HaRakevet

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A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of Israel and the Middle East
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148 01: New Jerusalem Tram 62 at the Hadassah-Ein Karem terminus two days after the opening. 2. March 2025 (Photo Sybil Ehrlich)

Editorial

148:02

Well, things CAN change quickly. The last issue was sent to Steve in Leeds for layout and printing on December 2nd 2024 and just five days later Damascus had fallen to a cluster of militias and President Assad was hiding in Moscow. Clearly things will take a little while to settle down there - if they ever do; The Editor is reminded of the flight of King Faisal from Damascus in 1920 when he was appointed by the British and swiftly deposed by the French; A short history lesson is included in the next caption. However there are signs that some optimism may (exceptionally) be allowed. The fall of the Assad regime also means a further weakening of Iranian influence and hence of Hizbollah. If Syria can rebuild itself as a non-failed state or at least as a cluster of smaller states - for Kurds, Druze etc. - but not under Iranian influence, then this may also allow Lebanon to rebuild itself with less Iranian influence too - there is even talk now of extending the projected railway from Kiryat Shemona further towards Kuneitra. Will Syrian railways still be required to hold the different 'autonomous territories' together? It will depend on their mutual relations. Would there ever be cause to rebuild the HBT to Beirut? Messianic visions perhaps but the one thing one knows about the Middle East is that nothing remains the same for long, even though self-destructive patterns tend to repeat.

One thing which repeats is improvements to IR. The Editor can still recall a ride in the cab of a G12 diesel loco on a string of British and Yugoslav carriages on the single track line from Haifa to Tel Aviv North. Then we covered the work on doubling this track and on constructing a line along the Ayalon Valley through urbanised Tel Aviv to link the northern and the southern lines. Then we have been covering the partial quadrupling of this line and electrification. Now suddenly come plans to rebuild to SIX tracks with a new high-speed pair added to allow ICE-type trains to link the cities in half an hour - and on to Beer Sheva. Plus the original PR main line - later called the 'Inland Line' - is now almost complete, doubled and electrified. Now there are plans also for bypassing Lod. Plus new Transport Hubs at Glilot and Savidor....

Visions continue on high-speed lines to link Israel with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Some people dream of a rebuilt Gaza Strip with urban railway systems or a link with Egypt. Everything is technically possible, if only the political will is there.... and someone puts up the $27 Billion. Small change when compared to what has been spent on weapons in the region in the past year.

Oh, if only people could stop hating each other..... and maybe go trainspotting instead...

This issue is being put together at the end of February and the tram extensions in Jerusalem have just opened (at last...) Enjoy.

The Editor

148:03

Thanks to Lorenz Degen who found this on the Internet. It seems rather relevant to the current upheavals in Syria. A HR (or by this time CFH) Hartmann 2-8-2 stands at Damascus probably in 1932 on what seems to be an armoured train (the van just visible has slits for shooting from) and a proud crew. and proudly wears banners and the new Syrian flag of the time (introduced 1930). A timely reminder that conflict is endemic to this part of the world. From the Internet: "The First Syrian Republic was formed in 1930 as part of the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, succeeding the State of Syria and inaugurated July 1932. A treaty of independence was made in 1936 to end official French rule, but the French Parliament refused to accept the treaty. From 1940 to 1941 the Syrian Republic was under control of Vichy France and was invaded by the Allies in 1941. A Proclamation of Independence was made in 1944, but only in October 1945 was the Syrian Republic de jure recognized by the United Nations; it became a de facto sovereign state on 17 April 1946, with the withdrawal of French troops. It was succeeded by the Second Syrian Republic upon the adoption of a new constitution on 5 September 1950."

148:04

News from the Line

(i). AN ADRENALIN RUSH FOR CHRISTMAS.....

From a press release of 24.12.2024 by the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.: "Breaking news:

Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, Transport Ministry's General Manager Mr. Moshe Ben-Zaken, Deputy Transport Minister Mr. Uri Maklev, Israel Railways Ltd. Chairman of Directorate Mr. Moshe Shi'moni, Israel Railways Ltd. General Manager Mr. Shiko Jana and the Mayor of the city of Hadera Mr. Nir Ben-Hayim participated today, 24.2.2024, in laying the corner stone of the 70 km fast tracks between Shefayim (north of Herzliyya) and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, to be covered-for the first time in Israeli rail history by electric trains running at 250 km/h. The same performance is to be achieved by such trains between Tel-Aviv and Be'er-Sheva; both lines being covered in 30 minutes each, compared with the present times of 45 minutes and more on each line.

The cost of the project is $4.3 Billion (NIS 4.3 Billion) and construction time will be five years.

The project includes, in addition to new tracks, radical changes to existing stations and new stations as well. The railways have already performed land expropriation where needed."

Attached herewith are computer-generated pictures of the future stations. (Courtesy of Mrs. Orli Barami from the Ministry's press office and from the railways):

- Proposed Atlit Station

- Zichron Yaacov

For the record: The relevant architectural teams and practices are:

Atlit station; Leviton Shumny Architects Ltd; upgrading and rebuilding

Or-Akiva/Binyamina station; Gordon Architects & Urban Planning; new.

- Beit Yehoshua

- Netanya and below an aerial view

- Netanya below view from above

Zichron Ya'akov station; Knafo Klimor Architects; new.

Hadera station; Gordon Architects & Urban Planning; entirely re-shaping.

Bridge over Poleg river; Yenon Planning, Consulting, and Research Ltd; upgrading and rebuilding.

Beit-Yehoshua station; Potash Architects; upgrading and rebuilding.

Netanya Central station; Amar Koriel Architects Ltd; upgrading and rebuilding.

Netanya Sapir station; Amar Koriel Architects Ltd; upgrading and rebuilding.

Hadera new rail complex; Gordon Architects & Urban Planning; entirely new.

(ii). TRACKWORKS

(a). Ben-Gurion Airport. From a press release of 24.11.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the annual vital track maintenance works, the following changes to traffic will take place around Ben-Gurion Airport between Thursday 05.12.2024 at 22:00 and Saturday night 07.12.2024 at about 18:00.

Night trains operating Saturday night between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya will operate between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Nahariya stations only and will not operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations; The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services between the closed stations.

Trains on the Jerusalem Navon and Herzliya stations will operate between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Herzliya stations only and will not operate between Jerusalem Navon and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations.

Trains to Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central will not operate on Fiday, 06.12.2024.

The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services between the closed stations.

Traffic will resume on Saturday night 07.12.2024 at about 18:00."

(b). Beit Shemesh. From a press release of 24.11.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The following changes to traffic will take place around Beit-Shemesh station on Thursday 12.12.2024 and Friday 13.12.2024:

Trains on the line between Beit-Shemesh and Netanya will operate between Lod and Netanya only and will not operate between Beit-Shemesh and Lod stations.

The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services between the closed stations.

Traffic will resume on Saturday night, 14.12.2024 at about 18:00."

(c). Zichron-Ya'akov. From a press release of 04.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of annual vital infrastructure works to take place in the vicinity of Zichron-Ya'akov station (coast line), the following traffic changes are to take place on Friday 20.12.2024 and Saturday night 21.12.2024:

Train services between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya (trains running in the night between Thursday and Friday) will be split; between Ben-Gurion Airport and Binyamina and between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Nahariya.

Trains between Be'er-Sheva and Nahariya will also be divided; between Be'er-Sheva and Binyamina and between Haifa-Hof-HaCarmel and Nahariya.

The railways will provide alternative free shuttle bus services between the closed sections and stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday 22.12.2024 at about 05:00."

(d). Haifa area. From a press release of 12.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of annual vital track maintenance to be performed at Haifa area, the following changes of traffic will take place on Friday 03.01.2025 only:

Night trains between Thursday night and Friday morning between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya will operate in split mode; between Ben-Gurion Airport and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and between Haifa Central the 8 and Nahariya only.

Trains between Nahariya and Be'er-Sheva will operate in split mode; between Be'er-Sheva Central and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and between Haifa Central the 8 and Nahariya only and will not call at Haifa Bat-Galim.

Trains on the Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Carmiel (Galilee line) will start/terminate at Haifa Central the 8 and will not call at Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Haifa Bat-Galim.

Trains between Atlit and Beit-She'an (Valley Line) will will start/terminate at Haifa Central the 8 and will not call at Haifa Hof-HaCarmel, Haifa Bat-Galim and Atlit stations.

The station of Haifa Bat-Galim will be closed.

Traffic will resume on Friday night 04.01.2025 at about 20:00." (!)

(e). Ashdod. From a press release of 25.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the annual track infrastructure vital works to take place at the Ashdod area, the following changes in traffic will take place at the Ashdod area on Friday 10.01.2025, only:

The stations of Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Yavne East will be closed. Trains on the Ashkelon - Binyamina line will start/terminate at Rehovot and will not call at Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Yavne East.

Trains on the Ashkelon - Herzliya line will start/terminate at Yavne West and will not call at Ashkelon and Ashdod. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle services between the closed sections and stations. Traffic will resume on Saturday night 11.01.2025 at about 19:00."

(f) Ashkelon. (See also (k)): From a press release of 30.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

'"Vital works are to take place at the Ashkelon area, the following changes in traffic will take place at the Ashkelon area between Thursday 23.01.2025 and Sunday morning 25.01.2025 at about 05:00:

Trains on the line Ashkelon - Herzliya/Binyamina will start/terminate at Ashdod; Ashkelon station will be closed. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle services to/from Ashkelon. Traffic will resume on Sunday morning at about 05:00."

(g). Nahariyya.

From a press release of 08.01.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Vital works are to take place around Nahariya between Thursday 16.01.2024 at about 23:00 and Friday 17.01.2024 at the end of the day at about 16:00. As a result, the following traffic changes will take place:

Trains between Modi'in, Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya (including night trains operating in the night between Thursday and Friday) as well as trains between Nahariya and Be'er-Sheva will start/terminate at Akko

(Akre) instead of Nahariya. Nahariya station will be closed.

Traffic will resume on Saturday night, 18.01.2024 at about 18:00.

(h). Holon

From a press release of 22.01.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.: Due to works of raising the height of tracks at Holon Junction station, in order to reduce the gap between platforms and trains, the following changes to traffic will take place between Monday 03.02.2025, and Saturday night 08.02.2025; Trains between Ashkelon and Herzliyya (through Rishon-LeZion Moshe Dayan, Holon and Bat-Yam) will operate at a frequency of 1 train/hour each direction (instead of 2); the second train on each hour will run between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Herzliyya only. There will be also changes of train departure times on Friday, 07.02.2025. Traffic will resume on Saturday night 08.02.2025 at about 18:00.

• Six-Track Main Line image with ICE on the fast lines over Poleg River

(i). Hadera.

From a press release of 19.01.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the annual infrastructure maintenance programme, vital works are to be performed between Hadera West and Binyamina between Thursday 30.01.2025 at 22:00 and Sunday 02.02.2025 at about 04:00; There will be no through service between Haifa and Tel-Aviv; the Caesarea/Pardes-Hanna station will be closed; the works also include the final linking of the Eastern Line with the network:

Trains between Ashkelon and Binyamina will start/terminate at Hadera West and will not call at Caesarea/Pardes-Hanna and Binyamina stations.

Night trains running in the night between Thursday and Friday between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya will run between Ben-Gurion airport and Hadera West and between Binyamina and Nahariya stations.

Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Nahariya will run between Be'er-Sheva Central and Hadera West and between Binyamina and Nahariya stations.

Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport and Binyamina (night trains operating in the night between Saturday night and Sunday) will start/terminate at Hadera West station.

The railways will provide bus shuttle services free of charge between the closed stations.

Traffic will resume on Sunday morning, 02.02.2025, at about 04:00."

j). Netanya. From a press release of 04.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As an integral part of the annual infrastructure vital works at the Netanya area, the following changes to traffic will take place on Friday 07.02.2025 only: Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya (night trains between Thursday and Friday) will operate in split mode; between Ben-Gurion Airport and Beit-Yehoshua and between Hadera West and Nahariya only.

Trains between Be'er-Sheva and Nahariya will operate in split mode; between Be'er-Sheva Central and Beit-Yehoshua and between Hadera West and Nahariya only.

Trains between Beit-Shemesh and Netanya will start/terminate at Beit-Yehoshua and will not call at Netanya.

Trains between Ashkelon and Binyamina will start/terminate at Herzliya and will not call at Beit-Yehoshua, Netanya Sapir, Netanya, Hadera West, Caesarea-Pardes-Hanna, and Binyamina. Netanya and Netanya Sapir stations will be closed. The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle services between the closed stations. Traffic will resume on Saturday night at about 19:00."

k). Ashkelon. From a press release of 10.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "As an integral part of the annual vital infrastructure works around Ashkelon, the following traffic changes will take place on Thursday 13.02.2025 and on Friday 14.02.2025: Trains between Ashkelon and Herzliya/Binyamina will start/terminate at Ashdod Ad-Halom.

Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Netanya will operate in split service; between Be'er-Sheva and Sderot and between Ashdod Ad-Halom and Netanya.

Friday Only trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Ashkelon will start/terminate at Sderot (instead of Ashkelon) and special bus shuttle services will be provided free of charge to/from the station. Traffic will resume on Saturday night, 15.02.2025, at about 19:00."

l.) Modi'in. "As part of the annual vital infrastructure works at Modi'in Central station, the following traffic changes will take place on Friday, 14.02.2025, and Saturday night 15.02.2025:

Trains between Modi'in Central and Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and between Modi'in Central and Jerusalem Navon stations will start/terminate at Modi'in Outskirts station. The Railways will provide special free bus shuttle services between Modi'in Central and Modi'in Outskirts stations. Traffic will resume on Sunday morning, 16.02.2025, at about 05:00."

(m). Binyamina. From a press release of 17.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Works are to be performed in Friday 22.02.2025 only around Binyamina, causing the following changes: Trains between Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya will operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Binyamina, and between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Nahariya.

Trains between Be'er-Sheva Central and Nahariya will operate between Be'er-Sheva Central and Binyamina, and between Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and Nahariya.

Trains between Beit-She'an/David Levi and Atlit (south of Haifa), will start/terminate at Haifa Hof Ha-Carmel, and will not call at Atlit, which will be closed on that day.

The railways will provide alternative free bus shuttle services between the closed sections. Traffic will resume on Saturday night at 19:00."

(n). Sharon Circle Line

From a press release of 24.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As part of upgrading electrification infrastructures and to adjust them to extending platforms and linking the Eastern line with the network, the following traffic changes will take place on the Sharon Circle line at nights only, between Sunday 02.03.2025 and Sunday 16.03.2025:

Between Sundays and Thursdays services will end each evening at 20:30 at the following stations: B'nei-Brak, the two stations of Petach-Tikva, Rosh-HaAyin North, Kfar-Sava Nordau, Hod-HaSharon/Sokolov and the two stations of Ra'anana.

On Fridays and Saturday nights these stations will not be served.

On Saturday night 15.03.2025 services to B'nei-Brak station only will resume. All the services will resume on Sunday 16.03.2025 at 05:00."

(iii). ELECTRIFICATION WORKS

(a). On 06.12.2024: From a press release of 27.11.2024 by the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways are starting the further stage of electrification; the remaining 30% is to be electrified. Works will take place at the Be'er-Sheva area and also at Atlit (about 20 km south of Haifa).

As a result, the following changes in traffic will take place from Saturday night 07.12.2024 and will last for about a year:

The hours of operation on the Tel-Aviv - Haifa line will be reduced on Fridays Only and trains will terminate between 12:00 and 13:00 instead of between 13:00 and 14:00.

The hours of operation on the between Mazkeret-Batya and Be'er-Sheva will be reduced on Fridays Only and train services will end between 12:00 and 13:00 instead of between 14:00 and 15:00.

On each Saturday night the sections of Haifa Hof-HaCarmel - Binyamina and Mazkeret-Batya and Be'er-Sheva will be closed and will reopen on each Sunday at about 05:00.

Trains between Beit-She'an and Atlit (Valley line) will start/terminate at Haifa Hof-Ha-Carmel.

Trains on the Nahariya - Ben-Gurion Airport - Modi'in will run in split service between Nahariya and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel and between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Modi'in Central including stop at Ben-Gurion Airport. Atlit station will be closed.

The suburban trains between Binyamina and Ashkelon will run regularly and will call at all intermediate stations.

Night trains between Nahariya and Ben-Gurion Airport will run between Binyamina and Ben-Gurion Airport only; The stations of Nahariya, Akko (Acre), Kiryat-Motzkin, Haifa Central the 8 and Haifa Hof-HaCarmel will be closed during the nights.

Each night from 21:00 till about 05:00 the following day, between Sunday and Thursday, the station of Be'er Sheva Central will be closed and trains will start/terminate at Be'er Sheva North/University station. Train No. 425 departing at 17.59 from Carmiel will terminate at 20:29 and will not continue to Be'er Sheva stations.

The railways will provide alternative bus shuttle services between closed stations and line sections."

(b). From a press release of 29.12.2024 by the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The electrification work is running quickly forward and the railways took advantage of the opportunity that the Sderot - Ashkelon section is closed due to the war in the Gaza Strip to electrify the Ashkelon - Be'er-Sheva line to advance with the electrification.

Meanwhile, the Planning Directorate has approved the Defence Ministry plan to build two sections of protective walls (against rockets/missiles) near the line between Sderot and the Erez border crossing (near Ashkelon); the first one will be 165m long and 3m high; the second one near Ashkelon will be 300m long and 7m high; Hopefully the rail services on the Western Negev line from Sderot to Be'er-Sheva, Ashkelon and the rest of the network will then resume."

c). From a press release of 04.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"This week, on Sunday 02.02.2025 the services to/from Sderot resumed and thus the Negev Western line returned to full operation and was linked to the whole network for the first time since the outbreak of the Gaza war on 07.10.2023.

On Sunday and Monday 02.02.2025 and 03.02.2025 about 17,000 passengers used the line, of which 4,300 used the Sderot station; these figures are to increase soon.

