

LCQ21: Operation of West Kowloon Station of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 26):

Question:

Regarding the operation of the West Kowloon Station (WKS) of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows, since the commencement of operation of WKS, if incidents of unauthorised entry into railway tracks and tunnels have occurred; if such incidents have occurred, of the following details of the incidents: (i) nature (such as falling onto the railway track by accident, committing suicide, deliberate entry (if the motives are known, please specify), and others (please specify)), (ii) the locations where and the ways in which the persons concerned entered and left, and (iii) whether the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has made public such incidents (if not, of the reasons for that), and set out such information by the identities of such persons;

(2) since the commencement of operation of WKS, whether incidents of passengers entering Hong Kong without undergoing immigration clearance procedure have occurred; if so, of the details, including the reasons and whether the authorities have made public such incidents (if not, of the reasons for that); and

(3) whether it knows the reasons why platform screen doors have not been fitted at WKS, and whether the Government will request MTRCL to retrofit the screen doors?

Reply:

President,

Passenger clearance for the West Kowloon Station (WKS) and security work of the Hong Kong Port Area within the WKS fall within the policy areas of the Security Bureau (SB). Having consulted the SB, I set out my reply below to the question raised by the Honorable Member.

With the implementation of the co-location arrangement at the WKS of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL), passengers can complete clearance procedures of both Hong Kong and the Mainland at the WKS in one go. Given that journeys will not be constrained by

whether a Mainland station has clearance facilities, passengers can travel conveniently between different places in the Mainland. Since the commissioning of the XRL in September 2018, its operation along with the co-location arrangement have been running smoothly. As at the end of last year, the XRL has a total patronage of over 22 million, with the average daily patronage being over 47 000 and the highest patronage for a day (February 7, 2019) over 104 000. Passengers are getting used to using XRL as a cross-boundary transport mode.

With the grant of the service concession of the XRL to the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the Government has signed an amendment agreement to the Operating Agreement (AOA) with the MTRCL to specify the requirements imposed by the relevant policy and regulatory bureaux/departments on the MTRCL in relation to the operation of the XRL. As for the requirements on security, with due regard to the co-location arrangement, the MTRCL has to assist the enforcement agencies of the Government to preserve the security and integrity of Hong Kong's boundary and prevent unauthorised access to and exit from the Mainland Port Area. The MTRCL is required to ensure the security and safety of the operation of the XRL, the WKS and the related facilities including tunnels, ventilation buildings and Shek Kong Stabling Sidings, etc. In this regard, the Government and the MTRCL have established a security committee under the AOA, chaired by the Secretary for Security or his representative, to formulate and review the security arrangements for the XRL. The MTRCL has to observe the security requirements specified by the Government from time to time.

(1) and (2) Since the commissioning of the XRL, which has carried more than 22 million passengers so far, there have been two incidents involving unauthorised entry into railway track areas.

The first incident occurred in late March last year, when a platform assistant of the MTRCL fell onto the railway track by accident while working on a platform of the WKS. Pursuant to the Liaison and Coordination Mechanism and the Mechanism for Handling Emergencies under the co-location arrangement, staff of the Fire Services Department of the Hong Kong side were granted permission by the Mainland side to pass through the Mainland Port Area to render assistance to the platform assistant.

The second incident occurred on an evening in early December last year. A Mainland passenger boarded a southbound train at Changsha South station. As far as we know, the passenger intended to travel to Shenzhen North station, only to forget to alight from the train when it called at that station. When the train continued its journey and finally arrived at the WKS in Hong Kong, the passenger alighted from the train but, instead of completing clearance procedures, entered the railway track area and walked along the tracks for a period of time. The passenger eventually left the railway premises from an emergency exit of one of the ventilation buildings beside the railway, and turned himself in to the Police. Subsequently, the passenger was sent back to the Mainland in accordance with the established mechanism. The Government and MTRCL were highly concerned about the implications of the incident for the operation and security of the XRL, and the MTRCL is continuing with its in-

depth investigation into the incident. On the security front, the MTRCL will, in conjunction with the SB and law enforcement agencies, carefully review the incident under the security committee, after which the MTRCL and law enforcement agencies will adopt appropriate follow-up measures to ensure the integrity of the boundary and prevent recurrence of similar incidents. On the operation front, our Bureau is currently following up on the incident with the MTRCL to ensure the safety and service quality of XRL operation.

Except for the second incident above, which involved trespassing onto the track, no case of entry into Hong Kong at the WKS without undergoing clearance procedures has been received.

(3) The railway tracks of the XRL lie within the Hong Kong Port Area and are therefore subject to the jurisdiction of Hong Kong. To ensure the safety of passengers and prevent them from trespassing onto tracks, the MTRCL has adopted appropriate management measures for passengers boarding departing trains and passengers alighting from arrived trains. All passengers, be they departing or arriving, are not allowed to stay on the platform. Departing passengers will first wait at the waiting hall for departing passengers upon completing clearance procedures, and will only be directed by the MTRCL to the platform for boarding after the train has arrived and the compartment has been cleared up. Arriving passengers must leave the compartment immediately upon arrival and then leave the platform as promptly as possible. The MTRCL will ensure that all passengers have left the platform before their train departs from the platform.

As the XRL is a cross-boundary railway, trains of different models will arrive at the WKS. Since the positions of doors on high-speed rail trains vary from model to model, it is not viable to install screen doors matching the doors of all models at the WKS platforms. Nonetheless, all platforms of the WKS are fitted with fixed panels at both ends to block the gap between the train's nose or rear and the platform. When a train arrives, the MTRCL will deploy staff to guard both ends of the platform to prevent passengers from accessing the tracks from the ends. The Government will also review issues relating to platform security and safety in conjunction with the MTRCL from time to time.