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**Transport and
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Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways
Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Fax no.: 2840 0716)

2 June 2020

Dear Ms LAU,

**Follow-up actions in relation to train derailment incident at
Hung Hom Station on East Rail Line**

Thank you for your letter dated 20 April 2020 conveying a letter from Hon Jeremy TAM regarding the captioned subject. The Government and the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) are very concerned about the train derailment incident that occurred near Hung Hom Station (“HUH”) on the East Rail Line (“EAL”) on 17 September 2019. After the incident, the MTRCL set up an investigation panel (“Panel”) comprising local and overseas experts and its senior representatives to investigate into and identify the root causes of the incident and to propose recommendations for improvement. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (“EMSD”) also conducted an independent investigation into the incident. The reports of the MTRCL and EMSD were released on 3 March this year. The Government and the MTRCL briefed Members at the meeting of the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways on 5 May (see LC Paper No. CB(4)438/19-20(05) for details).

Detailed procedures for drilling screw holes

2. Regarding the procedures for drilling mounting holes on sleepers, the maintenance team of the MTRCL has all along been following installation guidelines of sleeper manufacturers to formulate an internal code of practice on the procedures for drilling mounting holes required for replacement of sleepers. The MTRCL has been using the code of practice for ten years and will review and update the code regularly as necessary. According to the installation guidelines of sleeper manufacturers, maintenance staff will use electric drills, metal hammers and other tools to drill and cut mounting holes of 19 mm diameter on sleepers in vertical position as far as possible at track sites. The depth of mounting holes must be more than 130 mm. Maintenance staff will then mount baseplates with screws on the sleepers and secure rails on the baseplates by clips. Generally speaking, maintenance staff will drill mounting holes in vertical position as far as possible. If there is a greater deviation in the vertical angle, the screw cannot be screwed into the mounting hole. Having completed the relevant procedures, maintenance staff will check whether screws have been properly screwed into the mounting holes and baseplates have been secured on the sleepers. We are aware that in response to Hon Jeremy TAM's enquiries, the MTRCL had arranged a site inspection for him on 25 May to understand the procedures for drilling mounting holes on sleepers.

Causes for elongation of screw holes in the incident on 17 September

3. Regarding your enquiries about the causes for elongation of screw holes, the MTRCL has explained in the Panel's report (paragraph 4.4c) that to correct the track gauge problem found during routine maintenance, maintenance staff replaced two worse timber sleepers with new synthetic sleepers near the check rail of turnout P5116 in August 2019. Subsequently, a localised uneven lateral stiffness was created between the two newly replaced synthetic sleepers and the other 15 original sleepers. This resulted in unexpectedly excessive lateral force being applied to the rail under train operation which prompted elongation of the mounting holes of the baseplates on the sleepers. The Panel did not find any evidence to suggest that the deformation of mounting holes is related to the installation procedures.

Yours sincerely,

(Veronica TSE)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.:

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
MTR Corporation Limited

(Attn.: Mr TSE Lok-him)
(Attn.: Mr Y C CHAN)