The railways are accelerating the Electrification to the Be'er-Sheva area too, which include 40 km, and therefore, between Thursday 20.02.2025 and Saturday night 03.05.2025, the following changes to traffic will take place:

Between Sunday and Thursday between 20:00 and 05:00 on the following morning the stations of Be'er-Sheva Central and Be'er-Sheva North/University will be closed and thus the following changes:

Trains between Nahariya and Be'er-Sheva Central will start/terminate at Lehavim/Rahat (north of Be'er-Sheva) and will not call at Be'er-Sheva Central and Be'er-Sheva North/University stations.

Trains between Carmiel and Be'er-Sheva Central will start/terminate at Kiryat-Gat and will not call at Be'er-Sheva Central and Be'er-Sheva North/University stations.

The stations of Be'er-Sheva will be closed along Friday and on Saturday nights.

Trains between Netanya and Be'er-Sheva Central will start/terminate at Ashkelon and will not call at Sderot, Netivot, Ofakim and Be'er-Sheva stations; Alternative free bus shuttle services will be provided between the closed stations, in addition to more buses on the regular public transport lines."

- New station at Sderot

(iv). NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

From a press release of 28.11.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways' Directorate approved today the appointment of Mrs. Ronit Zalman-Mal'ach as the CFO. Mrs. Mal'ach is married with three children and is a citizen of Rishon-LeZion. She has experience of over 30 years in the financial market and fulfilled a lot of financial jobs in many companies. She has a B.A. in Economics and Accounting from the Tel-Aviv University and an M.B.A. from the Bar-Ilan University.

(v). THIRD QUARTER 2024 RESULTS

From a press release of 27.11.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Israel Railways published today the results for the 3rd Quarter (Q3) of 2024:

Total income was $254.4M (NIS 920M), compared with $235.2M (NIS 861M) in 2023; up by almost 7%.

The EBITDA was $2.7M (NIS 10M), compared with $6M (NIS 22M) in 2023; down by 55%.

The total profit for Q3 was $227M (NIS 830M), compared with $285.8M (NIS 1.046Bn) in 2023; down by 21%.

Passenger Section:

The railways carried over Q3 a daily average of 265,000 passengers compared with 285,000 over the same period of 2023; down by almost 8%.

The number of passengers carried over the first 9 months of 2024 was 49.4M compared with 52.6M over the same period of 2023; down by about 6%.

The income over Q3 was $223.5M (NIS 818M), compared with $209M (NIS 765M) over the same period of 2023; up by about 7%.

Punctuality was 95.45% over Q3, compared with 93.3% over the same period of 2023; slightly improved by 2.3%.

Freight Section:

During Q3 the railways carried 1.5M tons; the same over the same period of 2023.

The income was $22M (NIS 81M), compared with $20.8M (NIS 76M) over the same period of 2023; up by 6.6%.

The loss over Q3 was $5.8M (NIS 21.1M), compared with $5.98M (NIS 21.9M) over the same period of 2023; improved by 4%."

No doubt the ongoing aerial war is "contributing" to the situation.

(vi). STATION REOPENINGS

The railways announced on 02.12.2024 that due to the return of employees from Reserve military service and the recruiting of new employees, the stations of Ahi'hud (line to Carmiel in the Lower Galilee), Holon Junction and Bat-Yam HaKomemiut (Greater Tel-Aviv area) would be reopened to service.

(vii). DISABILITY ISSUES

From a press release of 03.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In honour of International Equality Day for people with Disabilities (which is today, 03.12.2024) the railways joined the 'Link 20' organization which promotes their rights. Special explanatory stands have been put up at the busy stations of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, Tel-Aviv HaShalom and Be'er-Sheva Central.

The railways are operating 600 accessible trains through 70 accessible stations daily; between November 2023 and November 2024 the railways were used by 70,000 people with disabilities.

(viii). SECURITY EXERCISE

"In order to exercise the preparedness for emergency situations in the tunnels of the A1 line to Jerusalem and per Fire Brigade instructions, there will be changes to traffic on Tuesdays 17.12.2024 and 24.12.2024 between 21:30 and about 24:00.

On 17.12.2024 trains between Jerusalem Navon and Herzliya will operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Herzliya only and will not reach Jerusalem Navon; traffic will resume on Wednesday, 18.12.2024 at 05:00.

On 24.12.2024 trains between Jerusalem Navon and Herzliya will operate between Ben-Gurion Airport and Herzliya only and will not reach Jerusalem Navon; trains between Modi'in and Nahariya will operate Ben-Gurion Airport and Nahariya only and will not reach the stations of Modi'in. Traffic will resume on Wednesday, 25.12.2024 at 05:00.

The railways will provide free alternative bus shuttle services on both dates between the closed stations and sections."

And this was repeated: From a press release of 23.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"In order to perform an exercise of preparedness for emergency situations in the A1 fast rail link tunnels, on Tuesday, 04.03.2025 there will be no services between 22:30 and until service end between Jerusalem Navon and Ben-Gurion Airport stations; alternative bus shuttle services will be provided free of charge between the closed section. Traffic will resume on Wednesday morning at about 05:00."

(ix). MANAGEMENT CHANGE AT THE MINISTRY

From a press release of 05.12.2024 by both the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Mr. Kame'el Kais, who was until recently the railways' Engineering Manager, has become a senior manager at the Transport Ministry's Department of Railways.

He has a Masters' degree in Railway Systems Engineering and Integration from Birmingham University UK, a Masters' degree in Public Policy from the Hebrew University and B.A. in Mechanical Engineering from the Technion (Haifa Technical Institute).

He is a member of the Druze community and lives in the Druze city of Isfya on Mount Carmel south of Haifa."

(x). E.T.C.S. INAUGURATED

From a press release of 15.12.2024 by the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

"A significant milestone for the railways: the ETCS (European Train Control System) will enter service soon, initially on the A1 fast link to Jerusalem and then to the rest of the system; The project which started in 2018 cost $0.57 Billion (NIS 2.1 Bn) and included 100 GSM antennas providing a continuous communication between trains and the two control centres at Kishon Works north of Haifa and at Lod and based on RBC linked with the electronic signalling responsible on real time information.

Additionally, 1,500 monitoring units have been deployed out of 5,000 to be deployed when the ETCS will be completed.

120 trains have undergone technological adaptations regarding interfaces with the new system."

(xi). EASTERN LINE PROGRESS

From a press release of 18.12.2024 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Both the railways and the Transport Ministry are pushing ahead the Eastern Line project and as an integral part and preparation towards the completion of the work and the re-linking of the Eastern Line with the rest of the network, the stations of Rosh-HaAyin North and Rosh-HaAyin South (the historical station) will be re-linked.

These works to take place between from the whole of Friday 17.01.2025 and until Sunday 26.01.2025 at 05:00 will cause the following traffic changes: Trains on the Ashkelon - Herzliya will run in split mode; between Ashkelon and Petach-Tikva/Segula and between Kfar-Sava Nordau and Herzliya; Rosh-HaAyin North station will be closed.

The railways will provide alternative free shuttle bus services to/from Rosh-HaAyin North station."

(xii) A MESSIANIC VISION?

The link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OyA52GiBlw will lead to a 10-minute or so video about plans or dreams for a high-speed line linking Kiryat Shemona with Eilat and on to Saudi Arabia and apparently using Siemens 'Velaro' trains similar to those built for Egypt....The commentary is quite repetitive and irritating and the images come from a whole variety of snippets including Russian trains, Saudi metros and a host of computer simulations but....

(xiii). REMOVING THREATS

In 'Times of Israel' Sun. 04.01.2025: "The Israeli military said Saturday that its troops had in recent days demolished an entire residential complex in northern Gaza, close to Beit Hanoun, which had been used as a hideout and command centre by senior Hamas commanders.

The military said the "Officers' Neighbourhood" had high-rise buildings overlooking the Sderot area of southern Israel and served as a "central terror complex" with anti-tank firing positions, booby traps, tunnels and rocket launchers aimed at Israel. The complex overlooks the Israeli community of Netiv Ha'asara and was considered a threat to the rail line to Sderot, which hasn't operated since Oct. 7, 2023. The IDF said combat engineers destroyed the entire complex and the terror infrastructure it housed over the past week."

(xiv). SAFETY AT TURNOUTS

From a press release of 09.01.2024 by the Transport Ministry & Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd. are launching a breakthrough pilot for more safety at turnouts, by installing AI-based monitoring devices on the switches.

The devices have been developed by the Israeli company Odysight.ai; the system will start working soon on several lines and is to be expanded later to the whole network. There is a worldwide interest in the system."

(xv). EXPANSION PLANS

From a press release of 09.01.2024 by the Transport Ministry & Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The Ministry and the railways have unveiled today data about continuing the project of "Linking Israel" with railway lines:

(a). The Carmiel - Kiryat-Shemona (Lower to Upper Galilee) - 53 km, including three new passenger stations at Carmiel East, Safed/Hatzor/Rosh-Pina and Carmiel as well as upgrading the existing Carmiel station.

The line will have four tunnels with an overall length of 24 km, 14 overhead road bridges, 9 railway bridges and grade separations.

The line will cost NIS 18.7 Billion, of which NIS 120 Million have been already allocated for preliminary design.

(b). The Lower Galilee line to Tiberias; activating the statutory design at NIS 30M; the line will create the missing eastern part of the Lower Galilee with future links with the Eastern Line and to the overall network.

(c). Extending the A1 Fast Link to central Jerusalem in a 5.5 km underground section; This will cost NIS 4.7Bn of which NIS 440M have been allocated at the end of 2024 for design and promoting with an additional NIS 50M. recently allocated.

(d). Bypass Lod Suburban lines, an intended continuation of the Eastern Line to divert freight trains out of Lod; This starts from Sho'ham on the railway east of Lod until Pleshet Sorek section.

This line has a budget of NIS 2.9 Bn, of which NIS 363M have already been allocated; in 2024, an additional NIS 65M have been allocated to promote the project.

(e). Bypass Pleshet Sorek section; Extending this line, running from the port of Ashdod until linking with the new southern lines; it will consist of a double-track line for both passenger and freight trains to run at speeds of up to 160 km/h.

It is to be built by Israel Roads at NIS 2.1Bn, of which NIS 100M have been allocated in 2024 to activate the project.

(f). Bypass Lod Fast lines; Includes two fast lines between Ben-Gurion Airport and Kfar-Menachem (south of Ramla); there will be two new tunnels and rail links as well as passenger stations. The project is in a design stage by Israel Railways Ltd. and has been budgeted at NIS 165M.

(g). The Fast tracks to Be'er-Sheva; A 100 km-long alignment for up to 250 km/h trains aside the existing lines, which will become Regional; This includes enlarging the University station to receive the fast trains, as well as an additional northern entrance to/from the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) cyber centre.

When completed, 5 trains/hour will run in each direction between Be'er-Sheva and Tel-Aviv.

The project is to be carried out by Israel Railways Ltd. and NIS 25M have been allocated initially.

(h). The railway line to Eilat (on the Red Sea); A long-awaited fast rail link for up to 250 km/h between Eilat and the other parts of the network; in preliminary design.

(i). The first section of the 64 km Hadera East to Rosh Ha'Ayin 'Eastern Line' has been completed; It starts actually at Remez Junction where the coast line to Tel-Aviv runs, but the importance of the 6 km section is the fact that initially freight trains will run between Hadera East and northwards after many years of this section being abandoned."

(xvi). MORE TRAINS TO JERUSALEM PLANNED

From a press release of 06.01.2025 by the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

From 2016 the hourly number of trains between Jerusalem Navon and Tel-Aviv stations will rise from current 2 trains/hour to 4 trains/hour; this is to rise further after the completion of the A1 line into the city (historical station) centre to 13 trains/hour each direction; there is no definite date for the completion of the extension; hopefully before 2040...

(xvii). ADDITIONAL MORNING SERVICE

(a). From a press release of 14.01.2025 by Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.: "Instructed by the Ministry, the railways are increasing the number of morning trains on the following line from Sunday,

19.01.2024: On the Valley Line between Beit-She'an/David Levi and Haifa; An additional train No. 61, will depart from Beit-She'an/David Levi station at 06:02 and will call at Afula/Raphael Eithan at 06:14, at Migdal Ha'Emek/Kfar-Baruch at 06:20, at Yokne'am/Kfar-Yehoshua at 06:28 and will terminate at Haifa Central the 8 at 06:46; this will increase the number of trains between 06:00 and 09:00 to 2 trains."

(b). ADDITIONAL TRAINS

From a press release of 16.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Israel Railways Ltd. are announcing upgraded services at several stations and extending services on Fridays at the stations of Beit-She'an/David Levi, Afula/Raphael Eithan, Migdal Ha'emek/Tel-Baruch, and Yokne'am/Kfar-Yehoshua on the Valley Line, and between Herzliya and Jerusalem Navon as follows:

Additional trains: No. 6080 will depart from Haifa Hof-HaCarmel at 14:42 and arrive at Beit-She'an/David Levi at 15:43; No.6081 will depart from Beit-She'an/David Levi at 14:56 and arrive at Haifa Hof-HaCarmel at 15:56.

An additional train No. 6751 will depart from Herzliya at 14:24 to Jerusalem Navon and No. 6752 will depart from Jerusalem Navon at 14:39 to Herzliya."

(xviii). REOPENING THE WESTERN NEGEV LINE

(a). The IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) confirmed on 17.01.2025 that the West Negev line section between Ashkelon and Sderot which was closed since the outbreak of the war with Gaza on 07.10.2024 would be reopened at the beginning of February 2025.

(b). and then : From a press release of 19.01.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Further to the instructions of the Transport Ministry and by confirmations of the Defence and Security offices, all the services on the Western Negev line between Be'er-Sheva, Ashkelon, and all the network will resume on Sunday 02.02.2025 without the need to change trains.

Services will be provided at Sderot, Netivot, and Ofakim on Sundays to Thursdays between 05:00 and 20:30 and on Fridays between 05:00 and 13:00 at a service frequency of 1 train/hour each direction; after completion of electrification about one year from now, frequency will improve.

The frequency at Rehovot station which is used by some of the trains will increase to 3 trains/hour in each direction."

(c). On 25.01.25 Aharon wrote: "The media has shown a picture of a container train at Sderot station as protection against rockets and anti-tank missiles that may arrive from the Gaza Strip; it caused a lot of criticism. Attached is a picture of the train; source: TV channel 14."

(d). Then: From a press release of 28.01.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.: "As an integral part of preparations to resume services between Ashkelon and Sderot (the West Negev line), the station of Sderot will be closed temporary on Friday, 31.12.2025, in order to refresh the drivers and final signalling adjustment. Trains between Be'er-Sheva and Sderot will start/terminate at Netivot station. The railways will provide bus shuttle services free of charge between Sderot and Netivot stations."

(e). Then finally on 2.2.2025, in "Times of Israel": "The Sderot - Ashkelon train line in the south of Israel resumed operations on Sunday morning, for the first time since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack rocked Sderot, a city near the Gaza border.

With the approval of the Defence Ministry, trains will now operate between 05.00 and 20.30, Sunday through Thursday.

- Protection screen at Sderot Station

"The IDF considers the train a vital, strategic national infrastructure, and a central part of the western Negev's rehabilitation," the military said in its announcement of the line's approval last month. "Therefore, no expense has been spared to allow its return in the best and most secure fashion." The IDF said it had prepared for the Sderot - Ashkelon line to reopen by deploying new technologies, physical defences and surveillance capabilities. The Sderot train station was shuttered in May 2023 due to security concerns, and its reopening was delayed after it sustained rocket damage during Hamas's October 7 onslaught.

When the station reopened last March, amid the gradual return of evacuated residents, the tracks northbound were not renewed due to their proximity to Gaza and frequent Hamas rocket fire.

Economic daily "The Marker" reported late last month that the Planning Authority, which oversees land development in Israel, had authorized the Defence Ministry to construct a two-part cement wall that would offer protection to vulnerable parts of the Ashkelon - Sderot line. The project was said to cost an estimated NIS 40M ($11.2 Million).

The plan reportedly passed despite the opposition of far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who, the report said, wrote to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in June that "the real meaning of such an investment is defeat in the war" in Gaza – ostensibly because it represented a defensive mindset and admission that rocket fire may continue.

The southern city of Sderot was one of the locations hit hardest by Hamas on October 7, 2023, when thousands of terrorists stormed southern Israel's south to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages, sparking the war in Gaza. During their rampage, terrorists attacked the Sderot police station, which became the scene of heavy battles between Hamas and the station's police officers. The building was ultimately completely destroyed. At least 50 civilians and 20 police officers were killed in Sderot on October 7.

Following Hamas's attack, the IDF evacuated communities along the Gazan border, including Sderot. The residents were cleared to return to the town in February 2024."

(f). And here a rather sad (because mistaken) article by Avi Ashkenazi from "Ma'ariv" 03.02.2025 which indicates why all Israeli journalists should undergo a history seminar at the Railway Museum in Haifa before writing rubbish: "Trains and war: the peace rails of yesteryear have become the protective walls of today".

"The Hejaz Railway, built during the Ottoman period, and the Beirut to Tripoli railroad from World War II bear witness to an era when train tracks connected cities and countries in the region. Today, they mark the defensive mentality and madness that characterizes this area.

The Hejaz Railway, built by the Turkish Sultan, and the railroad line built along the coast from Beirut to Tripoli in Libya during the Second World War, which crossed Israel from north to south, are witnesses to times gone by. It even crossed the Gaza Strip, not far from the railroad line that reopened yesterday after being closed since October 7. These two historic railroad lines prove that it was once possible to operate a rail service that connected cities and countries and created an

impressive flow of traffic - provided there was some peace. But we live in a different reality.

