond to carry out surveys and building work." Ray responded that "So far as I know all of the areas north of Medina with preserved dumped and damaged (by TEL) NG locomotives are all accessible including the other small museum with one loco." The Editor recalled "reading that a lot of Chinese workers were converted to Islam to work in Saudi..... ironic in view of current Chinese attitudes to Moslems within the wall!" In terms of the new line, John suggested: "The stations were designed by Norman Foster & partners, English I think; & the trains were built by Talgo, who are Spanish. Ask them if they had any restrictions."

Thomas Kautzor commented: "The Hejaz Railway Station with the museum is within the restricted area. That area was expanded many years ago from the initial Al-Haram area, before that it did not include the station. Maybe as a result of KSA's tourism initiative it will again be changed? The new Al-Haramain station is outside the restricted area, as is Al-Madinah airport and a number of hotels."

**(ii). HARAMAIN LINE SIGNALLING CONTRACT.**

From 'R.G.I.' 14.01.2020: "Xrail Group has been awarded a seven-year contract to undertake corrective and preventive maintenance of the ETCS Level 2 signalling and technical buildings on the Haramain High Speed Rail line, acting as subcontractor to Siemens Mobility.

Xrail will provide 24/7 support from six maintenance centres situated along the 453km route. Announcing the contract win, Xrail said it was 'proud to export railway expertise from the UK to Saudi Arabia, to help develop local talent, transfer knowledge and know-how and to ensure a strong, stable and competent legacy'."

**(iii). RUSSIAN - SAUDI AGREEMENT.**

A bit late: From 'RG.I.' 14.10.2019: "Russian Railways Chief Executive Oleg Belozarov, CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund Kirill Dmitriev and Saudi Railway Co CEO Dr Bashar Al Malik signed a co-operation agreement in Riyadh on October 14.

The parties expressed interest in Russian participation in the construction and modernisation of railways as part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030

programme, the supply of products including train control and safety systems, and the training of SAR personnel in Russia.

'Today there are favourable conditions for establishing close co-operation between our countries in the field of railway transport', said Belozarov. 'Considering the profound experience of Russian Railways in the construction of railway infrastructure, our expertise and advanced technologies, we believe in long-term co-operation with Saudi Arabia.'

One supposes that experience of building railways through Siberian permafrost will always come in handy.

**F. QATAR:**

**NEW CIRCULAR TRAMWAY.** (from 'Metro Report Intl.' 14.01.2020).

"A 2.12 km circular tramway in the Msheireb Downtown Doha district of the capital opened at the end of December. Travel is free. Trams run every 6 min, serving nine stops and a 400m hop-on/hop-off zone in the Wadi Msheireb area. Interchange to the city's metro network is provided at the Central Msheireb stop.

The three custom-designed 1,435 mm gauge single-section vehicles were supplied by US company TIG/m. They are powered by a 'battery-dominant' hybrid propulsion system, with two large LiFePO4 traction battery banks and a small LPG-fuelled generator set; other generator options are offered by TIG/m including fuel cells. The propulsion system is designed to be able to offer 20 h of passenger service per day without needing an external power source and maintaining at least 30% surplus power in order to extend the battery life by avoiding deep-cycles. The vehicles' air-conditioned interiors have 33 seats, wi-fi and CCTV. The windows incorporate light-filtering glass panels designed to reduce the heat from sunlight by 90%, and the glass can be removed for open-sided operation during the cooler winter months.

The trams have priority at the traffic signals, and real-time information is available on the trams and at the stops. 'We are excited about the project coming to fruition', TIG/m President Brad Read told Metro Report International. 'We believe that

this form of very light rail has a great potential for mid-sized cities as well as feeder systems for line-haul interurbans in large metropolitan areas."

**G. JORDAN.**

**NEW RAIL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ANNOUNCED.**

From 'RailPro': "Jordan Ministry of Transport has a strong railway development strategy which 'will explore country's strategic position as the country has the potential to be a major trade and transport hub. The transport system can be the gateway between Asia and Europe, as well as Turkey and GCC. The railway network will be implemented in several phases which will provide transport links with Iraq, Syria as well as Saudi Arabia,' Khalid Saif, the Transport Minister of Jordan said at the Middle East Rail conference held in Dubai, where Railway PRO is media partner.

Jordan intends to develop a 1000-km railway network within four phases resulting in railway connections with China and Europe. The standard gauge network will be primarily used for freight traffic, allowing the operation of 1,500-metre trains with a 30 tonnes axle load. Trains will be able to run at speeds of 120 km/h.

Under the first phase, Jordan will construct a railway line between Aqaba, a port city on the Red Sea's Gulf of Aqaba, and the capital Amman. The standard gauge line will have a total length of 400km connecting the Aqaba ports – the container terminal and industrial area - to Maddouneh dry port in Amman. The feasibility studies for this phase are fully updated and in the second half of 2020 the detailed design will be completed. According to the minister, land expropriation is almost completed.

