

Transport and Housing Bureau responds to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries today (September 4) on the media reporting arrangements for the handover of the Mainland Port Area and the "B5 level" of the West Kowloon Station (WKS), a spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau gave the following reply:

In the press release issued by the Government as well as the paper submitted to the Legislative Council Panel on Transport on August 30, 2018, it was stated that the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (Co-location) Ordinance (Cap 632) would come into operation on September 4, 2018, in order to dovetail with the preparatory works for the implementation of the co-location arrangement at the WKS of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL).

As agreed between the Governments of both sides, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government handed over the Mainland Port Area last evening (September 3) at the working level in a modest and simple manner, which signified that the HKSAR Government made available the completed Mainland Port Area to the Mainland Authorities Stationed at the Mainland Port Area for their exercising of jurisdiction, so as to make final preparations for the joint implementation of the co-location arrangement. Press releases were respectively issued by both sides so that citizens of both places could be aware of the arrangements in the first instance. The official opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL will be held in the morning of September 22. It will be jointly hosted by the Chief Executive and Mr Ma Xingrui, the Governor of the Guangdong Province, and media will definitely be invited to cover the ceremony.

As regards media reports on the existence of a so-called "B5 level" in the WKS, it is actually a back of house service corridor underneath the B4 Platform Level of the WKS managed by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) as the operator of the Hong Kong Section of the XRL, with plant rooms for air conditioning, drainage and sewage systems alongside and will be used during rescue and evacuation. This is not an area for passenger use and is not within the Mainland Port Area. A typical level has a floor area of about 110 000 square metres, but the aforesaid back of house service corridor only has an area of about 3 100 square metres, representing less than three per cent of the floor area of a typical level. As such, this back of house service corridor is not a "floor" as such. Rather, since the corridor is underneath the B4 Level, it was marked as "B5 level" for easy identification. In fact, in the quarterly reported submitted by the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Highways Department to the Legislative Council Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways in September 2016, it was mentioned that works were ongoing at the "B5 level". There is therefore no question of covering up the matter.

The aforesaid corridor forms part of the XRL WKS fire rescue and evacuation system and was designed based on the fire safety risk assessment by MTRCL to satisfy the relevant buildings legislation and fire safety guidelines. The design has been approved by the Safety and Security Coordination Committee that oversees relevant matters. This arrangement is in line with the other railway stations. The Committee is chaired by the representative of the Railways Branch of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, with members comprising representatives of the Fire Services Department, Buildings Department, Highways Department, the Police Force and MTRCL. The aforesaid corridor, together with the entire WKS, was constructed by the contractor of contract 810A – West Kowloon Terminus Station (North), and statutory inspections by the Fire Services Department and the Buildings Department have been completed.

Further, when relevant personnel need to enter the aforesaid corridor for performance of duties, they must enter through the cross-boundary restricted area. Such relevant personnel must first be issued a valid cross-boundary restricted area permit by MTRCL, and have authorisation from MTRCL before they enter the corridor for performance of duties.

Other than in the above circumstances, no person will be entitled to use the corridor. All exits and entrances to the corridor, including relevant passageways, doors and lifts that connect with the Mainland Port Area in the WKS, are locked by security systems. MTRCL has a stringent control mechanism and have assigned patrols to prevent unauthorised entry. In addition, security systems such as closed-circuit television and alarm systems have been installed together with clear warning signs so as to prevent unauthorised persons from using the corridor.