The railroad line from Sderot to Ashkelon has been reopened - a stretch of about 15, maybe 20 kilometres. It runs near Kibbutzim Erez, Nir Am and Yad Mordechai. The problem is that the route is controlled at three points from the other side of the border in the Gaza Strip: in the area of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia. It is true that the Nahal and Kfir Brigade fighters have "cleared" all the buildings facing the settlements in the north of the Gaza Strip and the railroad line between Sderot and Ashkelon. However, due to the topography, three sections continued to be shelled from the Gaza side. As a result, the line was out of service throughout the fighting.

In order to allow the line to reopen, one of the two tracks was shut down and freight trains ran on it, with heavy steel plates - armoured - serving as a protective barrier for the trains. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly promised a complete victory over Hamas. At the moment, however, it is unclear how we can build protective walls against a defeated enemy. In a civilized world, the weak build walls around themselves, not the strong."

Why is this "rubbish"? Because he has mixed up Tripoli in Lebanon with Tripoli in Libya! He is dreaming of a combination of the Beirut - Rosh Hanikra - Haifa line, and the 1917/8 built military railway built by the British from the Suez Canal at Kantara through El Arish, Rafah, Gaza and Ludd/Lod to Haifa for their campaign against the Ottomans. Later it did become until 1948 the main line for Palestine Railways traffic from Egypt to Palestine, until cut by Egypt. The Haifa - Beirut - Tripoli railway line was built by the British Imperial military forces (including Australians, South Africans and New Zealanders) in 1942 for military not civilian trade purposes and in fact immediately Lebanon got its independence in 1946 it cut the line at Rosh Hanikra and let the southern section from Beirut rot, while only the northern section from Beirut to Tripoli remained in modest use for a while. The Hedjaz Railway was also incidentally constructed not so much for the economic development of the region it reached but to enable Muslim pilgrims and Ottoman soldiers to reach Medina more effectively and to symbolise Ottoman power and prestige!

This journalist is therefore simply using misunderstood and incomplete railway references as part of a polemic against Prime Minister Netanyahu. Ironically the fact that a railway line reaches Sderot and then southwards to Beer Sheva at all (and is currently being electrified) is an example of successive governments investing in the Israeli internal railway network, even if there are no chances yet to run international services.....

(g). From a press release of 18.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"As per instructions of Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, the Railways are improving services on the Negev Western Line from 23.02.2025 as follows:

- Train 842 will depart from Be'er-Sheva Central at 06:35 and will call at Be'er-Sheva North/University at 06:41, at Ofakim 06:55, at Sderot at 07:12, terminating at Ashkelon at 07:25.

- Train 843 will depart from Ashkelon at 17:01 and will call at Sderot at 17:12, at Netivot at 17:22, at Ofakim at 17:31, at Be'er-Sheva North/University at 17:48, terminating at Be'er-Sheva Central at 17:55.

These are strengthening the regular services, particularly because only one out of the two tracks is in use, as one is used by a standing container train filled with sand as protection from rockets from the Gaza strip, as well as due to electrification works."

(xix) THE IC3 SETS

Sybil Ehrlich was very surprised to see two IC3 units parked in Plat. 3 of Beth Shemesh station on 4. February - and Chen Melling provided the following information:

"As part of the sale of almost all the remaining IC3 sets to a Romanian company, Israel Railways is gradually concentrating them in Haifa for preparation prior to shipment (6 already shipped, the next batch planned for March). There are five sets which remain stored in Malha station. These have now been prepared for movement, but despite being operable, it has been decided to tow them by two of the remaining active sets. Hence sets Nos. 23 and 32 were despatched earlier this week to Bet Shemesh, but some internal management misunderstanding and power-wrangling led to a GM instruction to stop this activity altogether until they sort everything out. This includes a planned farewell event when the last sets leave Jerusalem."

Sybil has provided the following from 'Jerusalem Post' Monday June 22 1992:

- IC3 sets at Beth Shemesh 04.02.2025 (Photo Sybil Ehrlich)

"NEW RAILCARS DEDICATED (by Sybil Ehrlich!) Commuters were given a glimpse of future train travel yesterday - complete with air conditioning, video, telephone and kitchenette.

A new set of Danish railcars was dedicated in a ceremony at the Bat-Galim railway station in Haifa. Transport Minister Moshe Katsav, Danish Ambassador Jacob Rytter, Ports and Railways Authority director Shaul Raziel and Moshe Bar-Kochba, director of Israel Railways took a ride on the train from Haifa to Tel Aviv.

The set of IC-3 railcars, which arrived last week, is one of 10 sets purchased from Denmark by the Ports and Railways Authority at a cost of $55 million. The rest of the cars will arrive during the course of the year.

They will be used, in addition to the existing equipment, on the suburban line from Haifa to the Bayside suburbs, in the Dan region, and on the Haifa - Tel Aviv line.

Each train, which consumes only one liter of gasoline a kilometer, seats 180, is fully air-conditioned. and has protective windows against radiation and damage by objects such as stones. The trains operate with a low noise and pollution level similar to electric trains. Special safetly features include double braking.

Each car has a video for announcements, including warnings of arrival at the next station, an internal telephone for announcements, and a telephone for passengers' use, wide doors which open and close automatically, upholstered seas, toilets, including toilets for the disabled, and a kitchenette for serving hot and cold drinks, and hot food.

The cars have a driver's cab at each end, which allows for driving in both directions.

Units can be linked and unlinked in two minutes and are designed for easy maintenance without the necessity of sending them to workshops, thus saving time which is needed for repairing of other models.

The cars, which have been used successfully in Denmark for more than two years, were chosen for technical and operating reasons as well as financial and have been examined by Swiss experts."

(xx). MSC FREIGHT TRAFFIC

From a press release of 11.02.2025 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways' Chairman of Directorate Mr. Moshe Shimoni and the General Manager Mr. Moshe (Shiko) Jana, had today a meeting with the President of MSC Mr. Diego Aponte at their headquarters at Geneva and discussed the possibility of cooperation on combined ship/train haulage thus to create door-to-door services; MSC are strong supporters of the combined services; Israel Railways Ltd. share the same ideas.

This week the first shipment by rail left the new port of Haifa carrying steel coils to the south of Israel."

- Loading the coils; credit: IPC-The Israel Ports Company Ltd.)

(xxi). TRANSPORT HUBS

From a press release of 17.02.2025 by the Transport Ministry:

"The National Infrastructures' Committee approved today the preferred alternative of building a Combined Transportation Hub, under the Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station, plus a second such hub (among other hubs planned all over Israel) at Glilot (south of Herzliya).

At Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central hub, passenger will enjoy the possibility of changing from 160 km/h suburban trains to 250 km/h fast trains to/from Jerusalem and to/from Be'er-Sheva; they will also have links to the LRV Red Line, to the M1 and M2 Metro lines, and to dozens of bus lines.

At Glilot hub, the passengers will enjoy links with M1 and M3 Metro lines in addition to the railway lines and bus services as at Savidor/Central hub.

The mega project will include a 27 km double-track line between Herzliya and Ben-Gurion Airport of which 15 km will be in tunnel; it will enable operation of 38 trains/hour each direction in 2040, compared with the current 13, and to carry 60,000 passengers/hour each direction compared with the current 15,000/hour."

A. JERUSALEM

From a press release of 05.12.2024 by both the Transport Ministry and Israel Railways Ltd.:

(i). Computer generated pictures of the planned Jerusalem LRV Blue Line to run from Ramot in the north to Gilo in the south provided by courtesy of the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan office;

(ii). RED LINE EXTENSIONS

a). The Jerusalem LRV Red Line was to be closed for a week during January 2025 due to work on the extensions to Neve Ya'akov in the north and Hadassah Medical Centre in the south.

On 30.12.24 it was reported: "Intensive test runs have started on 29.12.2024 along the whole length of the Red Line prior to operation start over the whole length from Neve-Ya'akov at the northern edge to Hadassah Ein Kerem at the southern edge; the test runs are performed by the concessionaire Kfir. Also infrastructure works are performed at Neve-Ya'akov between yesterday and Thursday, 02.01.2025 between 07:00 and 23:00.The full operation is to take place soon."

b). On 17.01.2025: "The Jerusalem LRV concessionaire Kfir is carrying out test runs along the whole line from Neve-Ya'akov in the northern edge to the Hadassah Ein-Kerem medical centre in the southern edge to be opened hopefully in February 2025. As a result, there are traffic changes at 23:00 and on between Sundays and Fridays."

c). On 05.02.25 on 'Arutz Sheva': "The light rail rail in Jerusalem will cease operations for five days next week, ahead of the extension of the city's "Red Line," which currently runs between Pisgat Ze'ev and Mount Herzl.

The suspension will begin on Sunday and last for five days, during which test runs will be performed along the line's entire length, from Neve Yaakov to Hadassah Ein Kerem Medical Centre. The full line is scheduled to become operational on February 14.

The service's suspension is necessary to allow tests of the new systems and their integration into the train's operations, as part of the preparations for the new lines. The Jerusalem municipality and Cfir announced that bus lines will be added and reinforced to provide alternative transportation during the period of suspension. The alternative bus routes will run between Mount Herzl and the Central Station, and there will also be three alternative routes for travellers in the north of the city. In Pisgat Ze'ev, significant reinforcements are planned for the neighbourhood bus lines, so as to help residents reach the city centre.

The Cfir company stressed that the suspension is a necessary measure ahead of the line's expansion, in accordance with what is accepted worldwide for municipal train lines. Professional sources noted that alternatives, such as a partial closure or nighttime testing, were rejected due to the need to conduct comprehensive tests along the entire route."

d). Then on 13.02 wrote Aharon Gazit: "As already reported, the Red Line is closed for passengers due to test runs on the line including the extensions at the northern and southern edges; as of today the services are supposed to resume on Sunday 16.02.2025, but not on the extensions due to final tests and checks to be performed by a German company.

Meanwhile, the absence of the LRV is causing severe traffic jams all over the city, which at least proves how vital it is!"

(Photo: 148.24. The LRV on the Red Line just south of the Mount Herzl station during a test run. Credit: Jerusalem Online.)

e). On 20.02.2025 Aharon wrote: "Although the Red Line was opened on 16.02.2025 including extensions, chaos is still dominating; this may be worsened by extremely cold weather due to reach the area in the coming days, particularly between Saturday night and Tuesday morning affecting all over Israel. There is much overcrowding and the train drivers are not yet used to CAF LRV vehicles and travel times are extended."

f). Then on 25.02.2025: "The chaos on the Red Line continuous with none of the Kfir Concessionaire's promises for improvements to happen. As if this is not enough, some involved in the project say that between May and September 2025 there will be no services over the ever-crowded section between the Central Bus Station and Ammunition Hill (north of the Old City), due to linking the Red Line with the Green Line, the latter to open in 2026. Today, 24.02.2025, a light snow fell on Jerusalem."

g). Then: Last minute news: "According to a recent announcement by the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan Team, the start of operations on the LRV Red Line over the entire length including the extensions is now set for Wednesday 27.02.2025, at 11:00."

h). And finally: On 02. March (our delayed Press Date) Sybil made a trip and reported: "The extensions of the Red Line of Jerusalem's light rail have finally opened, to Hadassah Ein Kerem in the southwest and Neveh Ya'akov North in the northeast. They were originally planned to open on some long-forgotten date, probably around two years ago. I saw test trains running to Hadassah Ein Kerem (the station is adjacent to a very large hospital and therefore an extremely useful transport link) in the summer of 2024, and they were presumably running to Neveh Ya'akov North (a residential suburb) as well.

The extensions were then scheduled to open in November 2024... and then February 2025.

The entire line was closed from Sunday February 9 to Thursday February 14, 2025, inclusive, supposedly for "testing of the extensions". No comment.

On February 18 I was surprised to see new trains running. These trains, built by CAF in Spain, are not a replacement for the older ones but are running in addition to them.

The extensions finally opened on the evening (?!) of Thursday February 28 – so yes, just in February! On Sunday March 2 your intrepid reporter rode the entire line from end to end.

The new trains have fewer seats than the old ones, and only double doors (the old trains have single doors at each end of each carriage).

I planned to wait for a new train, but as it happened the first train to arrive at Hadassah Ein Kerem was a new one anyway. There are four platforms at this station. A few people got out and a similar number got in for the return journey.

There are electronic destination boards inside each carriage, giving the name of the next station, the one after that and the end point, alternately in Hebrew, English and Arabic. (The older trains don't have this; they have spoken announcements of the next station in the three languages.) There didn't appear to be spoken announcements in the new train, but as we neared the end of the journey I heard very faint, barely audible announcements.

We arrived at Neveh Ya'akov North (two platforms), where the train waited for a considerable time. There was another train on the same track about 50 metres further on, with a crossover between them. I assumed that this other train would cross to the second platform, but no. And then to my astonishment I saw a man with some kind of metal pole doing what looked like manual switching of the points! This is something I never previously saw at the ends of the line. I asked an employee which train would be leaving first, and he told me the one that I had arrived on.

So I boarded that train for the return journey. The in-train electronic indicators were not working (? the same train!) and there were no audible announcements. Since the name boards on the stations are very small and hard to find, many passengers must have been somewhat mystified. I got out in the city centre because I had things to do there."

(iii). THE BLUE LINE PLANS

Steve Sattler provided this quick review:

- Above and previous page, photos of interiors and below the terminus at Neve Yaacov

"The plans for the future extension of the above-ground Jerusalem light-rail - the BLUE-LINE.

The Jerusalem Municipality and the Ministry of Transport have produced a nice coloured 28 page booklet for information on the 'soon-to-be-built' BLUE-LINE that will run from RAMOT in the North through the commercial city centre into Gilo in the South. It will have four side-extensions for Ramat Eshkol, Talpiyot and the German Colony and eventually Armon HaNatziv. There will be 31 kms of tracks with 2.5 kms in tunnel, 53 stations with 3 underground and eventually 68 car/tram

intersections. The BLUE-LINE will run from Ramot (over 30,000 residents) into a long tunnel under Geula, and then down Derech Hevron. Gilo also has over 30,000 residents.

It is my understanding that for a small section of Emek Rafaim St. there will be only one set of tracks and the 'trams' will take turns using this single track. (Another option is to build a tunnel under Emek Refaim).

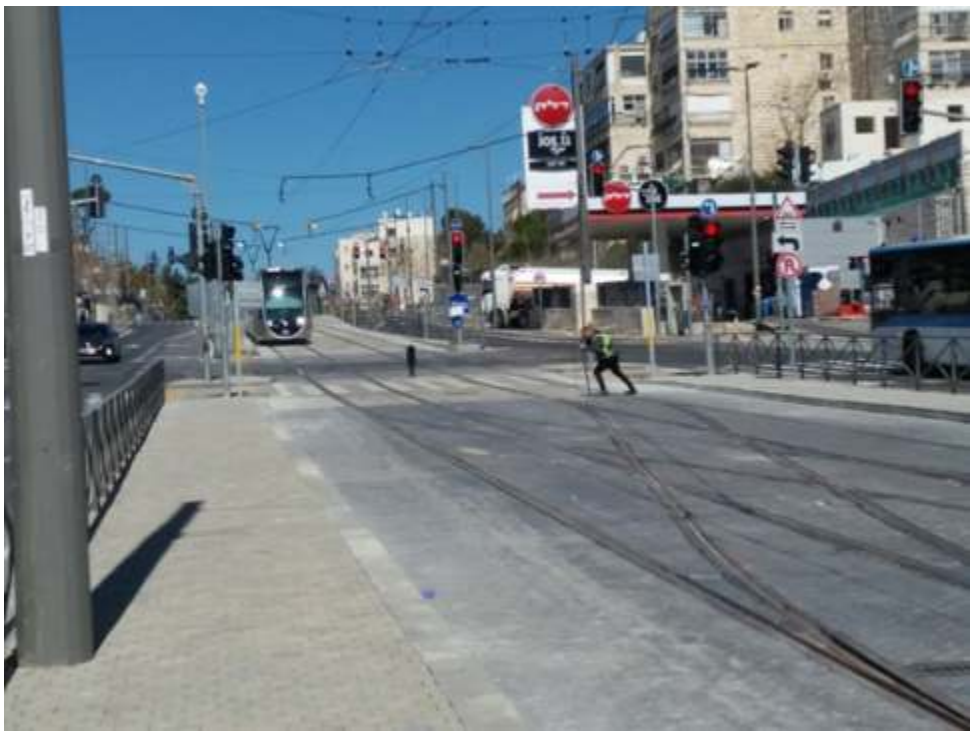
In any event - it will take (according to the City Transport Dept.) 8 - 10 years to see this project in public use. The section that runs the 3 kms down Golda Meir Boulevard from Ramot to the South has been under construction for five years, with 'difficult' lanes for cars and buses and frequent 'crashes' as lanes change, narrow or become 'bus-lanes'.

In my opinion the work that needs to be done in the commercial city-centre - down the very busy King George St - will be a nightmare for 3 -5 years. In any event - by 2035 -2040 Jerusalem will have yet another tram-line for the public.

At the same time: the Jerusalem METRO of 3 or 5 stations under Jerusalem - and maybe into Gush Etzion - will be also be in planning and will involve a lot of tunnelling."

(iv). NEW MANAGER

On 17.01.2025 it was announced: "The new manager of the Jerusalem LRV is Mr. Tamir Chen, 52, married with four children and a citizen of Jerusalem. He was until recently the general manager of Exodigo (underground mapping technologies) and earlier the-coordinator of metro projects in the Finance Ministry's budge department."



(v). ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES

An electric sub-station is being built at Hebron Road as an integral part of the Blue Line project to be opened hopefully between 2029 and 2031. Works may last a year and to be performed between 07:00 and 19:00. An acoustic wall will be built; pedestrian movement to be blocked and traffic to be handled by traffic inspectors.

(vi). DEFIBRILLATORS

The Knesset (parliament) Health Committee has announced that the law to install defibrillators on LRV trains has been approved in first reading.