In the second half of this year the tender documents will be completed. The railway line will



be designed for freight traffic. This first phase will allow rail container traffic to grow by 5% until 2050, while the capacity of Aqaba container terminal is estimated at 3 million TEUs. In addition, phosphate traffic will grow by 3% per year until 2040 when 11.9 million tonnes will be transported on the route, including to Iraq.

The second phase involves the construction of a new railway line between Maddouneh and Oman, while the third phase will provide transport link from the dry port to Iraq. The fourth phase will see the creation of a railway link to Syria. "By the construction of a railway network, we will reduce road traffic congestion, shifting freight transport to railways and will reduce the emissions and the environmental impact. We want this project to be implemented very soon," the minister concluded."

This is a major development concept and although we have heard of such concepts many times in the past, the current railway climate in the Middle East with the construction projects of Etihad Railways, Saudi Arabia etc. make this seem more feasible than usual. We will follow developments with interest – it seems almost certain it would mean the end of the remaining 105cm gauge Hedjaz relics, unless these are retained – a picnic train from Amman to Jiza, and a tourist train at Wadi Rum – as isolated segments. In the meantime here are some recent Jordanian postage stamps, courtesy of Steve Sattler.

## H. PALESTINE / GAZA.

From 'Times of Israel' 16.01.2020: "An amusement park in the southern Gaza Strip recently unveiled a train ride that seeks to simulate a journey from the isolated coastal enclave to Jerusalem's Old City, home to a number of Islamic holy sites.

The ride, which spans 550 metres and features two elevated tracks, is the newest attraction at the Asdaa City theme park in Khan Younis. It was built on land that formerly belonged to the Ganei Tal settlement, which was evacuated after Israel decided to withdraw from Gaza in 2005.

It took more than two years to construct and was named "The Train of Return to Jerusalem," according to Wael al-Khalili, the chairman of Asdaa's board of directors.

"This was the dream of every Palestinian in Gaza and now it has become a reality with the efforts of the Palestinian minds that built this project," he said in a post on the amusement park's Facebook page in early January.

While Israel controls Jerusalem and considers it to be a part of its sovereign territory, the Palestinians view it as their capital and a key centre of Palestinian culture. Before ascending to the train tracks, visitors see a large sign with the number 99, resembling the distance in kilometers from Asdaa to Jerusalem.

The train line, which was inaugurated on January 2, brings visitors across a valley to a partial mock-up of Jerusalem's Old City, including a small building representing the Dome of Rock shrine.

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem —the site of the biblical Jewish temples that houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock — has often been

the epicentre of tensions between Israel and the Palestinians as the holiest site in Judaism and third-holiest site in Islam.

Spice, bread and pottery vendors sold their goods to visitors, while others walked through large doors embodying some of the major entrances to the Old City, a video taken by Gaza-based journalist Osama al-Kahlout on January 10 showed.

Mousa al-Riati, a resident of Rafah, was smiling as he explained why he and his family decided to go on the train line. "We wanted to ride the train today because it is new and in the Gaza Strip for the first time," he told Kahlout, adding: "We want to [act] as if we are going on a trip to Jerusalem because citizens cannot go to the real Jerusalem."

Israel places restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza. Israeli officials maintain that the limitations are in place to prevent Hamas, which has controlled Gaza since 2007, and other terrorist groups from smuggling weapons into the territory.

In a video posted on social media in early January, one of the conductors of the train line was seen playing a recording of a voice: "We wish you a pleasant trip. Inevitably, we will return."

According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, there are 1.4 million Palestinian refugees living in Gaza; UNRWA includes descendants of refugees in its designation. Israeli officials contend that the return of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to lands that are now a part of Israel would wipe out the country's Jewish character.

Some Palestinian social media users have criticized the train project. "This is actually part of a profit scheme. Nothing more. People come, pay for tickets and ride," Khalid Walid, a Palestinian from Gaza, said in a video he posted on YouTube. Both Walid and the Kan public broadcaster said the cost of a ticket to ride on the train line is NIS 5 (\$1.45).

Besides Jerusalem, Asdaa also features several other mock-ups including one of Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs, which Jews and Muslims revere as the burial site of the biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. While Jews refer to the site as the Tomb of Patriarchs, Muslims call it the Ibrahimi Mosque. It also includes a lodging and pool area called the Tiberias Resort — a reference to the city of Tiberias next to the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel.

Khalili described Asdaa as an amusement park that brings together tourism and Palestinian nationalism. "Its projects are used for tourism and relaxation as well as instilling national concepts and values through representations of Palestinian history and memory on its property," he told Kahlout.

