

1 February 2021

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Investigation Panel on the postponement of the commencement of the East Rail Line new signalling system:

**Investigation Panel looking into the postponement of
the commencement of East Rail Line new signalling system
presents findings**

The Investigation Panel (the Panel) commissioned by MTR Corporation to look into the postponement of the commencement of the East Rail Line (EAL) new signalling system today (1 February 2021) presents its findings on the matter.

The Panel was set up by the Corporation on 13 September 2020, following the Corporation's announcement on 11 September 2020 of the postponement of the commissioning of the new signalling system and introduction of new 9-car trains on the EAL. The Panel was mandated to look into the Corporation's handling of the issue which led to the postponement and review its communication and reporting mechanisms both internally and with relevant Government departments.

Key findings of the Panel include:

- The concerned issue was not an issue of safety but of service reliability;
- There was no intentional concealment of the concerned issue. However, the staff involved underestimated the technical complexity of the issue and were not sensitive enough to public expectations on service reliability. This resulted in (i) the issue not being thoroughly investigated (Sections 4.2 and 5.1 of the Report); and (ii) a delay in escalating the concerned issue internally (Section 4.3 of the Report), and
- The above underestimation also impacted the reporting of the concerned issue to relevant Government departments (Section 4.4 of the Report).

Ir Edmund Leung, Chairman of the Panel, said, "The commissioning of a new railway signalling system is a large-scale and complex project which requires detailed planning, testing and drills, as well as close liaison among the working parties. The Panel considers that, while each of these parties had been focusing on their respective expertise to launch the new signalling system and new trains, there was a need to enhance sensitivity to public expectations on service reliability. There was also room for improvement in the process of identifying, analysing, classifying and reporting the issue concerned."

"In underestimating the complexity of the issue, the working parties lost the best timing to escalate the issue within the Corporation and report it to the relevant Government departments," opined Ir Leung.

The Panel puts forward recommendations as follows:

1. introducing internal procedures to ensure that relevant Government departments are kept adequately informed of all significant reliability issues in the future;

2. strengthening training to raise sensitivity around public concerns, effective communications and the importance of service quality and reliability, in addition to safety issues;
3. reinforcing second line of defence arrangements on risk management and compliance control to detect and escalate important issues early; and
4. full support for the Corporation's introduction of the Service Reliability Report to complement the existing System Safety Report, which will keep relevant Government departments adequately informed of all significant reliability issues in the future.

Ir Leung thanks the Corporation for its cooperation with the Panel in the investigation and expects the Corporation to implement the recommendations in a timely manner.

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