B. TEL AVIV

(ii). Public Tender No. 112/2023 Invitation to Bid in a Tender for the Operation of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan LRT Green Line and Purple Line

- (i) (Photos of new extensions under construction. by Jacob Rothschild)

- Tram interior. Photo Jacob Rothschild. Note: Logo from Zhong (Middle) and Che (Wagon) - thanks to Dirk Forschner for this

"1. NTA - Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. is an Israeli government owned company tasked with the development of the mass transit system in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, which includes, inter alia, an LRT network, comprised of three (3) LRT lines (the Red Line, the Green Line and the Purple Line).

2. NTA hereby notifies that certain amendments have been made to the Tender Documents, including updating the schedule for the Tender Process and postponing the Bid Submission Date to 30 May, 2024, by no later than 14:00 (Israel standard time).

3. Full particulars regarding all such amendments and updates are available for review at the following website: www.nta.co.il, under the "Tenders" tab – Addendum No. 5.

4. The potential bidders attention is drawn to the fact that all submission required under the Tender Documents are required to be submitted in accordance with the updated schedule for the Tender (as described in paragraphs ?2 and ?3 above).

5. Without derogating Clause 4 above, all previous submissions already made by Bidders and/or Participating Entities prior to the updates in the Tender Documents (as described in paragraphs ?2 and ?3 above) shall be considered part of their Bid.

6. NTA hereby clarifies that the potential bidders are required to check NTA's Website on a regular basis for any Addenda, updates, changes or modifications during the Tender process, particularly before the Bid

Submission Date. NTA further clarifies that it shall have no responsibility to inform any individual Bidder of any such publications.

7. All capitalized terms used and not defined herein shall have the meaning ascribed to such terms in the Tender Document...."

(iii). DEVELOPMENT LAW

From Steve Sattler, from 'Globes', 12.01.2025: National Outline Plan 70 covering the areas around Metro stations in Gush Dan provides the certainty that real estate developers have been craving.

1... At the end of 2024, Israel's real estate sector received news it had been waiting-for for a long time: after nearly five years, the National Planning and Building Council approved National Outline Plan 70 covering the areas around Metro stations in Gush Dan. The plan determines the building rights along the route of the planned Metro, and allows development in its vicinity.

2... Meanwhile, other proceedings connected to the Metro, such as setting the high Betterment Levy that will apply to its surroundings, have made progress, but still create a great deal of uncertainty. The approval by the National Planning and Building Council, even though it requires confirmation by the government to become absolute, provides the required certainty, and allows the market to understand the rules for development on the huge area of nearly 118,000 dunams around the Metro.

3... National Outline Plan 70 defines an "area of influence" for each Metro station, divided into three: the core area, up to about 100 meters from the entrance to each station; the first ring, from the edge of the core area to about 300 meters from the station; and the second ring, from the edge of the first ring to 800 meters (or, as in the case of some stations 600 meters), from the center of the station. The plan sets development rules and building rights for each area, in accordance with the "zone designation" in the plan, which determines the mix of uses in each area of influence.

4. Certainty for the Market: "The Metro is a real urban event. It's much more than transit routes," says Adv. Erez Kaminitz, head of the Government and Regulation practice unit in his law firm. "National Outline Plan 70 takes 109 stations along the route and creates a general plan for them, which from here onwards will allow detailed planning for upgrading the surroundings of the stations and turning them into practical urban centres of attraction and travel. It will bring to fruition the capacity to create greater urban density by means of the Metro, and will make it possible to create a new urban environment with less traffic and fewer cars, and thus, the greater use of public transport."

5... The Incentive: a Reduced Betterment Levy: On the face of it, the approval of National Outline Plan 70 should attract developers to the Metro surroundings, now that the rules have finally been clarified. For a long time this has not happened, even though the government hoped that it would turn out otherwise, and the area around the Metro route has not been developed at a high rate, mainly because of heavy taxation, which made development un-financial. Last June, an amendment to the Metro Law provided for a 15% reduction on the "Metro Betterment Levy" along the Metro route for any developer who files an application for a building permit by the end of 2030. The approval of National Outline Plan 70, as an important part of this puzzle, should therefore cause developers to get going and work against the clock to obtain a permit.

6... For that to happen, planning has to proceed to the next stage: the stage of detailed plans along the Metro route. National Outline Plan 70 is a general plan, and not a basis for issuing building permits, and so detailed plans need to be drawn up for the surroundings of each station. After these are approved, it will be possible to file a building permit application that will take advantage of the reduced Betterment Levy rate, but this will not be at all simple.

7... "The Metro Betterment Levy benefit is a good incentive, but only for those developers who are already to some extent prepared," says an expert in the field. "Those who are already familiar with the route and the environment, who are active in the areas of influence, will certainly be able to move ahead, and will manage to file an application for a permit within the defined timetable."

8. The challenge: Tel Aviv: Mainly developers claim that in Tel Aviv, that this new National Outline Plan 70 provides lower building rights than the older Urban Outline plan TA/5000, which is currently in force, and the future TA/5500, - an update to the existing plan, which is in the process of being formulated.

National Outline Plan 70 and the Tel Aviv outline plan award rights on the basis of floor area divided by land area. If a plot is 1,000 square meters in area, and the ratio of floor area to land area is 4, then the building rights will be 4,000 square meters. The developers claim that while the Tel Aviv outline plan offers a ratio of 12, and even 15 in certain places, the highest floor area to land area ratio in the National Outline Plan 70 is only nine.

9... Private landowners: The areas of influence around the Metro stations cover a great deal of land and many assets are in private ownership of people who aren't necessarily developers planning to redevelop the land. The Metro will pass though 24 local authorities, from Rehovot in the south to Ra'anana in the north, and along the route are numerous private owners who will also need to understand how the approval of National Outline Plan 70 affects them.

"The owner of a property within the area of influence of the Metro has to become familiar with the planning information that National Outline Plan 70 gives him," say the expert lawyers who cover this project. "If I live in a neighborhood of houses with gardens, for example, it's very important that I should know the density of construction that will be permitted, even if I'm not planning to do anything myself. If I live in an old building in an area of influence, and I have set my sights on urban renewal, I need to understand the planning potential; if I plan to buy an asset or sell one, or to embark on some real estate initiative, I have to acquaint myself with and study the relevant planning information in National Outline Plan 70."

(iv). NTA Tender No. 002/2025: Providing Consulting Services regarding Licensing:

NTA intends to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest dates for submission of proposals: 20.03.2025.

(v). Tender No. 023/2025: Providing services of Chief Planner for occasional planning assignments: NTA intends to select up to 2 winning bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest dates for submission of proposals: 19.03.2025.

(vi). Tender No. 032/2025: Providing services of Management, Operation and Maintenance for NTA Technological Infrastructures: NTA intends to select 1 winning bidder. The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest dates for submission of proposals: 23.03.2025.

(vii). REVISED PLANS. NTA new General Manager Mr. Iamar Ben-Meir, who started his job on September 2024, has decided to revise the works on the LRV Green and Purple lines, in order to overcome the delays caused by the 07.10.2023 war.

Backed by the Transport Minister Mrs. Miri Regev, he came to the conclusion that works can be accelerated and thus to gradually start operating the Green Line even partially between Rishon-LeZion through Holon up to the Central Bus Station already in 2028, while the line will start operating on the entire length in 2030. 3,500 passengers/hour each direction are expected to be carried on the partial section.

When completed, the Green Line will have a length of 39 km, with sixty-two stations, of which four stations underground in the centre of

Tel-Aviv and will carry 275,000 passengers/day with service frequency of 4 minutes.

In parallel; works on the Purple Line, which runs through 8 municipal authorities in Central Israel, continue; it will have 46 stations, and will carry 256,000 passengers/day or more than 60 million/year with service frequency of 4 minutes.

Just recently, the Ministry has decided to extend the line by another kilometre and three new stations, in order provide services to the students and staff of Bar-Ilan University and to the citizens of the nearby Givat-Samuel and southern Petach-Tikva.

The cost of the line is $3.2 Billion (NIS 11.2 Billion).

- The planned Ichilov station on the Purple Line. (Thanks to: Mrs. Orly Barami from the Transport Ministry's spokesman office; Credit for pictures: NTA.)
- The planned Ayalon bridge on the Green Line.

Other Middle East Railways

148.06

A. SAUDI ARABIA

(i). MORE ON THE LAND BRIDGE SCHEME

In the last issue [148:07:F:(iii) (p.28)] we included a map of the planned 'Land Bridge' route. From 'I.R.J.' Nov. 2024 p.22 is this description: "Development is split into six sections:

1. Upgrade of the Jubail Industrial City internal network on the Gulf coast, which is currently underway, and will require the construction of 10m of new track.

2. Upgrade of the existing Jubail - Dammam line, which is also currently under way and will require 35km of new track construction.

3. Upgrade of the Dammam - Riyadh main line, which includes the construction of 987km of new track.

4. Construction of the Riyadh by-pass line which will connect the existing network in the north of the city to the south and is split into two packages, the first has 67km of track and the second has 35km.

5. A new 950km line from Riyadh to Jeddah, which will continue for 146km to King Abdullah Port, north of King Abdullah Economic City. The Riyadh -- Jeddah section will have three intermediate stations at Jamuma, Moya and Al-Doadmi.

6. A new 172km line from King Abdullah Port to Yanbu Industrial City.

The project will also include the construction of seven logistics centres at Jubail Industrial City Logistics Centre, Dammam Logistics Dry Port, a relocated Riyadh Dry Port, King Khalid Airport Logistics Centre in Riyadh, Jeddah Logistics Dry Port, King Abdullah Port Logistics Centre and Yanbu Idustrial City Logistics Centre."

That SAR is able to contemplate such expansion is testament to its heavy investment in knowledge transfer and building up its own base of expertise. The cornerstone of these efforts is the Saudi Railway Polytechnic in Buraidah where technical training of young professionals takes place across several disciplines., More than 1300 engineers have qualified from the institute to work for various companies since it opened in 2014 and demand for places is extremely high. Up to 60,000 prospective trainees apply for around 35 posts made available by SAR each year, according to the polytechnic's general manager, Mr. Sultan Abdullah Alsultan. He says this level of demand reflects the high standing of a career on the railway in Saudi Arabia."

(ii). MORE ON RIYADH METRO OPENING

'Metro Report Intl.' had an extensive coverage of the staged opening of the first six lines of the Riyadh Metro network that came just after issue 147 went to press. The figures and images are rather jaw-dropping.

"King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud officially inaugurated the Riyadh Metro as the future backbone of the capital's public transport network on November 27. A phased opening to passengers is planned between December 1 and January 5.

The six routes totalling 176 km – including 9 km shared by the Yellow and Purple lines – have been built by three international consortia. RATP Dev said the 'extraordinary project' would 'transform mobility, allowing residents and visitors to transition from car-dependent travel to a more sustainable and connected transport system'.

Alstom said it is the largest single-phase turnkey urban metro project ever undertaken, and the company's most extensive turnkey urban project to date. Bechtel said it 'has been the world's largest rail project under construction over the past decade' and 'the job site spanned 800 square kilometres, an area bigger than New York City'.

Line Route Length, km Opening Construction contract winners Rolling stock supplier Operations Maintenance

1 Blue Olaya - Batha Street 38 December 1 2024 B A C S (Bechtel, Almabani General Contractors, Consolidated Contractors Co, Siemens Mobility) Siemens Mobility, 41 four-car and 26 two-car Inspiro trainsets CAMCO (RATP Dev/SAPTCO joint venture) Siemens Mobility

2 Red King Abdullah Road 25·1 December 15 2024

3 Orange Medina Road – Prince Saad bin Abdulrahman Al-Awwal 41·1 January 5 2025 ArRiyadh New Mobility (Ansaldo STS (now Hitachi), Bombardier Transportation (Alstom), Salini-Impregilo (Webuild), Larsen & Toubro, Nesma) Bombardier Transportation, 47 two-car Inovia trainsets FLOW (FS Italiane, Alstom and Ansaldo STS (Hitachi)) Alstom

4 Yellow King Khalid International Airport 29·7 December 1 2024 FAST (FCC, Samsung C&T, Alstom, Strukton, Freyssinet Saudi Arabia, Typsa, Setec) Alstom, 69 two-car Metropolis trainsets

5 Green King Abdulaziz Road 13·3 December 15 2024

6 Purple Abdulrahman bin Auf Street – Sheikh Hassan bin Hussein bin Ali 28·8 December 1 2024

The Metro is intended to significantly reduce reliance on private vehicles, cutting fuel consumption and pollution. 'Today, Riyadh City is reaping the benefits of this project that will reshape the capital's image and redefine mobility for its residents and visitors', said Ibrahim bin Mohammed Al Sultan, Minister of State, Member of the Council of Ministers and CEO of the Royal Commission for Riyadh City. 'The network is in line with Riyadh's economic, social, environmental, and urban development objectives, and represents a historic milestone in the capital's transportation sector. Riyadh Metro is going to ease the daily lives and commute of citizens, residents and visitors, offering them a world-class urban travel experience.'

Six lines

The Metro will have an initial capacity of 1·1 million passengers/day and a design capacity of up to 3·6 million passengers/day. There are 34 elevated, 47 underground and four surface stations, including four main hubs designed by Zaha Hadid Architects (King Abdullah Financial District), Snøhetta (Qasr Al Hokm), Gerber Architekten (STC) and Omrania (Western Station).

The stations were designed to reduce energy and water consumption, enhance indoor air quality, prioritise the use of local materials and use 20% recycled materials.

On 24.3.2022 'I.R.J.' had reported: "The project includes the design of the communications infrastructure, the installation of wi-fi in several different types of trains and metro stations, quality control, connection strength and seamless user authentication', said CEO Jan Kolá?. 'Part of the 10-year contract also includes a management and monitoring suite, which enables the metro operator to monitor and manage all of the 1,100 installed devices in real-time.'"

(iii). AL-ULA TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Saudi Railway Polytechnic (SRP) has signed an agreement with the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), which is leading development projects in the AlUla region of northwest Saudi Arabia.

The partners aim to strengthen the long-term and sustainable development of young Saudi talent, and under the first stage of the agreement vocational training programmes will be provided in the maintenance and operation of rolling stock and infrastructure.

Regeneration of the region includes the construction of a 22.4km light rail line in in the city of AlUla, which will be operated with a fleet of battery-powered LRVs. The new line will have 17 stations and will connect linking key heritage, tourist and residential sites.

RCU says that building the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of AlUla's workforce is critical to achieving its development goals, as well as the long-term ambitions of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 programme to diversify the national economy.

"The ongoing regeneration of AlUla supports the national development goals of Vision 2030 by upskilling young men and women with the knowledge and know-how needed to forge successful careers in exciting and diverse sectors, such as the growing railway sector in AlUla and the kingdom," says Mr Mohammed Alshkrah, RCU vice-president for human capability development."

(iv). RIYADH ORANGE LINE METRO OPENS

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 06.01.2025: "The last of the six Metro lines in Riyadh opened on January 5 when services began on Line 3, the Orange Line.

An initial five stations have opened, at Jeddah Road, Tuwaiq, Al Dawh, Harun Al Rashid Road and An Naseem. A number of intermediate stations and an eastern extension are to follow in the coming weeks. The Orange Line will be the longest on the network, running 41·1 km from Jeddah Road in the west to Prince Saad bin Abdulrahman Al-Awwal in the east and including 11 km of tunnels when fully open.

It has been built under a US$5·21Bn contract awarded in 2013 to the ArRiyadh New Mobility consortium of Ansaldo STS (now Hitachi), Bombardier Transportation (Alstom), Salini-Impreglio (Webuild), Larsen & Toubro and Nesma. It has a fleet of 47 two-car Innovia automated trainsets.

A further three stations on the Blue Line also opened on January 5."

(v). "THE NOSE HAVE IT!"

From 'R.G.I.' 09.01.2025: "National operator Saudi Arabia Railways has selected Swiss design consultancy Nose Design Experience to support the development of its next-generation of inter-city trainsets.

In February 2024 SAR awarded Stadler contracts worth SFr600m to supply and maintain 10 trainsets for use on the East line linking Riyadh with Dammam, with options for 10 more. Nose will be responsible for the complete interior and exterior design, collaborating with engineers at Stadler's Bussnang plant to meet the technical standards and constraints.

On January 8 Nose said it was aiming for 'a seamless blend of modern aesthetics and advanced technology that reflects the SAR brand, the rich cultural heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and SAR's vision of becoming a leader in transport and logistics'.

The trainsets will be 175m long with a capacity of about 320 passengers. They will have two independent diesel-electric power cars meeting European Stage V emission standards.

Nose has previously worked with Stadler on projects including the Mika EMUs for BLS, Orion EMUs for narrow gauge operator MGB, Flirt Nordic Express trainsets for Norway, and its range of Tina trams."

See photo next page.....

((vi). AL-ULA. From 'Metro Report Intl.' 04.02.2025: "RATP Dev has completed studies for the Royal Commission for AlUla's 360 Mobility Plan, which includes autonomous pods, electric buses and a 'Journey Through Time Experiential Tram' as the backbone of public transport."

(v) ECTS RETROFITTING.

From 'I.R.J.' 30.01.2025: "Spanish rolling stock and signalling supplier CAF has announced that the first train to be fitted with ETCS onboard equipment has

entered passenger service with Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) on the Riyadh - Dammam main line.

This follows two years of design, testing, certification and training, with work to retrofit CAF's Auriga ETCS system undertaken by the manufacturer at SAR's train overhaul facility in Riyadh.

ETCS equipment is being fitted to the 12 diesel push-pull trains supplied by CAF to SAR in 2011 for the Riyadh – Dammam line. The fleet of six trains later supplied by CAF for the Riyadh - Qurayyat line were delivered with ETCS Level 2 already installed. Both fleets are maintained by CAF under a five-year contract worth €200m that was awarded in 2022.

Involving "a multi-million Riyal investment" by SAR, according to CAF, on-train fitment represents a key first step in upgrading the Riyadh - Dammam line, where the introduction of ETCS Level 2 will reduce delays and improve performance.