Asdaa was established after Hamas took over Gaza. Khalili declined to be interviewed by 'The Times of Israel', noting that he does not speak to Israeli news outlets.

In his comments to Kahlout, Khalili contended that Asdaa had to overcome the obstacles related to Israel's restrictions on the movement of goods to construct the train project, which he said compelled the theme park to turn to "alternatives" to build it. He did not clarify what the he meant specifically by "alternatives."

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, the Defence Ministry body responsible for liaising with the Palestinians, said it could not comment on the train project unless 'The Times of Israel' provided it with evidence that Asdaa had made a request to import materials by way of the Jewish state.

Since shortly after Hamas took over Gaza, Israel has limited the entry of products that it labels "dual use" into the coastal enclave, which it says can be utilized for both civilian and military purposes. In order to import such goods, Palestinians in Gaza are required to receive special permits."

There are other media links which show what appears to be an underslung monorail with small 1- or 2-person cabins, and a small elevated railway – though the rails appear to be tubes – also with small articulated carriages. Maybe more information will become available in due course. Presumably only Return tickets are sold.....

### **STOP PRESS URGENT POST SCRIPT:**

The above was prepared just before Purim; By the time Purim was over the world had changed drastically. The railtour was cancelled - or possibly postponed until October. By 12th. March a shortage of Traffic Inspectors - at least 27 were in isolation at this point - meant a decision to cancel Lod - Rishonim trains, Beer Sheva - Dimona, Beit Shemesh - Jerusalem Malcha and also night trains from Beersheva to Tel Aviv. Ben Gurion Airport station was sealed off for international travellers and could be used only by airport workers (who could show their pass) and passengers on internal flights (who had to show their ID).

Hopefully by the time issue 128 is ready for distribution the pandemic and the associated fears and disruptions will be past and we wish readers a healthy few months.



# NOTES AND COMMENTS.

## (a). A NEW PRESERVATION SCHEME IN ISRAEL:

*This appeared in 'Ha'aretz' Online on 26.12.2019, by Ofer Aderet: "‘Legendary’ Century-old Railway Could Ride Again in Israel's Jezreel Valley*

Shlomo Maayan is working to realize his dream to recreate the historic rail route that was shut down in 1952, by operating a locomotive that was in operation in the same period as the Valley Train, which he found in Greece

About a decade ago, after an extended search abroad, Prof. Shlomo Maayan of Tel Aviv finally found what he was looking for, an original Linke-Hofmann-Busch locomotive, made in Germany in 1927.

A piece of junk to many, to Ma'ayan it was another step toward fulfilling his dream of recreating, at least in part, the legendary Jezreel Valley railway. The locomotive had been in operation in the same period as the Valley Train.

Maayan, 73 and an infectious diseases specialist, wants to operate his locomotive and three vintage passenger cars on one section of the historic rail line. He calls it a "moving museum," and views it as a potential tourist attraction.

A new valley line between Haifa and Beit She'an was inaugurated three years. The railway hews closely to the original route, which was shut down in 1952. None of the almost 4 billion shekels (\$1.15 Bn) spent on the new railway was set aside to preserve its predecessor. The state's declared goal was to reduce travel time from outlying areas to the country's centre and to increase the value of properties along the route.

Maayan hopes to restore a 4-kilometre (2.5-mile) stretch of the original route, from the historic Tzemah station on Lake Kinneret east toward Hamat Gader. "The railway will take us along a fascinating and unique view of the Yarmouk River, which contains remnants of the bridges and tunnels the original Valley Train rode along or through, and a view of the meeting of three borders – Israel, Jordan and Syria," he says.

Rescue, restoration and preservation work was done on the abandoned structures at Tzemah in recent years. They were rededicated in 2015 as part of the Kinneret Academic College campus. Australian cavalry fighting for the British empire captured the station from German and Turkish forces, which had entrenched themselves there. A Turkish railway turntable remained at the station.

Maayan took another step late last year toward making his dream come true. The locomotive, which he found at an old train station in Greece, was disassembled into four parts, loaded into trucks and shipped to northern Romania, where it will be restored by experts."

"This type of locomotive and similar ones ran on the Valley Train," Maayan says. After the work is completed, the locomotive will be shipped to Israel. That takes money, and Maayan is looking for donors. He has drawn up a business plan, detailing the next steps and their costs. He has already brought on board some major partners, including Israel Railways, rail vehicle manufacturers Alstom (the successor of Linke-Hofmann-Busch) and Bombardier; the Jordan Valley Regional Council and Kinneret Academic College. He even got the Greek government to approve the export of the historic locomotive that he tracked down.

Maayan launched the project as part of his effort to memorialize his daughter Lily, who died of leukemia 11 years ago, shortly before she was to complete medical school.

