Lapses, lack of preparation and under-maintenance are just some of the issues brought to light so far, halfway through the SMRT breakdown inquiry. Here’s what has been revealed.

FESTIVAL LEAD IN VAN

Preparations are clearly far from over as the half of the hearing was belied by the SMRT train drivers, suite managers, maintenance staff and engineers who faced the breakdowns.

Dr Park Youngsoon, programme head of the Master of Science programme in urban transport management at UniSIM’s School of Business, said that while he thought the COI was handling the right direction, he was surprised at some of the testimonies heard in the last three weeks.

One issue that stood out for him involved two SMRT maintenance officers who inspected 900 metres of the south-bound track between Newton and Orchard stations in 20 minutes on Dec 17.

During the inquiry, when CID members and the SMRT managers inspected the track, they could not inspect it quickly, one of the officers said, that was possible to do, and he had made those inspections thoroughly and found nothing abnormal.

Said Dr Park: “It doesn’t sound like SMRT had very well-established maintenance procedures. I thought it would be better than that. I think the full picture will be revealed during the proceedings.”

There’s a chance of what has been revealed during the proceedings.

UNDER-MTAINTAINED

- Metal wheels of trains were poorly maintained. The spurs on the wheels were supposed to be inspected regularly to their original roundness. SMRT had reduced rolling and profiling some, while the main rolling and profiling equipment had been out of service for a month.

- SMRT’s maintenance expenditure and manpower for maintaining trains and tracks have been increasing at the same rate as the increase in the distance covered per train. Numbers at the SMRT Station Control Office (OCC) have stayed almost the same.

- Some customer service teams were not given enough information by the OCC to help address the concerns of passengers.

- Train officers were not taught on how to handle passengers in emergency situations and failed to turn on the emergency ventilation switch which would have improved air circulation on stalled trains.

- Staff in the multi-function vehicle, used to measure third rail current, would have improved air circulation on stalled trains.

- There were no indications to tell the staff the carriages were occupied.

- SMRT’s rail incident management plan three months ago was not trained by the COI to help address the concerns of passengers.

- There was a breakdown in communications between the OCC and the managers of stations during the two breakdowns.

OVER-WHELLED

- When the first train stopped at 6.48pm on Dec 15, SMRT’s senior management was only alerted to the severity of the breakdown at around 7.20pm, the vice-president of rail operations Lee Wai Meng activated SMRT’s rail incident management plan several minutes later.

- Some commuters were treated to no portable lights to illuminate the tracks. Some passengers were retained on the trains for hours as a result of SMRT’s breakdown management plan.

- Train officers were not trained on how to handle passengers in emergency situations and failed to turn on the emergency ventilation switch which would have improved air circulation on stalled trains.

- Some customers waited two hours for the free shuttle buses, while some buses went to the wrong stations, while some were returned to the wrong stations.

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