

Backlash feared on LRT legal warning

By Franz Leung

THE Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation fears any legal action against eight District Board and Regional Council fare rise protesters may backfire.

The eight Tuen Mun District Board and Regional Council members disrupted services for about half an hour when they sat on the tracks on Sunday morning to protest against a 14.1 per cent fare rise on May 1.

Trains heading for Yau Oi had to be diverted to an alternate track.

The KCRC is assessing whether legal action would generate an even stronger public outcry from local residents and draw added attention to the protesters instead of deterring others from similar protests.

KCRC corporate public affairs manager, Annita Mau, yesterday admitted the company faced a dilemma because the eight had clearly breached the by-law which bans anyone from trespassing on the tracks.

The by-law says KCRC can prosecute any trespassers who, after persuasion and without proper reason, refuses to leave the tracks.

Trespassers face a maximum fine of \$1,000.

"The management is carefully considering the case and would have a decision very soon in response," Miss Mau said.

One of the factors to be considered was whether legal action could backfire and promote the actions of the sit-in protesters, she said.

It would be difficult for the corporation to prevent such protests happening again, Miss Mau said.

Before the sit-in, a public transport pressure

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— Lau Chin-shek,
public transport
activist

group leader, Lau Chin-shek, vowed he would lie on the tracks of the Mass Transit Railway to protest against the \$1 peak hour surcharge.

Mr Lau yesterday said he fully supported the action by the eight District Board and Regional Council members because the LRT had turned a deaf ear to the public outcry against the fare rise.

"The most important thing is not the legal aspect, but how the Tuen Mun and Yuen Long residents think about it," Mr Lau said.

"The LRT is increasing fares at will, without taking into consideration the hardship for residents affected."

Mr Lau said he would definitely go ahead with his protest if the MTR went ahead with the peak hour surcharge rise from 50 cents to \$1.

He said he was not worried about the risk of prosecution because his protest, by disrupting trains, would make a point with the MTR.