Awaiting further news, one can add that at Tzemach the former turntable pit has been uncovered by Mr. Levavony (as we have reported) but there are no

other useable facilities there – yet. But this is an interesting and exciting idea and we hope to hear more of it.

## (b). DUTCH HOLOCAUST TRAINS COMPENSATION.

*Thanks to Rob Bayliff for the following link to DutchNews.nl: of 24.02.2020:-*

[https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2020/02/dutch-railway-firm-has-paid-e32m-so-far-to-compensate-death-camp-victims/?utm\\_source=newsletter](https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2020/02/dutch-railway-firm-has-paid-e32m-so-far-to-compensate-death-camp-victims/?utm_source=newsletter)

"Dutch state-owned railway company NS has paid out €32m so far to the victims and close family members of people transported by train to concentration camps during World War II, broadcaster NOS reported on Monday. The money has been paid to 4,000 people, of whom 600 are survivors, the NS said. The railway group said last year it expected to pay at least €35m to around 6,000 survivors or next of kin: €15,000 to each direct survivor, €7,500 to widows or widowers and €5,000 or €7,500 to children of the victims. The NS was commissioned by the Nazis to take an estimated 100,000 Jewish, Roma and Sinti people in special trains to holding camps in Westerbork, Vught and Amersfoort, where they lived before being taken to death camps in the east. It is estimated to have been paid some €2.5 million for this – something it describes as 'a black page' in its history. The commission to allocate compensation was set up last August after a three-year battle by 83-year-old Holocaust survivor Salo Muller. Applications can still be made up to August 5 this year, in English as well as Dutch. Some 700 requests have so far been dismissed for not having the right paperwork or other evidence."

Rob adds: The matter of the NS being paid to run those trains was brought to light by the late Ing. C. Huurman, a WW2RSG member, who when going through NS Archives for his book *Het Spoorwegbedrijf in Oorlogstijd* {The Railways in Wartime}, Uitgeverij Uquilair B.V., ISBN 90-71513-40-8 came across invoices for the transports.

A full listing of trains from Westerbork giving dates, day of week, number of people in train, destination concentration camp is given as a table: Appendix 13 on pages 455/6. The totals at the end give 93 trains, 100,018 deported." In fact the Editor has an English translation of this chapter available digitally if anyone wishes it.

## (c). PRIESTLY BLESSINGS.

*Steve Sattler writes:*

"Here is a nice tit-bit: Rabbi Kook and the Emek Railway in 1913.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook came to Ottoman Palestine in 1904 from Lithuania. He was regarded as a genius by his very large community in Northern Poland and Lithuania. He was a Talmudist, a philosopher and had a good background in the sciences. He was elected Chief Rabbi of Jaffa and also the secular Jewish [or Zionist] communities in the Gallilee - about 20 villages and farms. In 1913 he organized a trip up North [from Jaffa] by ship, donkey and then he and his group spent the Shabbat in Haifa. There were about 10 Rabbis in this group and this included the ultra-Orthodox Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Jerusalem and Hebron - Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. They spent the Shabbat and most of the week in and near Haifa, and then on Friday 28th November 1913 they got up early to catch the early morning train from Haifa to El-Afula - an agricultural village.....some 33 kms to the SE. (Shabbat would commence at 16.17). This Emek train (the Jezreel Valley train) ran in the valley - from 1904 and it was the main form of transport across the

breadth of the Gallil. It originally was built to bring steel rails and sleepers for the main Damascus to Medina rail line - mainly for Pilgrims to the Haj - from Haifa port to the junction - at Daara in Ottoman Syria. The Rabbis decided to pray their morning service on the train (this is not unusual) and then, after some degree of indecision - Rabbi Kook - the Cohen (i.e. a priestly descendant) decided to stand and bless the passengers in the carriage - both Jews and Arabs - with the Torah-based priestly blessing - with raised hands, and the Tallit covering his head. This is called 'Birkat Cohanim' and is said aloud. The other Rabbis - after the blessing - [in Torah Hebrew it is 3+ 5+7 words and takes about 2 minutes] then explained to the other Arab passengers that this holy priest had just blessed them, their families and the Land. The rabbis got off at El-Afula and spent the Shabbat in the Jewish agricultural village of El-Afula. After Shabbat they then also visited a few other Zionist agricultural farms - along the tracks towards Beit Shean. They spent three weeks in the Gallilee."

#### (d). OPENING OF THE AI LINE.

Rather than place this in 'News from the Line' we have decided to place this report of the opening day here as a personal view by Steve Sattler for the 'Trains and Tram Society of Israel':

"Last night - Saturday night - 21st December 2019 = Kaf Bet Kislev Tashaf] at 21.56 the first real and public passenger train left the new Jerusalem Navon Station and at 160 Km/h flew down to Tel Aviv. The trip took 32 mins - including a 2 min stop at the BGA airport.

