

LCQ6: Major works under Shatin-to-Central Link Project

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 20):

Question:

Under the Project Integration Management System of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), there are a number of hold points for the construction works for the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) project, which is currently undertaken by MTRCL. At each hold point, the contractor is required to submit a Request for Inspection and Survey Checks (RISC) form to MTRCL upon completion of a certain construction activity; the contractor may proceed with the next activity only after MTRCL has confirmed after checking that no problem is found and granted permission. However, the Government has recently announced that a number of problems concerning the construction works at the SCL Hung Hom Station North and South Approach Tunnels and Stabling Sidings were uncovered, including the missing of materials testing records and a large quantity of RISC forms, as well as unauthorized alterations of the construction methods. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will request the Secretary for Transport and Housing, who is a MTRCL Board member, to take the blame for problems concerning the construction works of the SCL project being uncovered one after another and resign;

(2) whether the Highways Department and its consultants have regularly reviewed if the construction works of the SCL project were undertaken in accordance with the work procedures, including the checking of the RISC forms; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, the frequencies of such reviews and whether cases of RISC forms missing have been found; whether the Government and MTRCL have looked into the reasons for RISC forms missing (whether such reasons include the destruction of evidence by some works personnel for fear of their contravention of the rules being uncovered), and why the contractor, at various hold points, was allowed to proceed with the next construction activity even though the RISC forms concerned were missing; and

(3) of the quantity and percentage of the materials testing records which are missing, as well as the materials involved; with such records missing, how the Government ascertains that the materials used for the works and the works quality on the whole comply with the safety standards; whether there is any case of missing RISC forms and materials testing records concerning other works sites of the SCL project; if so, set out the relevant quantities and percentages in a table?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the three parts of the Hon Lam Cheuk-ting's question is as follows:

The major works under the Shatin-to-Central Link (SCL) Project commenced in 2012 under the service concession approach. MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) was entrusted by the Government to design, construct, test and commission the SCL Project and the Government monitors and verifies the implementation of the SCL Project by the MTRCL on the premise of the "Check the checker" approach. In accordance with a risk-based assessment, the Highways Department (HyD) and its Monitoring and Verification (M&V) Consultant conduct random audits to check if the main procedures and arrangements for the execution of the works by MTRCL have met the obligations under the Entrustment Agreement signed with the Government.

In general, HyD and its M&V Consultant inspect the works under 6 to 8 contracts every month and, for the works at Hung Hom Station Extension (HUH), once every 3 months. After the incident about the allegation of the cutting of steel bars at HUH, HyD had reviewed the relevant site inspection work and, with effect from August 2018, increased the frequency of site inspection to nine to 11 contracts every month and, for the works at HUH, once every month. Taking into account the experience of the implementation of large-scale infrastructure, HyD and its M&V Consultant have focused on such aspects as project expenditure, works progress and public safety during the inspections. At present, monitoring of structural safety has been strengthened in the regular inspections.

In accordance with the Project Integrated Management System (PIMS) of the MTRCL, there are hold points for certain construction activities (e.g. formwork erection, steel bar fixing and concreting, etc.). When the contractor completes the works and inspection at a hold point and requires an inspection or survey to be conducted by the engineering personnel of MTRCL, the contractor shall submit a Request for Inspection and Survey Check (RISC) Form asking the engineering personnel of MTRCL to conduct inspection or survey before proceeding with the next step. The RISC Form is to record the information about the inspection or survey conducted by the relevant personnel from the contractor and MTRCL, e.g. inspection and survey date and time, names of person in-charge etc. The Form is a tool for recording the process of the works executed by the contractor and the supervision conducted by MTRCL. These site records could be used for auditing in the future, if needed.

At the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways Meeting under Legislative Council Panel on Transport held on February 1, 2019, MTRCL indicated that the RISC Forms about the relevant steelworks in respect of North Approach Tunnels, South Approach Tunnels and Hung Hom Stabling Sidings were only 27%, 64% and 37% respectively of the total numbers of RISC Forms

required for filing. HyD requested MTRCL in writing to submit a detailed situation report on the missing of RISC Forms by the end of February 2019. The Government is still awaiting the reply from MTRCL.

The extent of missing site records in the present case under the SCL Project is unusual. MTRCL revealed that, apart from RISC Forms, the missing site records also included the detailed information about and the extent of, in respect of some connections, a change in design during construction from the original lapping of steel bars to coupler connections; as well as material test records. Government has already referred the case to law enforcement department for follow-up action and will fully facilitate the investigation.

Regarding the condition of other stations, we have implemented a three-tier audit as follows:

Firstly, the Government has already asked MTRCL to conduct an internal audit on major works under other stations, including whether site records are complete and whether design drawings have been amended in accordance with established procedures.

Secondly, HyD and its M&V Consultant will conduct audits on other SCL stations under the supervision of the Expert Adviser Team of Transport and Housing Bureau. The first stage audit covers To Kwa Wan Station and Diamond Hill Station and will focus on quality control of works and supervision records. This is extremely important because the audit will look into structural safety and give recommendations on strengthening works if necessary. Depending on the results of the audit, we will adjust the scale of the audit for the remaining stations.

Finally, for the purpose of vetting, MTRCL has to submit to the Government the relevant completion certificate, record drawings, test reports on construction materials and certificates.

According to the provisions of the Articles of Association of MTRCL and the regulations adopted by the MTRCL Board, the Board focuses on handling matters about the corporation's overall strategies, corporate governance, finances and shareholder issues, while the day-to-day running of the corporation is the responsibility of the management, who shall report to the Board. Government Directors do not differ from all other directors of the Board in terms of their role and duties; and have all along discharged their duties and at the same time, reflected the general concerns of the Government and the community about the management and operation of the MTRCL.

As the investigation into the SCL Project is still under way, I am duty bound to study the incidents thoroughly and upon ascertaining the facts and the root of the problems, take pro-active measures to rectify the problems so that the SCL Project can be implemented continuously for completion and commissioning as soon as possible on the condition that quality of the works is not compromised. The Government will take actions against concerned parties and safeguard the interest of the Government and the public. Thank

you, President.