

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport  
Subcommittee on matters relating to railways**

**Non-stopping of an East Rail train**

**Purpose**

On 28 April 2005, an East Rail train failed to stop at Tai Wo Station in accordance with the procedures for boarding and alighting of passengers. This paper sets out the Government's assessment of the incident. Results of the investigation into this incident and follow up actions by Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation ("KCRC") are set out in a separate paper submitted to Members on 6 May 2005.

**Government's assessment of the incident**

*Investigation*

2. The Government is very concerned about this incident and has immediately on the day of the incident asked KCRC to carry out a thorough investigation and submit a report as soon as possible.

3. According to KCRC's report, on 28 April 2005, as a result of the loosened contact of a switch on the train, the Automatic Train Operation System ("ATO") did not function normally, and the train was therefore operated by the train driver under the control of the Automatic Train Protection System ("ATP"). However, due to the carelessness of the driver, the train did not stop at Tai Wo Station in accordance with the procedures.

4. The Hong Kong Railway Inspectorate ("HKRI") has carried out an investigation of the incident including collecting information on the concerned driver's record. We understand that the concerned driver did not have poor past driving record and was off duty under the roster the day before the incident. He was also given sufficient operational break on the day of the incident in accordance with the Corporation's procedures. In addition, on the day of the incident, in accordance with the Corporation's procedures, the driver was observed and confirmed by

the Corporation's Train Crew Inspector as capable of performing the duties. It has also been confirmed after the incident that the driver was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

5. HKRI notes that the safe operation of the incident train was subject to the control of the ATP on the day of the incident. Having reviewed the video tape and information relating to the train speed, HKRI has confirmed that incident train was travelling at a speed of 80km/hr when it passed through Tai Wo Station, which is within the prescribed safety speed limit under the ATP. The ATP is a safety critical system and its major function is to prevent trains from speeding, collision and derailment. The ATP functions include:-

- (a) maintaining a safety distance between trains;
- (b) maintaining the trains to run at speed below the allowable speed limits (emergency brakes will be applied immediately if the speed limit is exceeded); and
- (c) ensure the system assigns safe routes for trains to pass through.

The investigation has confirmed that the ATP operated normally on the day of the incident and delivered the prescribed speed control to ensure safety of the railway operation. The other platform safety measures also functioned normally including the announcement at platform. Announcement was made as scheduled at the platform to remind passengers to stand behind the yellow line. HKRI considers that under the above circumstances in which these safety precautionary measures were functioning normally, the non-stopping of train at the station did not pose any hazard to passengers on the train or at the platform. However, such incident indeed brought inconvenience to passengers.

#### *Assessment on KCRC's proposed improvement measures*

6. There were two East Rail station-skipping incidents in February 2001. On this, KCRC has introduced a number of preventive measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents. In response to the

Government's requirement, KCRC at that time had implemented the various measures as scheduled.

7. In light of this recurrence of incident, the Government has analysed thoroughly the past preventive measures implemented by KCRC and the present proposed measures. The Government considers that to prevent recurrence of similar incident, the focus should be on two aspects, namely, enhancement of the reliability of ATO and staff training. The ATO is a service performance related system and its primary function is to control the train starting or stopping at stations according to train services timetable. Under the normal functioning of the ATO, station skipping incidents should not occur. If the ATO fails, the train will be switched to manual operation by the driver. Hence, the enhancement of the reliability of ATO and staff training is the fundamental task to prevent the occurrence of station skipping incidents. On this, we have asked KCRC to specifically step up efforts on the following areas:-

- (a) on the operation of the ATO, we consider that there is room for improvement of the reliability of the system, and that KCRC should step up the maintenance of the ATO in order to minimise the chances of manual operation by drivers due to failure of the ATO; and
- (b) as regards staff training, KCRC has already provided training programme to drivers. However, the Corporation should enhance drivers' training to strengthen the awareness of drivers in entering and leaving stations in order to ensure that the drivers would not be unduly relying on computer systems. So even in case of malfunctioning of the ATO, the drivers could operate and stop the trains at stations smoothly. In addition, although KCRC has required the drivers to take refresher course every year, we consider that the Corporation should actively consider increasing the frequency of such course so that the drivers could maintain the necessary vigilance.

8. Moreover, KCRC introduced a number of supplementary measures to help remind drivers to call at station. These supplementary measures include installation of audible alert signal, raising the volume of automatic announcement when approaching stations, and placing colour-coded card in the driver cabinet to indicate whether the train is a passenger train. Our investigation gathers that since the Corporation considered that the ATO had achieved a certain level of reliability, it had decommissioned the abovementioned audible alert signal on 2 April 2005. However, in light of the incident, the Corporation reinstated this audible alert signal on 29 April 2005. The Government considers that the fundamental task should still be the enhancement of the ATO and staff training, yet the Corporation should also review the supplementary measures from time to time to ascertain whether they are delivering the intended functions effectively.

9. KCRC has proposed three improvement measures in light of this incident, viz. upgrading of the signalling system, instructing drivers to pay attention to the reminders for stopping at stations, and arranging a qualified member of staff to accompany the driver to remind the latter to call at stations if a passenger train has to be driven by a driver. The details of these measures are set out in paragraph 16 of KCRC's paper. Government considers that these improvement measures are in the right direction which could help prevent recurrence of similar incidents.

### **Conclusion**

10. The Government is very concerned that KCRC should take measures to avoid recurrence of similar incidents, and has already asked KCRC to implement the improvement measures expeditiously for maintaining safe and reliable services for the public. Relevant Government departments will also closely monitor the implementation of the measures.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau  
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