At this time the last stop for this train is the south-Tel Aviv HaHagana Station, but soon this train will do all the Tel Aviv stations. This first train took 350 passengers and in our 'fairly empty' carriage - near the back - we had 27 passengers.

Sir Moses Montefiore considered this project in 1838, but it took Jerusalem resident and citizen of the Ottoman Empire Yosef Navon to actually get this idea off the ground. He spent 5 years in Constantinople trying to get the FIRMAN {a permit} from the Sultan - that he finally got in 1888 - 28th October. - for 71 years.

He sold this permit to a Frenchman for 1 million Francs and on 29th December 1889 a new company was formed to build & run this unique railway. The French SdCdFCdJaJeP company - Navon was on the board of directors..

Jerusalem - the HOLY city and a focus for wealthy Christian pilgrims, Russian pilgrims and religious Jews - would soon have a dedicated railway from the Jaffa port up into the hills of Jerusalem - 730 metres up the hills.

So, on the 26th September 1892 the first operative passenger train ran from the new stone Jaffa Station to the new stone & impressive Jerusalem station. In both cases the two new stations [and the 5 stations in-between] were not allowed to be built inside the city, but rather just outside the city.

Today, this electric train starts from NAVON - 89 metres underground, travels 51.8 Kms down and NW to Tel Aviv's HaHagana station. The downward angle is 2.8 degrees.

This first train was the No. 7776, and the returning train at 10.56pm was the No. 7721.

*It was a great and historic trip. Bivracha, Steve."*

128:09

## THE FIRST ISRAEL RAILWAYS DIESEL LOCOS

*Thanks to Erik Madsen we have a copy of the report of a trial run of one of IR Belgian-built Bo-Bo's Nos. 101 - 103.*

27th May 1952.

SOCIÉTÉ ANGLO-FRANCO-BELGE DES ATELIERS DE LA CROYÈRE, SENEFFE & GODARVILLE, S.A.  
La Croyère, Belgium.

Construction company licensed by General Motors Corporation, Electro-Motive Division, La Grange (Illinois). (Of a total of 3,740 Diesel-Electric locomotives built in 1951, Electro-Motive Division delivered 2,381 units, i.e. 64%.)

#### REPORT OF THE TRACTION TESTS.

A.F.B. - G.M. Diesel-Electric Locomotive.

I. Programme.

With the cooperation of the SNCB a traction trial was organised on the line Bruxelles - Ostende on 27th May 1952.

The locomotive to be tested was a locomotive with a Diesel engine and electrical transmission recently built in collaboration with General Motors - EMD of La Grange, U.S.A. This new machine is part of a batch of locomotives destined for the State of Israel.

Its Principal Characteristics are as follows:

- Power of motor transmitted to the generator and in continuous use: 1125 Hp.
- Weight in working order (Total available for adhesion): 85 Tonnes.
- Gear ratio: 60-17.

The two following characteristics, a result of restrictions applied by the State of Israel, are below the maximum values that would otherwise be possible:

- Top speed. 96km/h
- Tractive Effort limited to: 18,100 km. [sic - should this be kg? Yes, it should, but mind the number of noughts.]

The Tests were run to verify the principal characteristics of the machine, i.e.:

- Perfect construction and correct tuning for service.
- Riding qualities
- Power
- Speed
- Fuel consumption.

One remark must be made as to the profile/loading gauge of the State of Israel which permits the use of the locomotive in question.



Its dimensions are larger than those normal for the SNCB and therefore necessitated special care and the SNCB technical services were kind enough to check and determine which lines were suitable for permitting the passage of this locomotive running normally.

The line Bruxelles - Ostende was designated for this purpose.

#### Characteristics of the Line:

Length: 115 km

Gradients: 1.5 km following departure, 9.11 ‰; Then 10 km varying from 2 to 8 ‰.

The rest of the alignment is gently undulating around the horizontal.

Curves: There are several curves on departure from Bruxelles, of which the sharpest has a radius of 450m.

Weight of the Train: 14 steel carriages of 22m length, weight approx. 43 tonnes.

Total Weight: 620 Tonnes + 85 tones = 75 tons.

Total Length of the train: 324 metres

#### Planned Schedule:

Bruxelles-Midi	08.40	13.19
Gand St Pierre	09.25	12.32
Gand St Pierre	09.40	12.29
Bruges	10.14	11.55
Bruges	10.17	11.52
Ostende Quai	10.39	11.30

## II. Conclusions

Departure actually took place at 08.42, the machine started the passenger train very gently.

Current absorbed was 920 Amp at the precise moment of movement commencing, the maximum limit was 950 Amp.

