

# Monitoring and announcement mechanism for impact of private construction works on railway operation

The Government elaborated today (August 6) the mechanism to monitor and make announcement, as well as specific measures regarding the impact of private construction works within railway protection area on the structural safety of railway facilities and safe operation of railway.

A Government spokesman said that generally foundation works causing settlement in nearby structure is not uncommon. To protect railway safety, the Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) have put in place stringent monitoring mechanisms in handling settlement of railway facilities caused by private construction works within railway protection areas. In view of public concerns to the notification arrangement as revealed in a few recent incidents, the Buildings Department (BD), the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) and the MTRCL have reviewed the existing arrangement and stipulated measures to enhance communication and improve information dissemination arrangement.

In accordance with the Buildings Ordinance (BO), private development projects have all along been required to obtain consent from BD and notify the department before commencing construction works. Under the new mechanism, BD will notify both EMSD and MTRCL when granting consent to commence works for a private development project within railway protection area to allow MTRCL to timely formulate plan to monitor a safe railway operation. In individual cases if it comes to MTRCL's knowledge from other sources that private works have commenced within railway protection areas, MTRCL will notify BD and EMSD to enhance communication.

BD will continue to formulate settlement monitoring checkpoint(s) and applicable pre-set limit(s) for works suspension for relevant private development projects. In addition, MTRCL may require the developer of a private development project to set up additional monitoring checkpoint(s) and prescribe pre-set limit(s) for works suspension according to the established procedures for railway protection. During construction of the private development project, if any monitoring checkpoint within the railway protection area records a settlement reading reaching the pre-set limit for works suspension set by MTRCL or the Government, or in any other circumstances where MTRCL or relevant government departments consider the settlement may affect the safety of railway facilities or railway operation thereby warranting works suspension, MTRCL, BD and EMSD will notify each other immediately. In the next 48 hours, BD will complete inspection of the affected railway facilities to confirm their structural safety, and EMSD will complete reviewing MTRCL's rail monitoring data to ensure a safe railway operation. BD and EMSD will then issue a joint press release to report the situation to the public.

The spokesman reiterated that foundation works causing settlement in nearby structure is not uncommon. If the relevant settlement situation stays within the pre-set limit of the relevant monitoring checkpoint, it is not necessary to suspend the relevant construction works. If the settlement reading reaches the limit for works suspension, the works have to be suspended and the relevant registered building professionals have to consider additional mitigation measures and remedial measures to rectify the situation. However, it does not mean that the relevant railway facilities have been rendered structurally unsafe or the railway operation has become unsafe.

The spokesman supplemented that during works suspension, BD, EMSD and MTRCL will continue to closely monitor the situation to ensure the structural safety of the railway facilities and the safe operation of the railway. BD and MTRCL will request the registered building professionals responsible for the private development project to stipulate mitigation measures to reduce impact brought to the structure of railway facilities. EMSD will also ensure that MTRCL implements stringent monitoring measures ensuring a safe railway operation.

Upon receipt of application to resume construction works, BD will continue to vigorously scrutinise such application under the principle of ensuring structural safety of the railway facilities. BD will consult EMSD, other relevant government departments and MTRCL per the established mechanism. BD and EMSD will jointly announce to the public the decision to accept application to resume construction works.

According to the information provided by MTRCL, there are now 64 projects where settlement situation is being monitored within the railway protection areas. MTRCL will make separate announcement on the list of such projects.

BD regulates the planning, design and construction of buildings and associated works on private land to prescribed building safety standards according to the BO. To safeguard the safety of railway structures, construction works located within the railway protection area as stipulated under Schedule 5 of the BO should comply with a more stringent set of standards, the registered building professionals must monitor the effect arising from the building works to adjacent railway structures per the requirements set out in the BO and its subsidiary regulations, as well as relevant "Practice Notes for Authorized Persons, Registered Structural Engineers and Registered Geotechnical Engineers" issued etc. Comments and agreement of MTRCL have to be sought for the plans of the proposed works and the monitoring proposal. The registered building professionals are also required to inform MTRCL direct before the commencement of any building works to enable formulation of appropriate monitoring plan. EMSD regulates and monitors the safety of railway operation according to the Mass Transit Railway Ordinance and its subsidiary regulations.

As for MTRCL, its dedicated railway protection team will monitor the status of various railway facilities in accordance with a set of stringent railway protection measures and procedures, including regular machinery

inspection of railway structures to ensure that the track is always maintained in a safe and good condition, and requiring the contractor responsible for building works to set up additional monitoring checkpoints at appropriate locations to assist MTRCL to monitor the situation.