

LCQ6: Ngong Ping 360 operation

Following is an oral reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Frederick Ma, to a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam Kin-fung in the Legislative Council today (May 14):

Question:

Since its re-opening at the end of last year, there have been several incidents of the service of the Ngong Ping 360 cable car system being suspended. In one of the more serious incidents which occurred on the 11th of last month, 150 passengers were stranded in the cabins for nearly one and a half hours. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the reasons for the repeated incidents of service suspension after the re-opening of the cable car system, and whether mechanical wear and tear and maintenance problems were involved;

(b) whether Ngong Ping 360 Limited has fully implemented the measures for improving the operational safety of the cable car system recommended by the Expert Panel in its report on the cabin dislodgement incident; if not, of the details and reasons for that; and

(c) of the average daily number of passengers since the re-opening of the cable car system, and how this figure compares with that for the period between its commissioning in September 2006 and the service suspension in June last year?

Reply:

Madam President,

Since resumption of service on December 31, 2007, the Ngong Ping cable car has been operating smoothly in general, with an average reliability rate of 99%. The Ngong Ping 360 Limited (the Company) has also stepped up its publicity and promotion efforts, including organising special activities during the Chinese New Year, Easter holidays and Buddha's Birthday, etc. Within this short period of time, the number of visitors has resumed to the level before re-opening. That said, the Administration is very concerned about the recent service suspension incidents, and has written to the Company urging it to strengthen the operation, maintenance and management of the cable car system in order to improve its service. My reply to the Honourable Jeffrey Lam's questions is as follows:

(a) Between March and April this year, there were three service suspensions lasting 30 minutes or more, which affected the reliability of cable car service. After investigation, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) considered that the incidents were not caused by mechanical wear and tear. The Company had also followed the maintenance manual provided by the manufacturer and trade practices adopted in other countries. The service suspensions were caused by improper belt tension, which led to dislodgement of driving belts from their

normal positions. The resulting incorrect separation between the cabins inside the station activated the monitoring system and halted the operation of the cable car system. The incidents, which occurred at Ngong Ping Terminal and Nei Lak Shan Angle Station respectively, involved non-linear belt and pulley assemblies of different configuration.

EMSD will continue to closely monitor the situation. The Company has already implemented improvement measures including installation of additional tensioners for all non-linear belt and pulley assemblies at Ngong Ping Terminal and Nei Lak Shan Angle Station to maintain belt tension. Installation works for Ngong Ping Terminal were completed in end April. The works for Nei Lak Shan Angle Station would be completed in May.

EMSD is of the view that although the incidents have affected the reliability of cable car service, the system itself is safe. During the incident, the monitoring system had worked perfectly well by immediately halting cable car operation upon detection of abnormal separation between the cabins inside the station.

(b) Before the Ngong Ping cable car was re-opened to the public in end 2007, the Company had complied with all the prerequisite requirements in relation to the operational safety of the cable car system as recommended in the Expert Panel's report on the cabin dislodgement incident that took place in June 2007. EMSD was satisfied with the improvement measures implemented by the Company before approving the resumption of cable car service.

The improvement measures implemented by the Company before the re-opening of the cable car service included enhancing the training for operators and maintenance staff, establishing clear and systematic operation and maintenance procedures and guidelines, keeping adequate stock for all spare parts and materials, maintaining operation records, implementing regular preventive maintenance, introducing ISO9001 quality management system, and increasing the number of operation and maintenance staff, etc.

The experts concluded that the design of Ngong Ping cable car system complied with prevailing international standards and practices. EMSD will continue to closely monitor the operation of the cable car system and ensure that the Company will continuously and effectively implement all improvement measures.

(c) Since resumption of its services on December 31, 2007, the Ngong Ping cable car system received over 600,000 visitors in the first four months, with an average daily patronage of over 5,000, similar to that in the same period last year. The Company will continue to stage more promotion and publicity events, and will work closely with the Hong Kong Tourism Board and the travel trade to step up its overseas promotion, with a view to attracting more visitors and making Ngong Ping 360 a must-visit tourist attraction.

Ends/Wednesday, May 14, 2008
Issued at HKT 14:31

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