It is also relevant to remark that departure took place on an S-curved line, which was particularly unfavourable considering the length of the train. [i.e. side resistance on the flanges, but also the resistance of the buffers that are compressed, the Belgians couple their carriages tightly.]

A fine rain was falling at the time of departure, which made the rails somewhat slippery.

En route, the intensity of the current varied between 250 and 325 Amp.

The envisaged speeds were attained, with a maximum of 99.2 km/h on a gentle downward slope.

The cruising speed was found to be established at 57 m/h or 91.2 km/h.

On the outbound run, however, unforeseen speed reductions were implemented for the sake of prudence.

In fact the width of the machine led to concerns regarding contact with certain fixed installations, and it was necessary to run especially slowly at such places.

These speed reductions led to a certain delay on the outbound run.

On the return journey on the other hand, while the departure from Ostende took place with a delay of 20 minutes, arrival at Bruxelles was only 6 minutes late, meaning that 14 minutes had been gained over the time scheduled for the return trip.

The machine was worked at full power during the entire journey, the acceleration lever held at position 8.

It held the rail in a remarkable manner, the great flexibility of the suspension as well as the absence of

noise and noticeable vibrations were the cause of flattering remarks on the part of the [i.e. all] S.N.C.B. staff [the circumstances and the wording both suggest that they were quite senior] present in the driving cab.

The automatic relays which modify the coupling of the traction motors have functioned normally and with great steadiness.

The following temperatures of the cooling water for the Diesel motor were recorded:

- On arrival at Ostende: 82°C
- On return to Bruxelles: 76°C

Absolutely normal figures.

Consumption. Verification of the quantity of fuel oil consumed gave the following results:

Sections checked: Loaded, Bruxelles-Midi - Ostende, Ostende - Bruxelles-Midi

Return light engine: Bruxelles - La Croyère.

without deduction of the running from the depot at Bruxelles-Midi, brake tests on the train, uncoupling and turning on the triangle at Ostende and waiting for signals during the return to La Croyère.

Total quantity used: 885 litres.

It may be concluded from the calculations that the actual consumption when running loaded was inferior to the specific theoretical consumption of 188g per hp/hour and that the actual run on the line Bruxelles-Ostende was achieved at a cost of less than 900 francs for fuel.

- *"Tel Aviv North station as it used to be with a G12 loco having arrived from Haifa."*



## IRAN TAKES HER VEIL OFF.

By Kees Sinke.

(a). The following article appeared in 'Rail Magazine' 336, pp. 70ff. Translation from the Dutch by the Editor. The author was a participant in the tour organised by Bernd Seiler and all comments on the country and politics are his! Clearly this also pre-dates the later and current concerns with the corona virus and the social unrest which has also been created through reactions to the government handling of the crisis.

"Iran is not a country one thinks of immediately as a holiday destination, but here one will find nevertheless a report on the first acquaintance with its railways. In recent years Iran has gradually opened its doors and so in 2015 the realization dawned that it should be possible to organise a photographic expedition there for 2016, with the aim of photographing the trains. This then took place at the beginning of May 2016 – a journey that in fact provided much more, due to the many positive impressions, the unpleasant people and – what was of course the main interest! - the many attractive locomotives.

For many years Iran had a negative image due to its atomic policies, but now that this problem has been politically resolved it is as though a veil has been thrown off and there are now travel possibilities. Iran lies squeezed between a number of countries with varying degrees of conflict, such as Iraq, the eastern part of Turkey and Afghanistan. In Iran itself you don't notice anything of this; even though the journey brought the participants to within fifty kilometres of Iraq.

Iran is forty times larger than the Netherlands and has 85 million inhabitants; of whom some twelve million live in the capital Teheran. This is an enormous city covering an area of some twenty times fifty kilometres with the Alborz mountains on the northern edge which reach a height of 5604 metres and on the southern side the desert of the plateau. It is a city where traffic flows properly only in the middle of the night. During the day the number of cars is so enormous that one can reckon on a waiting time of some five to seven minutes at each traffic light.

### The People.

The first thing one notices is that the people are gracious. During the journey everyone whom we met was very friendly, interested,

open and eager to start a conversation. In many cases that went well in English; this is one of the basic languages taught in schools.

In Europe we have an image that all the women are covered in black veils; it was noticeable that women in burkas are more common in Europe than in Iran. The women are charming, but wear usually a headscarf in different colours which also suits them well. Only when in state service is it necessary to wear a black headscarf. The generosity was made palpable when we walked in the early morning through the old city of Isfahan. An inhabitant shared his fresh, just-collected bread with the group. It is not good to refuse, this would be classed as an insult.

