

MRT's North South, East-West Lines' electrical supply to be delinked: Khaw

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To prevent a repeat of the massive train disruption on Jul 7, electrical breaks will be installed at Jurong East and Raffles Place Interchange stations and activated when necessary, Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan says.

SINGAPORE: In the wake of the Jul 7 train disruption which crippled the North-South and East-West Lines (NSEWL), the electrical supply of the two lines will be delinked when needed, Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan said in a blogpost on Thursday (Oct 15).

About 250,000 commuters were affected when the two MRT lines went down for more than three hours during the evening peak period.

"The Jul 7 train disruption was a disaster because of its scale. Two major lines, the NSEWL, were simultaneously affected. No service recovery plan can adequately address the sudden and large loss of supply in the public transport system," Mr Khaw said.



Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan observing the emergency train disruption exercise on Oct 14. (Photo: Sherlyn Goh)

To prevent a repeat of the disruption, the two lines will be delinked by installing electrical breaks at Jurong East and Raffles Place Interchange stations, Mr Khaw said. The breaks will be fully installed at the end of next month.

"Under normal operations, (the electrical) breaks will not be activated as we want to continue to have the flexibility between the NSL and EWL. But when the need arises, the two lines can be electrically disconnected," he said.

In the meantime, maintenance of all lines must be stepped up to avoid any disruption, he said.

According to the Land Transport Authority, the two lines were originally electrically linked to allow trains to move from the NSL to the EWL and vice versa.

The link is essential as Bishan Depot is the only depot across the two lines with heavy maintenance and overhaul capability, Mr Khaw said. However, this limitation would disappear when the Tuas West Extension is completed next year, with the Tuas West Depot on the EWL which will have similar facilities.

"Other than for maintenance, allowing cross-overs gives operational flexibility. Unfortunately, this also means that a power fault on one line could affect the other," Mr Khaw said.

However, one analyst said the safety of the network must be ensured when disconnecting the lines.

"If the lines are decoupled ... then the power flow cannot flow from one line to the other," said Associate Professor Kenneth Sng of the Singapore Institute of Technology. "We must ensure that the single source that comes from these particular lines after decoupling is sufficient to provide power for the trains without other issues, and make sure the voltages are at correct levels for example, during the powering and the loading of the lines."

Assoc Prof Sng added that the reliability of the source needs to be ensured.