The rolling stock fitment programme is due be completed by the first quarter of next year.

"This is a critical investment for our railway and is a key part of our modernisation plan for the Riyadh - Dammam railway network," says Rashed Al Harbi, senior fleet manager for SAR's passenger fleet."

B. EGYPT

(i) TRACK MAINTENANCE MACHINES

From 'I.R.J.' 05.12.24: "The Egyptian Ministry of Transport, through the National Authority for Tunnels (NAT), has signed a contract with Plasser & Theurer for the supply of 14 track maintenance machines for Egyptian National Railways (ENR).

The track machines will support the maintenance, renewal and enhancement of Egypt's mainline network. The order consists of:

• four 09-2X/SD plain-line tamping machines for the continuous correction of track geometry in one or two-sleeper mode

• two 08-4x4/4S universal tamping machines for the maintenance of turnouts and crossings. The tamper features integrated three-rail lifting and the option to fix the diverging rail in place

• five USP 2005 ballast profiling machines, fitted with an integrated sweeping unit and ballast hopper. They can be used bidirectionally to create the required ballast bed profile

• two RM 80-750 ballast cleaning machines for the efficient cleaning of plain-line track and turnouts, with an integrated crossfall and excavation depth control as well as additional trailers, and

• one APT 1500 RA self-propelled rail welding machine.

All machines will be delivered with Plasser & Theurer's operation and machine maintenance planning software, Datamatic 2.0.

In addition to this order, Plasser & Theurer is supplying 30 track machines for Egypt's high-speed rail project. The Austrian company has supplied more than 120 track machines to Egypt, delivering its first machine in 1959.

The contract signing ceremony took place in early October and was attended by Kamel Al-Wazir, Egypt's minister of industrial development and transport, Georg Pöstinger, Austrian ambassador to Egypt, and Johannes Max-Theurer, CEO of Plasser & Theurer."

(ii). MORE LUXURY TRAINS

From 'R.G.I.' Sept. 2024 p.12: "Italian hospitality company Arsenale has signed heads of terms with Egyptian National Railways for the launch in 2027 of a luxury cruise train serving destinations including Luxor and Abu Simbel. 'The Guardian of the Nile' would have up to 15 coaches with 40 cabins de luxe, suite and 'honour suite' classes, with a total capacity of 80 passengers. It is Arsenale's fourth such project, following proposals in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Uzbekistan."

(iii). VELARO FOR EGYPT

From 'I.R.J.' December 2024 pp.34f.

"A new high-speed rail network is emerging from the sands of Egypt, over 2000km in length and connecting cities with hitherto remote regions. The network being built by consortium leader Siemens Mobility and its partners Orascom Construction and The Arab Contractors is set to transform the country's transport landscape and become the world's sixth-largest high-speed rail network. It will provide safe, efficient and, in particular, environmentally-friendly transport for nearly 90% of the Egyptian population.

The cornerstone of the rail project is the Siemens Velaro, an eight-car high-speed train that features distributed traction and can reach speeds of up to 250km/h, accommodating 489 passengers. The Velaro is no stranger to modern rail networks, having clocked up more than 3 billion

km in countries around the world, including with launch customer Deutsche Bahn.

To ensure successful operation in harsh desert conditions, the Velaro has been specially adapted for Egypt, with specific modifications to combat sand, dust and extreme heat to offer both high levels of performance and passenger comfort. Several features have been incorporated to resist sand and dust infiltration These modifications include sealed external gaps and special covers for vulnerable components, coupled with innovative brushes and aerodynamic spoilers that actively deflect sand and dust away from critical areas. They protect the train's mechanical and electronic systems from the abrasive effects of desert sand, extending the life of the train and minimising the need for frequent maintenance.

Other modifications include an advanced filtration system to ensure that only clean air enters the train, providing a constant flow of dust-free air to both the passenger areas and critical onboard electronic systems, reducing the risk of dust accumulation that could impair performance. The improved filtration system not only ensures passenger comfort, but also extends the life of the train by keeping sensitive equipment free from dust.

The aerodynamic design of the Velaro has also been modified to minimise sand accumulation on the exterior of the train. Tailored spoilers and design features manage airflow, especially at high speeds. This approach prevents sand from accumulating on the roof and top of the train. Special glass and sand-resistant windscreen wipers also enhance the train's resistance to sand abrasion. Effective cooling systems are esential in a desert climate. The Velaro for Egypt has been designed with optimised air-conditioning and heat dissipation systems to maintain a comfortable environment for passengers, even in exteme heat. Adjusted air distribution ensures efficient cooling, keeping the train's interior comfortable and protecting vital systems from the dangers of excessive heat The Velaro's air-conditioning units were designed to operate with 100% performance at outside temperatures of up to at least 45°C. In practice they have been tested in a climatic chamber at over 50°C and still delivered comfortable internal conditions with a temperature of around 26°C.

An extensive testing and simulation programme was undertaken by Siemens to inform the design of these modifications for the Egyptian climate. Siemens closely analysed sand samples to udnerstand their composition and abrasive qualities, and used high-performance computing to create a digital twin of the Velaro train. This virtual model allowed engineers to simulate the effects of sand on the train's structure and optimise design features to counteract the harsh environment. Real components, such as traction motors and air filters, were exposed to blown sand to test their durability.

In another series of tests, engineers simulated the Egyptian desert heat in climatic chambers and subjected the train's systems to simulated temperature cycles to ensure it could maintain passenger comfort and operational stability. Siemens also devised a way of recycling the used cool air from inside the train, using it in combination with refined underfloor aerodynamics to further cool underfloor components, thus obtaining optimal performance even under extreme external conditions.

The rollout of Egypt's high-speed train fleet is progressing according to plan. Siemens has built and tested five of the 41 Velaro trains and the turnkey contract to build the high-speed network also includes the supply of Desiro High-Capacity (HC) EMUs and Vectron locomotives. A phased approach to fleet deployment will ensure that each train is thoroughly tested together with the high-speed infrastructure including track, power supply and control, command and signalling (CCS) systems, and prepared for Egyptian operating conditions.

Tracklaying is well underway on the 660km Green Line, which will connect Ain Sokhna, Cairo, Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh. Known as the Suez Canal on Rails, this line will carry major commuter traffic to Cairo and will provide a vital transport link for passengers and freight throughout Egypt. Project milestones already reached include the installation of transformers and substations, as well as major groundwork at the New Capital Station and the main rolling stock maintenance depot. These efforts are laying the groundwork for the second and third lines, which will run from October Gardens to Abu Simbel and from Qena to Safaga respectively. The third line will connect Unesco World Heritage Sites along the Nile, boosting tourism between the Red Sea coast and historic sites in Luxor.

Siemens will maintain the three fleets for 15 years. Supporting a project of this magnitude requires extensive operations and maintenance infrastructure. Siemens is building customised depots and stabling facilities for the high-speed trains. The main depot, located near the October Gardens district of Cairo, features a large maintenance workshop, stabling for several trains, and a control centre that will oversee the entire rail system.

Egypt's high-speed rail project is on track to redefine transport in the region by reducing journey times, improving economic connectivity and boosting local tourism. The project itself is a testament to sustainable engineering and demonstrates how modern rail systems can be adapted to harsh environments. The completion of this resilient rail network, coupled with meticulous planning and rigorous testing, exemplifies the possibilities of 21st century rail technology."

(iv). DOMESTIC ROLLING STOCK MANUFACTURE

From 'I.R.J.' 16.12.2024: "Egypt's first domestic rolling stock manufacturing plant is due to open in East Port Said by mid-2025, according to Mr Ahmed El-Mofty, project manager at the National Egyptian Railway Industries Company (Neric).

A joint venture between the government and the Egyptian private sector, Neric is investing £E 4.2Bn ($US 82.62M) in the first phase of the project. It has signed a syndicated loan agreement with the National Bank of Egypt (NBE), Commercial International Bank (CIB), and Arab African International Bank (AAIB).

Egypt's minister of industry and transport, Mr Kamel Al-Wazir, says that the new plant will cover a total of 300,000 sq.m. and is being built in three phases each covering 100,000sq.m. The first phase is currently under construction, and when completed will focus on producing both metro cars and mainline rolling stock. In 2022 Neric and Hyundai Rotem of Korea signed a contract with Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels (NAT) to supply 40 air-conditioned eight-car trains for the Cairo metro.

The second phase of Neric's new plant located within the East Port Said Industrial Zone will concentrate manufacturing monorail trains, high-speed trains and LRVs. The third phase will focus on the refurbishment of metro cars and mainline rolling stock.

According to Al-Wazir, contracts are being finalised to locally manufacture 500 railway vehicles in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Transport and a global rolling stock supplier."

(v). ALEXANDRIA TRAMS UPGRADING

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 12.2.2025: "Under a 341·2Bn won contract, Hyundai Rotem is to supply trams for the project to upgrade Alexandria's Raml tram network to a modern light rail service, the

manufacturer told Railway Gazette International on February 6.

The contract was signed between Hyundai Rotem and Egypt's National Authority for Tunnels last June and runs until April 2037, including support options. Local media reports have said that the contract covers the supply of 30 trams 65 m long.

Comprehensive infrastructure upgrade

Dr Tarek Goueili, Chairman of the National Authority for Tunnels, said on January 15 that work to modernise the Raml tram network's infrastructure will start in June. The investment covers renewal of 13·2 km of tramway, which is used by four tram routes. Works are to include the reconstruction of track and 24 of the 38 stops, while the remainder would be closed to give at least 500m distance between each stop. This is intended to facilitate a planned increase in the average speed of services from 11 km/h to 21 km/h.

The tramway's electrical and mechanical equipment, signalling and communications systems and the ticketing and fare collection equipment are all to be upgraded.

As part of the programme, the network is to be reconfigured, with one section of route being abandoned and a 1 km extension in the city centre being built to serve Ahmed Orabi Square. A key aim is to fully segregate the light rail lines from road traffic.

The project is due to be completed in June 2027. A consortium of Arab Contractors and Hassan Allam was awarded a €363M contract to last November to lead the work, according to local reports. It is to be co-financed from loans provided by the French Development Agency and the European Investment Bank with a total value of €238M. A consortium of Systra, Egis, ACE and Projacs is providing design and supervision services for the project under a November 2020 contract.

The Alexandria tramway traces its history back to 1863, and was modernised in the 1960s. It is one of the few remaining tramways to operate double-deck trams in regular service."

C. TURKEY

(i) MEETING

In November the 34th. Meeting of the Near-East RAME Group of the UIC ('Union International de Chemins de Fer - Regional Assembly Middle East') was held at Istanbul. Participants included Jordan, Afghanistan, Saudi-Arabia, France, Belgium, Germany and others. The General Manager of the Hedjaz Heritage Railway Dr- Zahi Khalil Al-Jajmaa delivered a paper on 'Qualitative Analysis and Delay Factors in High-Speed and Multi-Level Railway Projects in the Near East and the Gulf Region."

Interestingly the website entry (https://uic.org/middle-east/) notes: "According to UIC Statutes, 6 UIC Regions (including Middle East) will hold powers and responsibilities to determine their regional strategy, their action plans and regional budget and approve projects on specific regional issues. The Regional Assemblies shall comprise representatives of all UIC Members of that region.

RAME Members are the railway administration of Turkey (TCDD), Railway of Islamic Republic of Iran (RAI), Railway of Syria (CFS and SHR), Railways of Saudi Arabia (SAR) and Transport General Administration of Saudi Arabia (TGA), Railways of Jordan (JHR and ARC), Railways of Afghanistan (ARA), Railways of IraqIRR), Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure in United Arab Emirates (MoEI), Railways of Israel (ISR), TCDD Transport (Turkey) and Kafriz (Iran)

The RAME Chairmanship is performed by Turkey Railway (TCDD) and its vice-chairmanship is carried out by the railways of Iran (RAI) and Saudi Arabia (SAR). According to UIC Statutes, the Middle East Region will be represented by those 3 members in the UIC Executive Board and therefore RAME appointed members in Executive Boards are:

• Turkey Railways (TCDD), represented by Mr. Veysi KURT, Director General of TCDD, Chairman of the Board, RAME Chairman

• Iranian Railways (RAI), represented by Mr. Seyed MIAD SALEHI, Vice-Minister for Roads and Urban development, President of RAI, Chairman of the Board, RAME Vice-Chairman

• Saudi Railway Company (SAR), represented by Mr. Bashar EL MALIK, Chief Executive Officer of SAR, RAME Vice-Chairman »

(ii). PROTECTING HIGH-SPEED LINE

From 'R.G.I.' Sept. 224 p.24: "TCDD has awarded construction company IC Ictas a TL707.6M contract to rebuild and reinforce a section of the Ankara - Istanbul high-speed line in the Bilecik area which is prone to flooding and landslides."

(iii). UPGRADING LINE TO KARS

From 'I.R.J.' 9.12.24: "The World Bank has approved $US $660M in financing for the Eastern Turkey Middle Corridor Railway Development Project, which will upgrade the 660km line from Divrigi in Sivas province to Kars, close to the border with Georgia.

Additional financing for the project is being provided by the Islamic Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, supplementing what the World Bank says is a sizeable contribution from the Turkish government.

The line from Divrigi to Kars and the Georgian border is a key section of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. Also known as the Middle Corridor, this is the shortest route by rail between Europe and China, running via Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. The project includes electrification and work to increase capacity on one of the oldest sections of the national rail network. Once completed, the Divrigi - Kars upgrade will increase freight capacity from 750,000 tonnes to 20 million tonnes a year, eliminating a major bottleneck in the Middle Corridor.

The upgrade is expected to benefit 600,000 people living along the line as well as local businesses. It will avoid the emission of 72,332 tonnes of CO2 a year when it is fully completed in 2030. The volume of avoided emissions is forecast to 245,835 tonnes a year by 2060.

The World Bank says that around 95% of freight in Turkey currently moves by road and that this is responsible for as much as 50% of national greenhouse gas emissions from transport. Decarbonising freight transport is therefore crucial to reducing the emissions of Turkish industry. Reducing the carbon footprint of exporters is particularly vital as the European Union (EU) accounts for 40% of Turkish exports, and in 2026 the EU will begin imposing tariffs on carbon-intensive products.

"By modernising and expanding rail connectivity, Turkey can make progress towards several strategic goals, including boosting local economies and creating jobs in underserved areas, contributing to the country's objective of becoming a logistics hub and decarbonising the transport sector," says Mr Humberto López, World Bank country director for Turkey."

- Freight train to Kars

(iv). ISTANBUL TRAM EXPANSION

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 18.12.24: "Istanbul municipality has been given the go-ahead by the city's Governor to develop the planned 21 km Üsküdar – Kadiköy – Maltepe tram line, following a ruling that no environmental impact assessment would be required for the project."

D. U.A.E.

(i). ABU DHABI : HAFEET RAIL PROJECT

A Press Release: Abu Dhabi, 17 December 2024 – "In collaboration with Hassan Allam Construction, RINA Supports Advanced Rail Technology for Hafeet Rail through System Integration and System Engineering Services

RINA, a global leader in engineering consultancy and in inspection and certification, has been selected by Hassan Allam Construction alongside its subsidiary Kortech, the main Project Manager, for the systems of the Hafeet Rail project, a joint venture connecting the UAE and Oman via a 303 km railway network.

The Hafeet Rail project will link Abu Dhabi to Sohar, offering seamless transportation of passengers and freight across the two nations. Passenger trains will travel at speeds exceeding 200 km/h. The new network will reduce travel time between Abu Dhabi and Sohar to just 100 minutes and facilitate the transportation of 15,000 tonnes of cargo in a single freight journey. The project is expected to support sectors ranging from mining to petrochemicals, strengthening the UAE and Oman's positions as logistics hubs.

RINA is responsible for ensuring the complete and safe integration of the railway's various subsystems, including signalling, telecommunications, and operational technologies. It will also oversee the implementation of the project's signalling system, based on the cutting-edge European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 2, for safety and reliability across all operations. Kortech—one of the region's market leaders in providing turnkey solutions for MEP, ICT, system integration, data centers, and ERP—is responsible for ensuring smooth and efficient project systems execution at every stage.

Andrea Raffetti, Middle East, India & Turkey Infrastructure & Mobility Director from RINA commented: "RINA's extensive experience in railway system integration is key to the safe and efficient operation of this critical infrastructure. Our role in the Hafeet Rail project is to ensure that all subsystems work harmoniously, resulting seamless and reliable performance. This project follows RINA's successful involvement in Etihad Rail's first stage. As part of the consortium, RINA's scope includes requirements & configuration management, system interface and integration management, system assurance, safety analysis, RAM (Reliability, Availability, Maintainability) management, test & commissioning activities and specialities such as human factor and ergonomics, cybersecurity and electromagnetic compatibility. It will ensure that the system's performance aligns with the client's exacting specifications, guaranteeing the safety and operational success of this important project."

RINA, leading certification and engineering company, provides a wide range of services across the Energy, Marine, Infrastructure & Mobility, Certification, Industry and Real Estate sectors. In December 2023, alongside the majority shareholder Registro Italiano Navale, Fondo Italiano d'Investimento SGR entered the shareholding structure guiding a pool of co-investors. With revenues in 2023 of 797 Million Euros, 5,800 employees and 200 offices in 70 countries worldwide, RINA is a member of key international organizations and an important contributor to the development of new legislative standards. www.rina.org "

(ii). U.A.E. HIGH SPEED LINE PROJECT

From 'I.R.J.' 23.01.2025: "Etihad Rail has invited bids to design and build the 150km first phase of a high-speed network in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Tender documents were issued on January 10 with a deadline for bids of May 7 for civil works and construction of five stations on a new line linking Dubai with Abu Dhabi.