### Safety.

Iran is often described as a dangerous country. Whoever actually comes to the country sees that this is not the case. In the West there is a feeling that Iran is not a safe place; the contacts the group had with the police were instead considered to be friendly and helpful. Many people want to make a Selfie and that was also the case with the policemen. So long as you stick to the basic rules there is nothing to worry about.

Out in the countryside and in the areas which are almost inaccessible it is a bit different. In the small villages there is a different culture and it would be inadvisable as a Westerner to walk around alone laden with photographic equipment. If you are together with your wife you will be welcomed. The biggest danger in Iran seems to be the road traffic. That can sometimes be really wild. Three cars driving next to each other on two lanes on the fast roads is not uncommon.

### Photography.

The aim of the trip was to photograph trains. If you check the website of the railways you will find that photography is forbidden, but in fact Iranians are always happy to photograph each other and that happens on stations too. That seems to be no problem. When preparing for the trip in 2015 the guide was sent to consult the local police on the station and that seemed to be no problem and one could travel further. For our trip a photographic permit for all the days had been prepared and there was also someone from the railways always with us in case any problems needed to be quickly

resolved. On any self-respecting station there is always a small police post.

The railway personnel are very friendly and curious. In many cases one may be invited inside to take a look. Here it is normally desired that one removes one's shoes and place them in the shoe rack by the door. During the trip the permit had to be shown a few times; there were also unexpected delays caused by the police. For example, the tour bus was standing parked on the emergency lane of the motorway and the photographers were standing in the countryside awaiting a train. Within a few minutes the police appeared; but instead of a prohibition the police actually set up a protection for the bus and after the photo had been taken we all had a very friendly handshake.

### Travel.

To travel to Iran one needs a valid passport and a visum. That is normal to ask for in the Netherlands and takes a couple of weeks. In Germany it is organised within a week. In order to apply for the visum various forms have to be filled in on the computer which must then be printed out and taken along, including a few passport photos. This results in an impressive adhesive section with photo inserted into the passport. Involvement in terrorist activities leads immediately to a visum application being rejected. But that applies to any country that demands a visum. Once one has the valid visum and a valid travel insurance then nothing stands in the way. On arrival at Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport the border controls are no problem. You get a stamp on arrival and departure and that is that.

### Railway History.

Things were still for a long time when it came to railways in Persia, as Iran was formerly called. The beginnings of railway building in the beginning of the last century had little effect, in Persia this was limited to some narrow gauge lines. At this period the country was contested between Russia and Great Britain and as a consequence no-one was really interested in building railways. During the First World War the British, Turks and Russians occupied Persia and at this period a start was made by the occupiers on building railways.

A real boost came with the end of the 1920's by Reza Shah, the new leader of the country. He saw Persia as an important country



at a crucial point in the region – the east-west link from Europe to India and China and the north-south link from Russia to the Persian Gulf. To finance the construction of these lines he introduced a tax on sugar. Here in Europe that might have little effect, but in Persia much tea was drunk and this was slurped with a sugar lump between the front teeth.

Up until the present there is much work on the railway network in the form of new lines, upgrades to high-speed stretches and electrification. Through the boycott of the past years everything has gone a bit slower than originally planned.

### Visiting a Depot.

A part of the trip was a planned visit to the diesel depot at Tehran. The depot lies in the middle of the city and a visit without a permit is not possible. In order to see everything one needs to allow for at least 4 or 5 hours – in our case there was not enough time.

Directly after we arrived on the right side there stood two modern sheds with tracks, for minor maintenance. Between the sheds there is a double traverser to bring the locos from one track to any of the others. Here also small service measures are carried out such as oil, sand and water supplies. The larger maintenance takes place at another part of the large complex. The interesting depot, which makes a very modern impression, lies close to the main station in Teheran, where steam loco 51-03 stands on a plinth. The machine is one of a series of 16 built by Henschel in 1938 for Iran, numbered 51.01 – 51.16 (Henschel 24052 – 24067). At the moment investigation is under way to see if the loco can be put into working order once again.

### Trans-Iranian Railway

An important line is the link from the Caspian Sea from Bandar Shah via Teheran to Bandar Shapur on the Persian Gulf. This line is 1,392km long and runs over two passes of some 2000m and a high plateau in the centre. The line was opened in 1938 and forms even today a major artery passing right through the country. Whoever looks carefully at what has been achieved will end up thinking that the lines over the Brenner or Gotthard Passes were child's play in comparison. The way the line twists and spirals can be easily seen on a map.

In order to get from the Caspian Sea to Teheran the Alborz Mountains must first be crossed. From the coast the line is not very interesting and runs through green and inhabited landscape. When the mountains begin then one feels more of southern Poland or Austria. Near the small village of Pol Sefid it begins to get really interesting; here there is a

small depot that can be reached fairly easily from the road via a small bridge. In this depot there are stationed, apart from diesel locos, two interesting vehicles: a German snow plough and a four-wheel coach that was used by the former Shah. After Pol Sefid the line begins to climb before the Doab bridge is the first section where the line climbs at three levels along the mountain side. The Doab bridge is a good photographic point. From the station there is a point one can reach on foot and here one can shoot in both directions from the bridge.

