

Government completes review of report on investigation into postponement of commissioning of East Rail Line new signalling system

A Government spokesman said today (February 1) that the report on the postponement of the commissioning of the East Rail Line (EAL) new signalling system by the Investigation Panel (IP) and the related technical investigation report were received from the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) on January 21.

Since the incident was revealed on September 10 last year, relevant government departments have been monitoring the technical investigation conducted by the MTRCL, including reviewing the data logging of the new signalling system, examining the relevant technical documents and software codes, participating in the simulation of the incident and the related testing to confirm the cause of the incident, and evaluating the remedial measures. Relevant government departments have completed the review of the reports.

The IP was of the view that the route recall issue was not a safety issue, but one of service reliability. The report also pointed out that it was an error of judgment not to carry out a more detailed investigation earlier after noting the software issue that could potentially cause deviation of trains from their intended route.

The Government considers that the MTRCL, being the project manager of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project and with extensive experience in railway operations, should have been able to assess the possible consequences of the incident and take follow-up actions duly, including conducting more thorough investigations, escalating the incident internally, and reporting to the Government. The Government expresses grave disappointment that the incident has led to the postponement of the commissioning of the EAL new signalling system and mixed-fleet operation, and possible deferral of the commissioning of the cross harbour section of the EAL, and reserves the right to take further actions against the MTRCL.

As for the recommendations proposed by the IP, the Government has urged for early implementation by MTRCL and would closely monitor the implementation progress and effectiveness. The Government also expects that with the establishment of the SCL Technical and Engineering Assurance Team under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer, and the implementation of other enhancement measures, the MTRCL would effectively monitor its internal governance to ensure the smooth implementation of the project.

After the incident, the MTRCL reported to the Government that the

software routine which caused the incident has been changed and submitted the Service Reliability Report as requested for review by relevant government departments. Upon stringent review and extensive testing, the relevant government departments confirmed that the EAL new signalling system and the new nine-car trains were safe and sound, and ready for operation. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department's relevant notification was issued to MTRCL today.

The MTRCL plans to commence the operation of the EAL new signalling system and the new nine-car trains on February 6, and will progressively replace the existing 12-car trains. The Government will continue to monitor the new signalling system, the new trains and the mixed-fleet operation with new and existing trains to ensure railway safety and reliability.