Pre-qualification bids were received last year. Work on the new line will be divided into four sections:

- Al Zahiyah - Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, 23.5km
- Yas Island - Abu Dhabi/Dubai administrative border, 64.2km
- Abu Dhabi/Dubai administrative border - Al Jaddaf, Dubai, 52.1km, and
- Abu Dhabi Airport branch, 9.2km.

Construction is already underway on a new conventional line that will link the UAE with Oman, which is being developed by Hafeet Rail, a joint venture of Etihad Rail and Oman Rail."

(Photo)

This from 'I.R.J.' 04.02.2025: "The executive councils of Abu Dhabi and Dubai have signed a co-operation charter for the development of a 150 km high speed rail link between the cities which would be designed for 350 km/h running to offer a 30 min journey time.

The Abu Dhabi government said the project announced on January 23 would integrate 'cutting-edge and innovative technologies' to provide 'seamless connectivity' and significantly reduce travel times supporting sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship. Tenders have been called for the civil works design and build contracts.

The project is being led by Etihad Rail, building on its work on the UAE's national rail freight network which will also carry 200 km/h passenger services between stations in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah. The four stations would include business-class lounges, retail outlets and family-friendly amenities, with designs inspired by Emirati heritage."

(iii). DUBAI BLUE LINE CONTRACT

From 'Metro Report Intl.' 06.01.2025: "Dubai's Roads & Transport Authority has awarded the contract for construction of the metro network's Blue Line to a Turkish-Chinese consortium comprising civil works contractors Mapa and Limak with railway systems supplier CRRC.

The project is valued at 20·5Bn Dirhams, with construction to begin in April 2025 for opening on September 9 2029, the 20th anniversary of Dubai's first metro line.

The international tender attracted technical and financial proposals from five alliances comprising 15 companies, and three consortia advanced to the final stage.

Route

The 30 km Blue Line will have two routes totalling 15·5 km of underground and 14·5 km of elevated alignment, including a 1·3 km long bridge across the Dubai Creek.

One 21 km route branch with 10 stations will start at Al Khor Interchange on the Green Line in Al Jaddaf and run through Dubai Festival City, Dubai Creek Harbour and Ras Al Khor to International City 1, Dubai Silicon Oasis and Dubai Academic City.

The 9 km second route with four stations will begin at Centrepoint Interchange on the Red Line in Al Rashidiya and run through Mirdif and Al Warqaa to International City 1.

The Blue Line will have a capacity of 46 000 passengers/direction/h with trains every 2 min. It is expected to serve nearly 200 000 passengers/day by 2030, rising to 320 000 passengers/day by 2040.

RTA Director General & Chairman Mattar Al Tayer said the 'iconic' Dubai Creek Harbour station designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill would be 'distinguished by its unique architectural design that embodies Dubai's forward-thinking vision'. International City 1 will have the largest underground interchange station on the metro network, with a capacity of 350 000 passengers/day.

The project includes a depot in Al Ruwaiyah.

Remarkable success'

"The project builds on the remarkable success of the Dubai Metro since its inauguration on September 9 2009", Al Tayer said when the contract was announced on December 19. "As the backbone of Dubai's transportation network and the preferred choice for residents and visitors, the Dubai Metro now accommodates over 850 000 riders daily and has transported nearly 2·5 Billion riders since its launch. It currently accounts for 60% of all public transport users in the emirate.

The new Blue Line aligns with the objectives of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 and the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan, reinforcing Dubai's vision to become the world's best city to live in." It also supports the 20 Minute City initiative to ensure more than 80% of essential services and amenities are accessible within a 20 min commute.

The Blue Line is projected to yield 2·6 Dirhams in economic, social and environmental benefits for every Dirham invested by 2040, including savings in time, fuel consumption, accident-related fatalities and carbon emissions. It is predicted to reduce traffic congestion on key corridors by 20% and boost the value of land and properties surrounding its stations by up to 25%.

It will be the first transport project in Dubai to comply with platinum-grade green building standards."

(iv). CHINESE EXHIBITION AT DUBAI EXPO

This is from a couple of years ago but came from Dirk Forschner who is an expert in the field:

"China's Fuxing Train Appears in Dubai

Published: 08.04.2022.

Recently, the Dubai Expo 2020 officially opened in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and the opening ceremony of China Pavilion "Light of China" was held to formally welcome visitors.

Covering an area of 4,636 square metres, China Pavilion is one of the largest foreign pavilions in the Expo. The pavilion, looking like a magnificent lantern in the distance, employs traditional Chinese architectural elements including oriental arches, lattice windows and the like, showing a subtle blend of tradition and modern technology. In the pavilion, the exhibition item "China HSR", represented by the Fuxing simulator cockpit, attracted a swam of attention, with an endless stream of visitors. It is known that the Fuxing simulator cockpit is built in life-size, and visitors on the driver's console can experience the virtual 'Beijing-Dubai Expo Park' route via Shanghai and Abu Dhabi.

The Chinese and Arab peoples enjoy a long history of friendship. The development of railway has further shortened the travel distance of the Land Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. As a distinctive "national card" of China, Fuxing, together with the China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, the Unmanned New Energy Concept Vehicle and the Yuan Longping Sea-rice, has become an important highlight of the China Pavilion.

Based on the theme of "Building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind: Innovation & Opportunity", the exhibition area of China Pavilion is divided into four sections, namely, "Common Dream", "Common Earth", "Common Home" and "Common Future", showcasing China's development achievements in areas such as information technology, modern transportation, artificial intelligence, intelligent life and space exploration. The exhibition is to last until March 31, 2022."

(v). GRADUATE TRAINING PROGRAMME

From 'R.G.I.' 9.2.2025: "The first intake has completed what Dubai metro and tram operator Keolis MHI says is the region's first graduate training programme of its kind for the rail sector.

This runs for 12 to 24 months, and is designed to nurture young talent through theoretical and practical training and hands-on experience of operations, engineering and management. It forms part of a broader initiative to support Emiratisation and develop a skilled local workforce. 'Our graduate training programme represents a significant investment in the future of rail management', said Amal Abdullateef, Chief People Officer at Keolis MHI. 'By providing fresh graduates with specialised training and real-world experience, we are developing their individual careers and cultivating the next generation of leaders in our industry. This programme emphasises Keolis MHI's commitment to fostering local talent and contributing to the UAE's vision for a knowledge-based economy.' "

E. QATAR

LUSAIL TRAMWAY

From 'I.R.J.' 09.01.2025: "Qatar's minister of transport, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla bin Mohammed al-Thani, officially inaugurated the Turquoise Line of the growing Lusail light rail network on January 6.

The line runs from Lusail QNB, an interchange with the Doha Metro Red Line, east via a new station at Grand Masjed, which is yet to open, and joins the existing Orange Line to operate anti-clockwise on the uni-directional single-track loop that serves nine stops in Lusail city centre. The line returns to Lusail QNB via Grand Masjed. Qatar Rail has confirmed that an announcement is due soon on the opening date of Grand Masjed.

The addition of the Turquoise Line extends the Lusail light rail network to 19km, serving 25 stations across four lines. The extended Orange Line and the Pink Line opened in April 2024, following the initial 7km section of the Orange Line in early 2022.

The network is operated with a fleet of 28 five-section Alstom Citadis LRVs. The at-grade sections are entirely catenary-free, with LRVs drawing power from Alstom's track-mounted APS system.

RKH Qitarat, a joint venture of RATP Dev, Keolis and Hamad Group, operates and maintains the Lusail Tram network as well as the Doha Metro under a contract signed with Qatar Rail in 2017."

F. KUWAIT

GCC RAILWAY PROGRESSS IN KUWAIT

From 'I.R.J.' Dec. 2024 p.10: "Kuwait's Central Agency for Public Tenders has opened four financial bids for a 12-month contract tendered by the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation provide design services for a 111km railway between Kuwait City and the border with Saudi Arabia. This will form the northern section of the ambitious $US200Bn Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) project to build 2,000km of new lines to connect Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

According to local media, Proyapi Enginering and Consulting of Turkey made the lowest bid of Dinars 2.47M ($US 8.15M) for the contract, while China Railway Company offered Dinars 6.77M. The other bidders were Serner of Spain (Dinars 8.82M) and Systra Turkey (Dinars 9.73M). Nine companies had sought to prequalify for the contract, but five were excluded. Design and consultancy work is due to be completed within 12 months.

Appointing the design consultant forms the first phase of the Kuwait projct. The second phase includes presenting the project to investors and selecting an investment partner, with the third phase focussing on project implementation. Kuwait's portion of the GCC project is expected to be completed in late 2030."

Then: From 'I.R.J.' 22.01.2025: "A government report has set out a total of seven tenders to be issued by Kuwait's Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) in connection with plans for the construction of a new railway in the country, according to Arab Times.

The project is part of the wider GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) scheme to build 2000km of new railway connecting Kuwait with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman.

The Kuwaiti government, which is keen to encourage private investment, says that the project will enhance trade and open up new investment opportunities between GCC countries, as well as developing local and regional economies.

Bids for the first contract, covering project design and with a value of Dinars 2.4m ($US 7.8m), were invited last year and an award is expected shortly. Work covered by the contract is due to be completed within 12 months.

Further tenders will issued to provide project management and control, project implementation and project supervision services for the design and implementation phases. Two tenders will be issued to advise on the formation and then establishment of a Kuwait Railway Company. A tender will also be issued in relation to construction of the passenger station, that will be located in Al Shadadiya, west of Kuwait International Airport.

The government says other benefits of the project include a reduction in transport costs for both passengers and freight, lower road maintenance costs, reduced carbon emissions and fewer traffic accidents."

G. SYRIA

Finally some news about the CFS but it is, as to be expected, sad news of destruction of both the standard-gauge stock and the narrow gauge museum at Cadem. This article is typical journalese focussing on an individual and his family and mixing up the history of the line to Aleppo and the Hedjaz line but - it is an insight.

From 'The Independent' 18.01.2025: By Kareem Chehayeb for AP. "A train station in Damascus was once the pride of the Syrian capital, an essential link between Europe and the Arabian Peninsula during the Ottoman Empire and then a national transit hub. But more than a decade of war left it a wasteland of bullet-scarred walls and twisted steel.

The Qadam station's remaining staff say they still have an attachment to the railway and hope that it, like the country, can be revived after the swift and stunning downfall of leader Bashar Assad last month. On a recent day, train operator Mazen Malla led The Associated Press through the landscape of charred train cars and workshops damaged by artillery fire. Bullet casings littered the ground.

Malla grew up near the station. His father, uncles and grandfather all worked there. Eventually he was driving trains himself, spending more than 12 hours a day at work.

"The train is a part of us," he said with a deep, nostalgic sigh, as he picked up what appeared to be a spent artillery shell and tossed it aside. "I wouldn't see my kids as much as I would see the train."

The Qadam station was the workhorse of the iconic Hejaz Railway that was built under the Ottoman Empire's Sultan Abdulhamid II in the early 1900s, linking Muslim pilgrims from Europe and Asia via what is now Turkey to the holy city of Medina in present-day Saudi Arabia. The line also transported troops and equipment for the empire that controlled large swaths of the Arabian Peninsula.

That glory was short-lived. The railway soon became a target of Arab fighters in an armed uprising during World War I backed by Britain, France and other Allied forces that eventually took down the Ottoman Empire.

In the following decades, Syria used its section of the railway to transport people between Damascus and its second city of Aleppo, along with several towns and neighboring Jordan. While the main station, still intact a few miles away, later became a historical site and events hall, Qadam remained the busy home of the workshops and people making the railway run. As train cars were upgraded, the old wooden ones were placed in a museum. The Qadam station, however, retained its structure of Ottoman stone and French bricks from Marseille.

But war tore it apart after Assad's crackdown on protesters demanding greater freedoms.

"The army turned this into a military base" Malla said. Workers like him were sent away. Qadam station was too strategic for soldiers to ignore. It gave Assad's forces a vantage point on key rebel strongholds in Damascus. Up a flight of stairs, an office became a sniper's nest. Slogans praising Assad and the Lebanese Hezbollah militant group, a key ally of the ousted leader, can still be seen on the walls. "We will kneel and kiss wherever Assad walks," one says.

The nearby neighborhood of Al-Assali is now mostly in ruins after becoming a no-man's land between the station and the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk that became a rebel stronghold and was besieged and bombarded for years by government forces.

The fighting entered the railway station at least once, in 2013. Footage widely circulated online showed rebels firing assault rifles and taking cover behind trains. Malla and his family fled their home near the station to a nearby neighborhood. He heard the fighting but prayed that the station that had long been his family's livelihood would be left unscathed.

Assad's forces cleared the rebels from Damascus in 2018. The train station, though badly wrecked, was opened again, briefly, as a symbol of triumph and revival. Syrian state media reported that trains would take passengers to the annual Damascus International Fair. It broadcast images of happy passengers by the entrance and at the destination, but not of the station's vast damage.

Syria's railway never returned to its former prosperity under Assad, and Malla stayed away as the military maintained control of much of Qadam. After Assad was ousted and the insurgents who forced him out became the interim administration, Malla returned.

He found his home destroyed. The station, which he described as "part of my soul," was badly damaged. "What we saw was tragic," he said. "It was unbelievable. It was heartbreaking."

The train cars were battered and burned. Some were piles of scrap. The museum had been looted and the old trains had been stripped for sale on Syria's black market.

"Everything was stolen. Copper, electric cables and tools — they were all gone," Malla said. The trains' distinctive wooden panels had disappeared. Malla and others believe that Assad's fighters used them as firewood during the harsh winters.

In the former no-man's land, packs of stray dogs barked and searched for food. Railway workers and families living at the train station say an urban legend spread that the dogs ate the bodies of captives that Assad's notorious web of intelligence agencies killed and dumped late at night.

Now Malla and others hope the railway can be cleared of its rubble and its dark past and become a central part of Syria's economic revival after war and international isolation. They dream of the railway helping

to return the country to its former status as a key link between Europe and the Middle East.

There is much work to be done. About 90% of Syria's population of over 23 million people live in poverty, according to the United Nations. Infrastructure is widely damaged. Western sanctions, imposed during the war, continue. But already, neighbouring Turkey has expressed interest in restoring the railway line to Damascus as part of efforts to boost trade and investment.

That prospect excites Malla, whose son Malek spent much of his teenage years surviving the war. At his age, his father and uncle were already learning how to operate a steam engine. "I hope there will soon be job opportunities, so my son can be employed," Malla said. "That way he can revive the lineage of his grandfather, and the grandfather of his grandfather." "

H. AFGHANISTAN

From 'R.G.I.' 03.01.2025: "Afghanistan's National Development Corp. has released a video of what it says is the country's first domestically-built train.

I. IRAN

From "Metro Report Intl." 04.02.2025: - Good news, Iran can apparently build more than rockets and warheads!

"Tehran Wagon Manufacturing Co. has received approval for series production of metro trainsets with 85% domestic content. This follows 1 years of testing of a prototype seven-car set developed under the National Train project which was launched in 2019 to increase the level of localisation in the transport engineering sector. The government has invested US$30M in the project, which is expected to support 12,000 jobs and reduce costs by US$720,000 per car.

MAPNA is to supply 42 car bodies and 84 bogies under a contract signed in September 2024. Braking systems and automatic doors are to be produced by Tivan Termez Raili. The initial plan is for the production of one eight-car and 15 seven-car trainsets. The Tehran metro is estimated to need 1,500 cars, and significant potential demand from other cities is envisaged."

J. LEBANON

There is currently no railway in Lebanon but news trickles through in two directions - Those who look forward to better times, especially following the recent political and military upheavals which have at least weakened the Hizbollah movement and given the Lebanese Government more chance of creating policies; and those who look back with nostalgia to what was and try to uncover and restore sections of former lines.

Through Lorenz Degen, from Facebook: "Al-Nawwar - Special for Al-Afdal News." 28.01.2025:

"The train was one of the most important means of transport in Lebanon. It connected the country's towns and villages and formed an important network for transport and communication. But over the years, trains stopped running and the road was the only option for the Lebanese. Can this old dream be revived today in the face of increasing traffic problems, rising pollution and, above all, the changing political landscape in the country? Will the train return to Lebanon?

This dream is more than an idea, it is an urgent necessity to meet the challenges of modern transport. Can Lebanon restore its trains and raise its logistics system to a new level? What economic benefits does this project offer the country? We know that we urgently need development and tourism projects that will boost the economy and lead the country into a new phase of growth.

Chairman of the Train Train Association, Dr Carlos Naffa, points out that the railway project is the foundation for any strategy to build a national air, sea and land transport system that is economically connected in the region and in global trade. In an interview with the 'Al-Afdal News' website, it said that this is 'a fundamental step in bringing Lebanon into the modern era through the development of infrastructure' and emphasised the support of both President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam for the restoration of Lebanon as a gateway to the Levant and for 'putting Lebanon back on the right track'.

Regarding the positive aspects that will arise once the railway project is completed and Beirut is connected to the Bekaa Plain, the North and all regions, Nafaa says: 'The completion of the railway project comes with great benefits for Lebanon. The most important of these is strengthening economic integration between Lebanese regions such as Beirut, the Bekaa Plain and the North, which strengthens industry and promotes decentralisation.' Investments that contribute to increasing growth and economic cooperation between the governorates and facilitate the movement of goods and people.

He goes on to list the positive aspects: 'This project promotes tourism, as the railway network can become part of Lebanon's tourism destination, and it also contributes to supporting the local economy. In addition, the project plays an important role in creating new jobs in the fields of operation, maintenance and construction as well as non-directly through a network of investments related to property development, which strengthens the national economy and contributes to sustainable development.'

In addition, economic expert Dr Pierre El Khoury said that 'the transport sector is the cornerstone of any successful economy. It is the backbone that increases the efficiency of supply chains and reduces the costs associated with the transport of goods and services. Its role is not limited to improving economic performance, but it also contributes directly to increasing competitiveness and productivity,' noting that 'in today's world, the success of modern economies depends on efficient transport networks that ensure the smooth flow of traffic, reduce waste of time and resources, and create tremendous opportunities for growth.'

