

A fine can never make up for commuters' inconvenience: Josephine Teo

By Dylan Loh | Posted: 08 September 2012 1615 hrs



MRT staff giving affected commuters directions at HarbourFront station on Thursday, March 15.

SINGAPORE: Minister of State for Transport Josephine Teo has said the S\$400,000 fine that train operator SBS Transit got for a service breakdown in March can never make up for inconveniences experienced by commuters.

However, she said the penalty is sized to adequately reflect the scale of the impact of the disruption.

Mrs Teo was speaking to Channel NewsAsia after a community brisk walking event in Bishan on Saturday.

On 15 March 2012, trains between Dhoby Ghaut and HarbourFront stations on the North East Line did not run for about 10 hours. Over 117,000 passengers were affected.

Snapped steel wires caused the disruption, leading to operator SBS Transit being fined S\$400,000.

Mrs Teo said that in meting out penalties, the key is to balance considerations for commuters and operators.

She said: "What the commuters really want to see is not the size of the penalty. What the commuters really want to see is the operators making a concerted effort to ensure two things -- one, that they prevent all preventable breakdowns, and secondly, to make sure that their incident management is tip-top."

So a gap that needs to be addressed is service reliability.

A recent survey by the Institute of Service Excellence at the Singapore Management University showed that Singaporeans were less satisfied with the public transport service than before.

Mrs Teo said: "What this tells us is that the commuters have to feel that the service



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enhancements have already reached them, and only then ... their perceptions will improve.

"So ... we look at the survey results as an important indicator as to whether the efforts to improve service reliability are felt on the ground."

Mrs Teo added that the aim is always to improve public transport service standards.

With efforts now in place to do this, she hopes customer satisfaction results will improve when the next survey is conducted.

- CNA/al