

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**THB(T)233**

**(Question Serial No. 3672)**

Head: (42) Electrical and Mechanical Services Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified  
Programme: (2) Mechanical Installations Safety  
Controlling Officer: Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (CHAN Fan)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Transport and Housing

Question:

The Government states in the Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2015-16 of this Programme that safety inspection and supervision of railway service provided by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will be enhanced. Would the Government advise this Committee -

- (1) Why does the Government propose to enhance safety inspection and supervision of railway service? What are the details?
- (2) Does the Government propose to enhance safety inspection and supervision because of the deficiencies in the aforementioned work in the past? If yes, what are the deficiencies?
- (3) It is understood that the Railways Branch (RB) of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) is responsible for safety inspection and supervision of railway service. Would the Government advise this Committee the operating expenditure, establishment, estimated annual payroll cost of staff in 2014-15, as well as the operating expenditure, establishment, estimated annual payroll cost of staff in 2015-16 of the RB respectively?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Wai-yip, Albert (Member Question No. 81)

Reply:

- (1) & (2) The RB of the EMSD is responsible for monitoring the safety performance of the existing railway service and new railway projects. Since its establishment in February 2008 <sup>Note</sup>, the RB has been delivering its duties as the statutory regulatory authority on railway safety. Under the monitoring of the RB, the safety performance of railway service in Hong Kong has been maintained at an internationally-recognised high standard, and the number of railway incidents has also remained stable for the past few years. Nevertheless, in view of the expanding railway network, increasing patronage and train frequency, major

improvement works of the existing railway system and the new railway projects, the RB will need to enhance safety inspection and supervision of railway service provided by the MTRCL and the Corporation's implementation of new railway projects. The work plan of the RB includes:

- (i) to carry out safety vetting and on-site tests for new railway projects and major upgrading works of the existing railway system, to ensure that these new railway lines and facilities meet the relevant safety standards;
- (ii) to increase the number of safety inspections in the coming years in view of the increased train frequency and the expanded railway network; and
- (iii) to conduct supervisory audits for the established mechanisms of the MTRCL in respect of safety management and asset management, in order to monitor the safety performance of the MTRCL in a more comprehensive manner.

The above tasks will create additional workload to the RB. In this regard, the Government will strengthen the manpower of the RB to cope with the additional workload.

- (3) The establishment of the RB for the monitoring and regulation of the safety performance of the existing railway service and new railway projects in 2014-15 comprises one directorate, 13 professional and one technical staff. The annual expenditure of these posts in 2014-15 is about \$14.5 million. The number of staff in 2015-16 is expected to increase to 24 with nine additional officers, comprising two directorate (subject to the approval of the Finance Committee), five professional and two technical staff. The estimated annual expenditure of the strengthened establishment in 2015-16 is about \$22.7 million. We are seeking funding approval for the creation of the two directorate posts according to established procedures. The Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways of the Legislative Council Panel on Transport gave support to such proposal on 6 March 2015.

Note Before the establishment of the RB, monitoring of railway safety was undertaken by the Hong Kong Railway Inspectorate under the Transport and Housing Bureau.

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