Dr Al-Khoury continues. in an interview with our website: 'The revitalisation of the railway network and the railway project in Lebanon is a strategic move that holds promises of a sustainable economic development. Rebuilding this old system is not just a romantic idea, but a real opportunity to transform the neglected infrastructure into an economic lever that serves the country's goals.'

He also emphasised that 'this project will not only improve transport, but will also boost the economy by stimulating investment, creating new jobs and increasing the country's general revenue. The railway network will connect inland regions with major cities, facilitating the movement of people and goods and strengthening local supply chains.' And internationally.

What about funding? Dr Al-Khoury said that 'funding for this project could come from various sources, such as public-private partnerships or global development institutions like the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development', noting that 'such institutions strongly support sustainable transport. Projects that bring direct economic and social benefits.' especially if the government shows serious commitment to the necessary economic and administrative reforms.'

With regard to the effects, the economist emphasises that these 'will be felt on several levels. The reduction in transport costs will make a big difference to the lives of individuals and businesses, while regional connectivity with neighbouring countries will open new doors for trade.'

In addition, thousands of new jobs will be created during the construction and operation phase, unemployment will fall and income levels will rise. The revenue from the transport services will boost the state coffers, in addition to the indirect benefits of stimulating the local economy.'

'From a tourism perspective, the railway network could be a ground-breaking innovation,' he continues. 'Improved transport options will make tourist sites such as Baalbek, Byblos and the Cedars more accessible, attract more visitors and increase tourism revenue. Major railway stations could become attractions in their It includes markets, restaurants and cultural spaces.

Of course, the project is not without its challenges, according to the expert. In addition to the need to achieve political and security stability in order to attract foreign investment, government reforms are also necessary to ensure transparency and efficiency in the administration.

However, if the government takes these challenges seriously, the railway project could radically change Lebanon's transport landscape and open up a new horizon for inclusive and sustainable development that benefits everyone."

K. JORDAN

In February 2025 a delegation from Turkey visited Amman to discuss means of assisting in the redevelopment of the residual Jordanian railway system.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

(i) CORRECTION - and Apology to Dierk Lawrenz for misspelling his name in 147:03.

(ii). AJAX

In 'Heritage Railway' 326 p.22 is an item on the Barclay 0-6-0T 'Ajax' (1605/1918) being transferred from the Isle of Wight Steam Railway to the Northampton & Lamport Railway after some 50 years there. It includes: "Ajax was built for the Sulphide Corporation of London but was requisitioned on completion by the Ministry of Munitions and sent to Persia, where it remained for many years, latterly in the service of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The locomotive returned to the UK, working at Llandarcy Refinery at Swansea and later at the Stanton ironworks, Sheffield. It finished its industrial service at Harlaxton ironstone Quarries near Grantham and was withdrawn in 1968."

(iii). TEN SAMARITAN COMMANDMENTS

On 18.12.2024 Sotheby's sold for over $5M a stone tablet containing the Ten Commandments in Hebrew. The accompanying press release stated the following:

"This December, Sotheby's will auction one of the most widely known and influential texts in history: the oldest inscribed stone tablet of the Ten Commandments. Dating to the late Roman-Byzantine era, this remarkable artifact is approximately 1,500 years old and is the only complete tablet of the Ten Commandments still extant from this early era. It will be offered as a single-lot sale on 18 December.

Weighing 115 pounds and measuring approximately two feet in height, the marble tablet inscribed in Paleo-Hebrew script, was unearthed in 1913 during railway excavations along the southern coast of the Land of Israel, near the sites of early synagogues, mosques, and churches. The significance of the discovery went unrecognized for many decades, and for thirty years it served as a paving stone at the entrance to a local home, with the inscription facing upwards and exposed to foot traffic.

In 1943, the tablet was sold to a scholar who recognized it as an important Samaritan Decalogue featuring the divine precepts central to many faiths, one that may have originally been displayed in a synagogue or a private dwelling. The original site of the tablet was likely destroyed during either the Roman invasions of 400-600 CE or the later Crusades of the 11th century..... The twenty lines of text incised on the stone closely follow the Biblical verses familiar to both Christian and Jewish traditions. However, this tablet contains only nine of the commandments as found in the Book of Exodus, omitting the admonition "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain" while including a new directive – to worship on Mount Gerizim, a holy site specific to the Samaritans. "

Unfortunately no information is given as to the original site where it was found but - had anyone bothered to consult 'Harakevet' - they may have noted that there were no excavations in 1913 "along the southern coast of the Land of Israel". Options could be the Turkish military lines built towards Gaza in 1915 or the British military railway built across Sinai and to and through Gaza in 1917.....

(iv). A LITTLE-KNOWN JEWISH LOCOMOTIVE BUILDER

From Wikipedia: "The Gesellschaft für Feldbahn-Industrie Smoschewer & Co. was a German engineering company in Breslau that existed from 1899 to 1945. The company was founded by Leo Smoschewer (1875-1938), who also became known as an art collector.

Initially, the company based at Kaiser-Wilhelm-Straße 48-50 in Breslau was involved in the production of accessories and equipment for light railways and the trade in locomotives. The company grew rapidly and began to build up a sales network with its own branches in Germany and abroad. During the First World War, the company took over locomotive construction from the Initially, the company based at Kaiser-Wilhelm-Straße 48-50 in Breslau was involved in the production of accessories and equipment for light railways and the trade in locomotives. The company grew rapidly and began to build up a sales network with its own branches in Germany and abroad. During the First World War, the company took over locomotive construction from the Bromberg machine and steam boiler factory Leopold Zobel and also manufactured light railway locomotives.

The company had an extensive domestic and foreign organisation, consisting of its own branches and agencies as well as workshops. It had its own branches in Berlin, Leipzig, Görlitz, Gdansk, Bydgoszcz, Katowice, Prague and Bucharest. The main manufacturing plant was located in the west of Breslau in the suburb of Schmiedefeld, where there was a large locomotive factory and a special light railway factory for small railway carriages, points, etc. The company also had a large number of workshops. There were also large-scale workshops in Bromberg, Berlin and Leipzig. In the 1920s, the company was very successful and at times employed up to 1000 workers and employees in its factories.[2] Between 1925 and 1935, Smoschewer & Co. also operated the Neumarkter Kleinbahn AG line between the town of Neumarkt in Silesia and its railway station just outside the town.

After 1933, the Nazi persecution of Jews also affected the company of Leo Smoschewer, who was Jewish and an active member of the Jewish community in Breslau. Smoschewer finally had to sell his company in 1938. In the course of this Aryanisation, the company initially traded as F. W. Hofmann KG from 1939. In 1941, it became Budich AG, which existed until the end of the Second World War.

The company was involved in the manufacture and sale of all materials used for the construction and installation of railways in the broadest sense. Around 1923, field railway materials of all kinds were manufactured, such as points, turntables, tipping wagons, special wagons and all other accessories for field railways. From the end of the First World War, the product range also included steam locomotives in various gauges, primarily for field and works railways.

The company was particularly interested in field railway operation on farms. It had special designs, patents etc. for this purpose. The company also supplied all rail material and accessories for earthworks, for equipping small railways, main lines and standard-gauge sidings and also had a special technical office for designing small and branch lines.

In the extensive workshops that the company owned in Schmiedefeld, locomotives of all kinds were also manufactured, primarily for construction companies, works railways, standard-gauge sidings and public small railways. Occasionally, state railway administrations were also among the customers. The focus here was on small railway locomotives and shunting locomotives as well as fireless locomotives. The locomotive factory was equipped with the most modern equipment and also received orders from foreign railways.

In addition to steam locomotives, Smoschewer also built motorised locomotives on a smaller scale from the mid-1920s, initially petrol locomotives, then also diesel locomotives. Exact delivery lists are no longer known, but based on the factory numbers assigned, it can be assumed that around 500 steam locomotives were produced.

Another focal point was the transport equipment department, which produced capstan systems for moving railway carriages without locomotives. These devices found an increasing market in the early 1920s due to high wages. They were installed on many railway sidings at home and abroad."

And: " Leo Smoschewer was co-owner of the company Smoschewer & Co. in Breslau, founded in 1898 and aryanised in 1938, which manufactured locomotives and wagons for light railways, road rollers and other machines. The company had branches in Berlin, Gdansk and Prague as well as in Romania. Smoschewer had been Romanian Consul General in Wroc?aw since 1924. In the same year, he was also made an honorary Senator of the Wroc?aw University of Technology. After 1933, the Smoschewer family was also affected by the persecution of Jews. The company was aryanised in 1938. In the course of the Aryanisation, the F. W. Budich light railway factory emerged from his company in 1938.

Leo Smoschewer was the son of Emanuel Smoschewer, a grain wholesaler who had come to Breslau from Krotoschin, and his wife Henriette Smoschewer, née Reich. Together with his wife Elise, he lived in a villa at Lindenallee 12 in Breslau.

He joined the "Society of Brothers" (an organisation for support of Reform Judaism) on 21 March 1911. The family belonged to the synagogue community in Breslau and Leo Smoschewer had been a member of the community council since 1927. After Leo Smoschewer's death, his widow Elise initially wanted to emigrate to her children living abroad, but committed suicide in May 1939."


Feldbahn- und Lokomotivfabrik Smoschewer & Co.

Breslau.

Feldbahnmaterial aller Art,

Kleinbahnwaggons, Güterwagen,

Hauptbahnweichen, Prellböcke usw.

Anschlußgleisen, Nebengleisen, Kleinbahnen

Rangier-Anlagen (Spills).

Lokomotiven aller Art

It is not clear from the entries how he died but the fact that this occurred at the same year as he was forced to sell his business indicates either great stress or possibly even suicide. He had possessed an extensive art collection and some of this has since been found and restored to heirs.

(v). AN ESSEN TRAM IS NAMED...

From 'Ruhrbahn' 25.11.2024: "Everything stays in place. NF4 christened with the name 'Old Synagogue'."

"The 13th NF4 christening this year on 22 November was extraordinary. Dr Diana Matut, director of the Old Synagogue, laughingly made it clear right at the start that she was not expecting a baptism like the one in Christianity - but neither was the Ruhrbahn baptising a ship. It would be a pity about the freshly applied paint! And cutting the NF4 with a knife, as in a circumcision ritual, is also not permitted, according to Ruhrbahn Managing Director Ahmet Avsar.

The disappointment didn't last long, as they agreed on a glass of sparkling wine and, instead of a christening speech, a witty little speech, which Matut gave in the tram workshop, laughing merrily. At the end, she sincerely hoped that the NF4 would age just as beautifully as the Old Synagogue and that it would be used and driven with pride by passengers and drivers alike. At the same time, she extended an invitation: The synagogue is open to all citizens* for visits and guided tours. The magnificent building at Edmund-Körner-Platz 1 is a museum, memorial, cultural institution, concert, educational and mediation centre.

Finally, her colleague Shahar Viso spoke a few impressive words in Hebrew. Unfortunately, we could only take down one of them: Le'chaim! Which means 'to life' and is often used in blessings and toasts. Cheers!

The next such baptism will take place on 13. December but then it will be Christian: The NF4 will be named "Essener Dom". "

(vi) A BRITISH LOCO NAMED FOR AN IRAQI KING

From 'Preserved British Steam Locomotives':

WD75133 – Hunslet Works No 3183 'King Faisal of Iraq'.

"This locomotive is part of the National Collection.

This locomotive was built in 1944 by the Hunslet Engine Company for the Ministry of Defence and entered service at Bicester as War Department Number 75133 in August 1944. Here it acquired the name "King Faisal of Iraq" in 1946. The name was in honour of pulling the train of the 11-year old king to Bicester Central Ordnance Depot.

King Faisal became king at the age of three following the death of his father in a mysterious car crash. His uncle served as Regent until he came of age in 1953. As a teenager Faisal attended Harrow School along with his second cousin The Prince Hussein of Jordan. Faisal was killed in a revolution in 1958 along with a number of other members of the family. During the regime of Saddam Hussein Faisal was reburied in a marble tomb next to his father in the Royal Mausoleum in Bagdad.

The locomotive was renumbered as 138 in 1954 and remained in military service until 1963. During its working life it underwent repairs at the WD Central Ordnance Depot at Donnington in Salop in December 1957, the Central Ammunition Depot at Longtown near Carlisle in 1958, Bramley Central Ammunition Depot in Hampshire in 1959 and Bicester also in 1959.

In February 1963 the locomotive was sold to the National Coal Board (NCB) to work at Woolley Colliery at Darton in Yorkshire as No 8. It was the last locomotive to be repaired at the Allerton Bywater Workshops in 1975. The repair used parts from classmate Bagnall 2753 (WD75165). The locomotive remained at Wooley Colliery for many years but was sometimes placed in store and remained out of use following a boiler examination in March 1981.

In May 1982 the locomotive was moved to the Hallamshire Railway Preservation Society at Penistone. In November 1983 it moved on to the South Yorkshire Railway Preservation Society at Chapeltown in Sheffield. It then moved with the same organisation to Attercliffe in Sheffield in 1987.

In the summer of 2020 the locomotive was reported to be awaiting restoration at the Flour Mill at Bream in the Forest of Dean."

From 'Heritage Railway': "It acquired its name when the 11-year old King Faisal visited the depot in 1946, and although the nameplates

have disappeared, the engine has long outlived the king, who was brutally murdered in the revolution of July 14, 1958.

After demobilisation in 1963, by now renumbered 138, the Austerity was sold to the National Coal Board and worked until 1982 at Arthur Scargill's Woolley Colliery as No. 8, eventually coming into the ownership of the National Railway Museum (NRM) in 2005."

It is worth noting also that the Longmoor Military Railway also had an English-Electric 0-6-0D (BR '08' type) named 'Basra'. From internet comments: "WD 878 was formerly WD 272, built at Derby for the WD to the LMS design in 1945, one of a batch of fourteen; It went straight to Longmoor. It never had an LMS number. It became 601 in 1968 and went to Shoeburyness in 1970." It is now preserved on the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway in the guise of LMS shunter 7120.

(vii). M.A.N. DIESEL MULTIPLE UNITS FOR TURKEY

In 'Eisenbahn Kurier' 1/2025 pp. 44-49 is an article by Gerald Sandrieser on how the M.A.N. Works at Nürnberg ('Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg') returned to production after the war. Much of the factory had been destroyed, but from 1948 at the Nürnberg works DR goods wagons were first repaired (initially some 5,300 tank wagons) and then construction of 1,300 open wagons began. From 1950 it was possible to accept the first contracts for new Diesel railcars, especially from abroad. The first was for six diesel-mechanical 3'6" gauge single-ended bogie railcars for Mozambique, delivered in 1952.

"An important customer for MAN was the Turkish State Railways. In 1940 TCDD had ordered six two-car railcar sets, but due to the war conditions in the end only two of the series MT 5201-5206 a/b got to Turkey, and also delayed. These trains, powered with two 420hp V12 motors, must have been convincing because in mid-1950 TCDD ordered sixteen three-car Diesel railcar sets as part of the plan to replace steam traction on the fast services from Ankara to Istanbul Haydarpasha, to Izmir and Zonguldak on the Black Sea as well as Adana in the south and on the route Ankara – Baghdad.

MAN formed the new express diesel sets from two four-axle close-coupled power cars and a centre car. Their design was based upon that of their predecessors but these were now fitted with hydraulic transmission and had more powerful motors. The specifications as such were no problem to the builders at Nürnberg but the deadline for delivery was very short and so a consortium was formed with MAN in control and much work was sub-contracted to the Maschinenfabrik Esslingen, the Düsseldorfer Waggonfabrik and the Vereinigten Westdeutschen Waggonfabriken (Westwaggon). MAN itself was responsible for the machinery and some of the carriage bodies. MAN built the power cars (two for each set) for Tw 5301 (a/b), 5304, 5307, 5310, 5313, 5315, 5316b; Esslingen built the bodies for Tw 5303, 5306, 5309 & 5312 and the power bogies; Düsseldorfer built the coach bodies for Tw 5302, 5305, 5308, 5311, 5314 and 5316a and the carrying bogies; Westwaggon built the centre cars 5301c to 5316c.

V12 Diesel motors of Type L12V 17.5/21B without superchargers were fitted in the power cars. The bogie-mounted motors were rated at 550hp (405kW) at 1,400 rpm; Coolers were integrated in the roof. Voith delivered the hydraulic T24a transmission. The top speed was 125km/h. Up to four three-car sets could be operated coupled together from one cab. Siemens-Schuckert and Brown, Boveri & Cie. were responsible for the electrical control equipment.

Within the total length of 70,930mm over buffers there was plenty of space for 119 1st. Class seats, a Restaurant saloon with 18 seats and a bar and kitchen in the centre cars and also luggage compartments in the power cars. The seats were of artificial leather and the carriages were furnished with mahogany and maple together with individual lighting and a bell to call the steward. At 134 tons the TCDD units were heavier than the VT08 sets being developed for the DB at the same time.

The first test run started on 11 December 1951 and the MAN trains could be delivered punctually to the TCDD between February and December 1952."

(viii). THE HISTORY OF THE IC3 SETS

In 'Eisenbahn Geschichte' No. 127 for Dec. 2024 is an article by Garrelt Riepelmeier on the development of the well-known 'Gumminase' ('Rubber-Nose') multiple units in Denmark – well known in Israel too of course as the 'IC3' which transformed IR passenger services and are only now withdrawn and sold, though one set remains at the Haifa Railway Museum.

The background is that the Danish railways were naturally influenced by the complex geography of the country which initially meant the need for many ferry links between the mainland and islands. Relatively soon the idea of having train sets that could be propelled onto a ferry at one side and hauled off at the other side became significant. In May 1935 the bridge between Jylland and Fyn was opened (1,178m) and this led to the introduction of the 'Lyntog' (Lightning Trains') inter-city system. In Sept. 1937 followed the 201m bridge between Sjaelland and Masnedo and then that of 3,199m from Masnedo to Falster. The Litra (Class) MS/AA units built in the 1930's now needed replacing and various ideas were tried including versions of the DB VT601 and – intriguingly – four-coach unpowered sets with a driving trailer at each end, so that a loco could push them until and onto the ferry and another loco could pull them off. Two such sets were built and in 1995 sold to Iran... [Iran has purchased amongst other items a lot of Danish rolling stock second-hand but I am unaware of a full list of stock acquired by Iran in this way. Ed.]