Near the station Sorkhabad comes the most interesting part of the line. Near the little place Veresk stands the famous Veresk Bridge. The support construction is still visible under the bridge. It was built by the Austrian engineer Walter Aigner, who lies buried here in the small local cemetery. In this way he still (so to speak) has a view of the famous bridge that he built.

### At a High Level.

Once a train has passed the bridge it has to travel three times along the mountainside in order to attain the great rise in altitude. The three levels can be seen easily from the high road and there is even a small restaurant. Here it is normal to park along the side of the highway to see this special point better. In order to reach the pass, another double-eight has to be traversed near Shourab, which means that the train 'crosses over itself' twice!

Through a tunnel the mountain station Gaduk is reached at a height of 2,136m and then the line continues over the high plateau with snow-topped mountains in the background. When you come out of the desert, the temperature at this height is quite pleasant. During the journey the mountain station formed the climatic border with rain on the Caspian Sea side and pleasant dry weather southwards.

After Firez Kooh the line descends again via a river valley. It runs through a desertified rocky landscape that gets constantly drier and acquires steadily a more desert character. One can follow the line with a normal car for one short section, but in order to follow all of it a 4-wheel-drive all-terrain vehicle would be necessary. Near Gamsar the main line to Teheran is joined.

### Through the Zagros Mountains.

The night train was taken from Tehran to the south, in the direction of the Persian Gulf. On the most important night routes modern Chinese stock is employed, even with televisions in the compartments. On less important routes older material is used, which at least has air conditioning.

In the early morning we got out at a halt on the south side of the mountain, some fifty kilometres from Iraq. That sounds exciting, but it is not really. From the Persian Gulf the line climbs through the river valley through the Zagros Mountains. This is a deserted, empty and in the daytimes very hot area without any rain. The railway line is the only route and some small villages and stations can only be reached by rail. Use is made of small Draisines for local traffic; one of these is even equipped as an ambulance with a blue flashing light. During the trip we travelled for two days on a set of three draisines in order to get to the various planned photography points. There is no other way to get there.

The line has many tunnels and bridges. Considering the heavy traffic and the quite significant length of the tunnels it is not considered sensible to walk through them. Only from Doorud on the north side is there a road of some thirty kilometres into the mountains. From the road the railway line can be seen and there are many good spots for photography. The highest point of the line is reached between Doorud and Arak, to the north of the Zagros mountains. The line here runs with wide curves through a green and open landscape with snow-topped mountains in the background.

### Stock.

The current motive power fleet comprises mainly diesels. Only in the north-west is there an electrified line; for this the Swedish firm ASEA delivered eight locos based on the Rc4. Most of the diesels are similar to the older type of American types. They were built by EMD and delivered in the period when there was a different political approach. In the internet one can find some limited information. There are also locos of the type formerly delivered to Yugoslavia.

The newer machines come from Alstom and are built in Iran under licence, and the Iran Runner delivered by Siemens; this is a modified version of the ER20, a type used also in Germany and Austria. The Iranian version has only a single cab and a larger cooling system due to the greater heat of 40 to 50° C in the desert. The Iran Runners are still being delivered. The first thirty examples were built in Germany, the rest are self-produced.

There are multiple unit trains from Chinese and German manufacturers. The Siemens 'Paradise' sets have a top speed of 160km/h and are derived from the Desiro. Along the highway to the airport there were posters advertising a Vectron for the Iranian railways. This fits the image, considering the plans to electrify the Tehran – Mashhad line and to operate it at a speed of 250km/h.

128:11



**One of the General Electric diesel locos on the Ma'an - Aqaba line is trying to work out what colour it is. (Photo: Christoph Kutter)"**

128:12



- *Haifa Mizrah (East) in 1952. The Bo-Bo diesel No 103 is brand new - the carriages are not. Buildings now cover the hill in the background*
- *From 'Railways of Palestine and Israel' by Paul Cotterell.*



Major realignment works in late 2019 between Herzliyya and Shefayim, in connection with the quadrupling (and sextupling) of the main line and the new junction for the Raanana line. The former route can be seen heading northwards, the new alignment veers to the North-East. (Photos: Courtesy of Steve Sattler)





Spring is here! After what seems to have been a mild but - fortunately for Israel - wet winter. IR has done much planting along the AI line which is already merging into the landscape and vegetation. Here a scene near the Yitla Gorge. Photo: Ofer Hirsch, IR.

