

LCQ17: Ensure safe and reliable power supply in HK

Following is the question by the Hon Howard Young and a written reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (October 8):

Question:

In view of the extensive power breakdowns in New York and London this summer, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) it has assessed or will assess the probability of such an occurrence in Hong Kong;

(b) it has reviewed, in collaboration with the two electricity companies, the reliability of Hong Kong's electricity supply systems, in order to ensure that there are adequate safeguards against blackouts and that emergency measures have been formulated to minimize economic losses arising from blackouts; and

(c) there are adequate backup power generators installed in public hospitals, the airport, the railway and tram systems to sustain normal operations during a blackout?

Reply :

Madam President,

My reply to the three-part question raised by the Hon Howard Young is as follows -

(a) & (b) The primary objective of the Government's energy policy is to ensure that the public enjoys a reliable and safe power supply at reasonable prices.

The reliability index of electricity supply in Hong Kong has been 99.99% in the past three years, one of the highest in the world.

To minimize the possibility of a major power blackout in Hong Kong, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) monitors regularly the power supply by the two power companies to ensure that best operational requirements and engineering practice are complied with. Both power companies have sophisticated systems in place to minimize risk of major supply interruption and to deal with emergency situations. For instance,

individual generating units are installed with power system stabilisers to enhance system stability against any transient disturbances in the power networks.

The reserve capacity margins operated by the two power companies are also sufficient to ensure that the public would continue to receive electricity supply should there be unexpected load variations or failures of individual power generating units.

In light of the recent power breakdown incidents overseas, EMSD met with the two power companies last month to discuss the reliability of installed power system protection equipment, supply network maintenance procedures, and measures to ensure the security of power supplies in Hong Kong.

(c) Electricity supplies to hospitals, the airport and the railways (including the Mass Transit Railway, East Rail, Light Rail, Tramway and Peak Tramway) are provided from at least two different power sources by the power companies.

In the event of an electricity blackout, public hospitals have emergency power supply to support essential hospital services, such as operating theatres, intensive care units, accident & emergency departments, as well as emergency lighting and power for meeting fire safety requirements.

The Hong Kong International Airport is equipped with independent power generation for providing emergency back-up electricity supply. This back-up electricity system is capable of providing continuous electricity to ensure uninterrupted airport operations, including 100% coverage of critical systems such as air traffic control, flight information display system and aviation security-related systems.

Both the stations and trains of the Mass Transit Railway and East Rail are provided with emergency lighting and ventilation. The emergency supply will enable the safe evacuation of passengers, even if the rail service has to cease operation.

End/Wednesday, October 8, 2003