



**Mr Khaw, in his first month as custodian of the Transport ministry, also wants the top management to be present when breakdown exercises are run, so the staff don't just go through the motions.** FILE PHOTO

# Rail operators told to run collective train breakdown exercise

**Khaw wants regular dry runs of contingency plans to be sure they work well**

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TRANSPORT Minister Khaw Boon Wan has asked the Land Transport Authority (LTA) to conduct a collective breakdown exercise with rail operators SMRT and SBS Transit (SBST) this month, to test the contingency plans that have been enhanced since July 7, when the North-South and East-West lines broke down.

Mr Khaw added that he would be there to observe the exercise.

In a blog post, he said Singapore is committed to minimising rail disruptions.

"But when even the best in class, the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway (MTR), experiences on average one major disruption monthly, we are reminded of our Home Team's 'Low crime does not mean no crime' message," he wrote.

Mr Khaw, who took up the Transport portfolio just last month, said the key question is: "If and when (a breakdown) happens, what can we do to recover service speedily and to minimise inconvenience to commuters?"

Comprehensive contingency plans for breakdowns are therefore a must, he added.

The July 7 disruption to service lasted more than three hours and was the network's worst so far. About 250,000 passengers were affected, and SMRT was subsequently fined a record S\$5.4 million.

Mr Khaw also wrote that, beyond contingency plans, there must be actual and regular walk-throughs and "live rehearsals" to ensure smoother execution of such plans when disruptions happen.

It is important that SMRT and SBST "actually walk through the contingency plan related to each station, and for the scenarios that they have envisaged with LTA".

"There must be table-top exercises and also ground deployment exercises, where we put to test our contingency plans in a real-life environment."

He noted that this was being done, both individually by each operator, as well as collectively when the LTA coordinates multiple-operator scenarios.

"And the top management needs to be present at such exercises, as otherwise, the staff may carry them out half-heartedly, just to put a tick in the check-boxes. Through these exercises, we can also pick up learning points to further improve our plans."