A new concept of self-powered but lightweight multiple units that could be combined or divided en route was now considered the better alternative – at least until electrification took place in maybe 20 years' time. In October 1984 tenders were called for a three-car (hence the name 'IC3') 'Supertrain' from four manufacturers – Carel Fouché Industries in France, Duewag in Uerdingen, Messerschmidt-Bölkow-Blohm and what was now Ascan Scandia A/S in Randers. There was some doubt as to whether this last, a well-known producer of carriages had enough experience in the development of entire trains and the relatively small size of the factory. Nevertheless on 9 Dec. 1985 a contract was signed between DSB and a consortium of Duewag (the lower carriage frame and technical elements) and Scandia (carriage body and fittings). The plan was for the first set to be delivered in early 1988 – the specifications were very detailed and this was an ambitious aim.

The DSB allocated the classification 'MF' and each set comprised a coupled unit of two motorised end cars Type MFA and MFB and an unpowered centre coach FF. A large number of new or even previously-unknown construction techniques were incorporated. The revolutionary concept for this train, that would be largely controlled by computer, was the young engineer Niels Tougaard Nielsen who, together with the DSB Design Chief Jens Nielsen can be consided the main 'fathers' of the IC3.

Like its predecessor the MA sets, the MF was built from aluminium (delivered by Alusuisse of Switzerland) and in view of the short length of the carriage body (the MF 20.54m, the FF 17.74m) was rather reminiscent of U-Bahn cars with ribbed sides above and below the window band. The entire length of 58.82m enabled two coupled units to fit together on the Stoerebalt ferries. The light weight of only 97 tons also gave the 180km/h train with its very efficient mechanical transmission a good acceleration capacity and very low fuel consumption.

The wheel arrangement was (1A) (A1) (1A) (A1) and each of the four powered axles was fitted with an air-cooled Deutz motor of Typ BF8L513CP (V 8-cylinder, 294kW) which was a standard five-gear automatic transmission used in bus and lorry construction (Ecomar 5HP600 from ZF-Friedrichshafen), with a cardan drive and an axle-connected transmission from Kalbl-Gmeinder. Use of a mechanical transmission did however prevent the option of any later conversion to electric traction.

Wegmann was responsible for the design and construction of the front and rear and the centre Jacobs bogies, although following their takeover by Talbot from Set 24 Scandia took responsibility for this too.

In order to enable the fastest possible coupling and uncoupling of different train sections an automatic Scharfenberg coupling from Dellner was chosen. DSB also demanded the maintenance procedures should be as simple as possible with consquent lower costs and this meant many components were fitted into modules below the floor that could be easily drawn out from the skirted lower sides. ATC (Automatic Train Control) was fitted and there were three braking systems – a direct-action electropneumatic brake from KNORR/KBGM, a hydrodynamic brake and on each end bogie a magnetic rail brake.

The main visual characteristic of the train was the rubber membrane filled with compressed air that encircled each end, which of course gave it the nickname 'Rubber-Nose'. This took over several functions. It framed the front door which was fitted with a window and various controls. Directly behind this was the driver's desk with all operating controls, which was so conceived that it could be folded back to the left side together with the door and covered with a blind. This enabled fulfilment of another DSB demand, that passengers and rail staff should be able to walk through the entire length of the train.

On coupling two sets the rubber membranes had to be first emptied and then refilled to a pressure of 80 millibars but they formed an absolutely water-tight connection and also extremely advantageous aerodynamic characteristics especially with the almost undistinguishable link between the two trains. That a 180km/h train was fitted with a flat front did cause some surprise, but in practice when a train accelerated a form of turbulence was formed that was pushed ahead in a form of invisible plough and this also meant less obstruction of vision during rainfall. One negative feature however which could not be denied was the lack of any protective room for the personnel in the case of a frontal collision.

For the entrance vestibules at the end of each motor car double swing doors by Tebel were used, so that initially there were eight doors per side of a train. From here one went into an interior area with a central aisle and fitted with Hagenuk air-conditioning which provided a level of comfort unheard of until then. This was also possible through the slightly oval shape of the profile which used the maximum extent of the available loading gauge and a width of 3.1m. The communication system included LED reservation and information displays, at the peak of contemporary standards. In the initial deliveries (later modifications were made) there was a play area for children, a Flexi-area for prams, wheelchairs and bicycles, a pantry, three large toilets (one suitable for the Disabled and fitted also with a nappy table) and an automat for refreshing drinks. It had been decided not to include a restaurant car which would have been important to have 'EC' (Euro-City' status. Instead a half of the centre car formed a Quiet Zone with seats in airline style, and in each end car there was a service compartment and the 1st class in the form of a saloon with in some cases loose armchairs. In total there were 16 1st. Class and 132 (later 122) Second Class seats and six folding seats.

Nevertheless there were difficulties in bringing the new trains into service. The first train could be officially presented on 5 February 1988 but problems in the technical systems meant it could not yet move under its own power. It should have been possible to couple up to five sets and the 'Stella' computer system to control this proved to be a weak spot. New programmes had to be developed and testing carried out. In summer 1988 the IC3 was presented at the International Transport Exhibition in Hamburg; soon after this Scandia, which by now was in severe financial difficulties due to the delays in accepting and paying for the trains, was taken over by a consortium of three new investors, one of these being Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) which itself had been formed shortly before by a fusion of Asea and BBC; the Randers works was henceforth known as 'ABB Scandia'. A new computer programme was now developed and finally on 19 June 1989 Set 03 became the first to leave the factory under its own power. The DSB officially accepted the first vehicles on 17 November 1989 and after eight sets had been delivered and the staff trained, in January 1991 - some two years late - the IC3 sets took up the Kobenhavn – Frederikshavn/Struer Lyntog routes. From the Winter 1990/91 timetable they added more intercity services and though by summer 1991 there had been several problems with the axle drive and the vacuum toilets and the air-conditioning it was clear that they were essentially a success.

In 1989 the price per set was 17M Kroner and it was required that at least 75% of the labour hours and 59% of the price should be for the benefit of the Danish economy. By now DSB had increased the order to 85 units and eventually 92 sets were built within a decade, 5090-5092 being completed in 1998.

On 22 Oct. 1991 Set 06 was worked up to a speed of 204.6km/h between Arup and Middelfart. In the meantime the builders were developing the design further to the IR4 four-car electric multiple units, DSB 'Litra ER', of which 44 were built between 1993 and 1997. It was even possible to run electric and diesel units coupled together from one driving cab."

(ix). SNCB CLAIM TURNED DOWN

From 'Times of Israel' 23.01-2025: By Shira Li Bartov

"No need for Belgium's railway to pay for sending Jews to death camps, panel finds

Government commission concludes Belgian National Railway Company should apologize for WWII transports; Holocaust restitution group pans outcome.

"JTA – The Belgian railway company that sent Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II should not have to pay compensation to survivors, a panel commissioned by the Belgian government has concluded.

The official report, released on Friday, ended a five-year investigation into the role that the Belgian National Railway Company played in the Holocaust. Between 1942 and 1944, the railway carried more than 25,000 Jews and 353 Roma to Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Fewer than 1,200 people returned alive.

Belgium's government opened an independent probe of the railway company, known by the acronym SNCB, in 2019. It invited a research centre, the Study and Documentation Centre for War and Contemporary Society, to investigate the railway's role in the Holocaust. Last week, a committee revealed its recommendations based on what the researchers learned.

The committee said that SNCB should offer an official apology to survivors and urged expanded Holocaust education and commemoration initiatives, but they stopped short of recommending reparations. Instead, they said the deportation trains were the "collective responsibility" of Belgian authorities and a silent, complacent Belgian public. "The ultimate responsibility cannot therefore be attributed to a single person or even to a single company," said the report.

One member of the commission, Belgian Supreme Court Judge Sidney Berneman, spoke strongly against the report's conclusions. Berneman's parents were Holocaust survivors from Poland who settled in Antwerp after the war.

"It is with a bitter feeling that I must give the final report a resounding fail and cannot in good conscience endorse it," Berneman said. "The report does not honour the memory of thousands of Jews."

The finding drew swift condemnation from the World Jewish Restitution Organization, or WJRO, founded four decades ago to negotiate reparations for Holocaust survivors. The group's president Gideon Taylor and COO Mark Weitzman said they were "very disappointed."

"To reject compensation from the perpetrator to the victim denies the moral obligation by SNCB to those it wronged," the group said in a statement. "Accepting responsibility means facing and dealing directly with individual victims."

The report comes as the number of survivors – and thus opportunities for restitution – dwindles. Fewer than 250,000 survivors were alive a year ago; the number is lower now.

Taylor and Weitzman pressed Belgium to compensate people urgently while they are still alive, noting that the annual mortality rate for Holocaust survivors is between eight and ten percent. January 27 marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Belgium's investigation follows similar moves in France and the Netherlands, where railway companies that shipped Holocaust survivors to death camps have successfully arrived at agreements for compensation. Dutch Railways said it would pay about $17,000 to each living survivor, while France's SNCF railway negotiated payments of up to $100,000.

Meanwhile, Amsterdam's public tram company last year announced that it would donate more than 100,000 Euros to Jewish groups to divest itself of revenue generated by transporting local Jews to the Nazis.

WJRO rebuked the Belgian group for stepping away from those precedents and accused it of failing to cooperate with WJRO, which represents Belgian Holocaust survivors living abroad.

"Such consultations would have enabled the Committee to draw on a broader range of perspectives from Holocaust survivors and benefit from our expertise in restitution, fostering a more inclusive process that addresses the full scope of these injustices," said Taylor and Weitzman."

(x). ASHFORD WAGONS VIA PERSIA FOR RUSSIA

In 'Backtrack' Feb. 2025 p.118f is an article by John Chapman entitled 'How Ashford Works Helped the Soviet War Effort." Following Germany's attack on Russia on Sunday 22 June 1941 the Soviet Union asked for assistance from the Allies – during the course of the war the USSR received from the USA alone 44,000 Jeeps, 376,000 cargo trucks, 14,000 aircraft, 8,000 tractors and 12,700 tanks....The Arctic Convoy route being particularly deadly, "as an alternative some equipment was shipped to the Middle East and sent overland to Russia and in the autumn of 1941 an order was placed with Ashford railway works for the construction of 1,000 railway wagons, each capable of carrying a 13-ton payload, to be sent by this route for use on the Russian railway network.

The workers in the Ashford Works approached the task with enormous enthusiasm to help their new ally and 130 men, 19 boys and 22 women worked double shifts on the project, each averaging 67 hours per week, and the work was completed in under ten weeks. In the wagon building works Russian flags were flown and slogans were chalked up saying, for example, "Hurry up, lads, Uncle Joe needs this one". During the ten weeks production cycle there were 70 air raid warnings but the work proceeded uninterrupted.

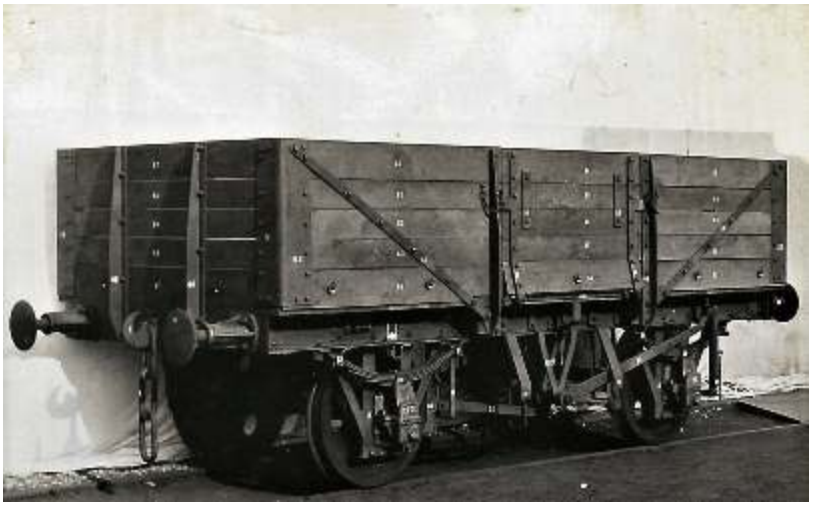
The wagons were shipped out... by way of the Persian Gulf in kit form in large crates, every wagon comprising 792 parts, each of which was individually numbered and accompanied by photographs to help the workers who had to put them togther on arrival. These workers had no workshops, no wagon-building skill or knowledge and only a limited percentage were artisans, but they managed to achieve the target of assembling each wagon in under 45 minutes.

On 10 November 1941 Colonel Llewellin, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of War Transport came to Ashford to drive the final nail into the last packing crate as it was loaded. He used an American hammer to symbolise the unity between the three great Western allies.

It was only twenty working weeks from the day that work on building the wagons commenced until the day on which the last one was in service thousands of miles away, an amazing achievement."

On the other hand the assembly by the Southern Railway of 1,600 open goods wagons for shipment to Persia deserves mention, if only as an example of cooperation between the railways. the L.M.S.R. supplied for this work 800 pairs of wheels and axleboxes, 2,000 axleboxes, 500 three-link couplings and as many bearing springs, 210 sets of timber sheeting and flooring and many small fitments, while the L.N.E.R also transferred a large quantity of material from its Darlington shops to the S.R. wagon works."

This is an interesting insight - the typically-British 13T wagons would presumably have been built to 5-feet gauge and could not have been used on the Trans-Iran line itself, only on the Soviet network, yet they were, by Russian standards, low-capacity and unbraked. Thanks to Mike Christensen for an illustration from 'Railway Gazette' 21. Nov. 1941 p.530f and an excerpt from Bell 'History of the British Railways During the War' p.199.



(xi). GAZA RAIL?

I have decided to playe this item under 'Notes and Comments' rather than 'Other Middle East Railways' because it describes a controversial dream rather than any real concrete plan - but maybe in twenty years or so someone will look back and wonder.... It is by Steve Sattler, a Jerusalem-based retired WHO consultant and political analyst and represents essentially his own thoughts although there have been reports of "advisers" drawing up such schemes for President Trump. Of

course the history of the Middle East has been filled with sensible, rational, pragmatic visions drawn up by people who fail to take into account the obsessive suicidal and fundamentalist tendencies of many of the populations (of all religions) there..... such as the early Templars:

"GAZA: a quick look into a great future.

If we assume that over the next few years Gaza gets diluted (by over 80%) of her 'angry' residents and then the city-planners, builders and financiers get involved - a major, new and 'happy' section of the Mediterranean coast can become a gem of modern civilization. (It could compete with Monaco, Singapore and Dubai as prime residential land.)

The USA, under the forceful umbrella of a pushy White House - will order, organize and shift most of the 1.8 million Gazan residents into a temporary city - in North Sinai. Subsequently, Egypt and other Arab countries will help these ex-Gazans to find new homes across Africa and Asia. Wealthy Arab governments will finance the process.

Meanwhile, city-planners will take the 360 sq kms Gaza Strip and create 12 sub-sections; each with a central city and quality agricultural fields around it. Hothouses will pepper the fields. Desalination plants (4) will service the needs of the population. Electricity will come from gas-turbines - in Israel but South of Ashkelon.

A double-track railway will run down the centre (the old Sa'lahadin road), connecting the - Northern - Ashkelon train complex with new stations across North Sinai. This train system will be flanked by the new North-South highway. Over 180 kms of tracks will service the local populations, business and industry. It is fair to assume that Egypt will connect her national railway to the new Israeli/ Gazan North Sinai train complex.

Each city will get a main-central train station and relevant rail connections from the main line. The central line will be at ground level but side tracks - could best be placed underground. Private cars and 'private-transport' will be limited as the focus will be on public transport including robot-taxis.

A container and passenger port will be built out into the Mediterranean Sea from the Khan area. A double rail line will service the port.

Each of the 12 cities will have a well-planned and unique character - based on high-rise buildings, villas and shopping complexes.

A major industrial zone (serviced by the trains) will be built near the Kerem Shalom entrance.

Hotels, exclusive walled-suburbs and 'tourist' services can take most of the front coastal zones. Beaches and many public parks will give each city a high-level of 'quality'.

The new population will be filtered by 'wealth', a high degree of security and suitability. Each city will have several sections for 'working-class' families that find work in the 'better sections'.

The construction/building process - of 10 - 20 years - will give jobs to many thousands of the former Gazan residents who live in the Egyptian North Sinai city. Either a bus service or the trains will bring 'workers' - every day -into Gaza and back.

The new Beersheba airport will provide flight services for the new Gazans, and Israelis."

Hmm. Let us wait and see..... (Ed.)

(xii) GÖRLITZ: ANOTHER SIGN OF THE TIMES

The historic and extensive railway carriage building factory at Görlitz in Saxony was to close down after completing its last current order - double-deck carriages for Israel Railways. But now it seems that it will remain open (thus saving jobs etc. in an economically-weak region) and start to produce - Tanks. Not tank cars but the "real thing". To what extent armoured tanks remain relevant on the battlefields of the future, having seen how the Ukrainians can swiftly eliminate them and their hapless crews with kamikaze drones, is an issue we shall leave to the military "experts". But Europe is slowly gearing up to another arms race.....

148:08

- "At the Megiddo archaeological site stands this typical 60cm gauge tub."

The remains of the former Turkish World War 1 railway bridge, what's left of it, south of Kiryat Gat, in the Pura Reserve in the Negev ... (Photo Sybil Ehrlich

148:09

148:10

Hedjaz Railway Mixed Train in the Yarmuk Gorge ca. 1912