

Court to resume business with reduced capacity

The Judiciary announced today (July 21) that all hearings of courts/tribunals originally scheduled from tomorrow (July 22) onwards will generally proceed as scheduled unless otherwise directed by the court. Relevant parties will be notified and given directions where necessary. Registries and accounts offices at all levels of courts will also re-open.

However, necessary social distancing and crowd control measures will be implemented. These measures seek primarily to reduce crowd gathering and the flow of people in court premises by spacing out court hearings. This will inevitably reduce the number of court hearings and volume of business handled by the registries and accounts offices of courts/tribunals.

For civil proceedings at the High Court, District Court and Family Court, parties may in suitable cases be directed to use alternative modes of disposal, including paper disposal and remote hearings using video-conferencing facilities or phones.

All court users (particularly those in the Family Court) should in any event go onto Judiciary's website to check whether their cases will proceed before they come to court.

Registries at all levels of courts will continue to operate normal operating hours, i.e. from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, except public holidays. In order to reduce crowd gathering and people flow, there will be a general reduction in the capacity of the registry and accounts services. Delays are expected. The registry area may be expanded as appropriate to allow for more social distancing. Queuing, ticketing and other crowd management arrangements may also be implemented.

Capacity limits will continue to be imposed on all relevant areas in court buildings, including courtrooms, court lobbies and registry areas.

The Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants of the High Court Building will be relocated to LG4/F and only limited services will be provided from tomorrow onwards.

The Canteen in the High Court Building and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Courts Building will remain closed until further notice.

For offices on Judiciary premises operated by government departments or outside organisations, court users should enquire with the relevant service providers direct for details relating to the operation of those offices.

Preventive and crowd management measures

The Judiciary will strictly enforce appropriate preventive and crowd management measures. These measures include enhanced cleansing and disinfection of public areas, requiring all people entering the Judiciary premises to undergo body temperature checks and wear surgical masks at all times unless otherwise directed by the judge, expansion of registry/office areas as far as possible, and putting in place necessary queuing, ticketing and other crowd management arrangements to regulate the people flow and avoid crowding.

Chessboard seating arrangements will continue to be applied in the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies, with seating capacity reduced to half. Broadcasting of proceedings may be arranged if necessary and if practicable. In addition, capacity limits and admission control will remain in force for areas such as court lobbies, registries and accounts offices to avoid crowding.

Any court users including parties and legal representatives who have a fever or a high body temperature, and/or are subject to any quarantine requirement or medical surveillance will not be allowed to enter Judiciary premises. They should apply to the

court as soon as practicable for permission of absence or inform the court with reasons for absence as appropriate.

Court users should maintain good personal hygiene at all times and disinfect their hands frequently while they are in Judiciary premises. Alcohol-based handrub is provided at entrances, registries and courtrooms of all Judiciary premises.

Court users should follow the instructions of the Judiciary staff and security personnel.

For enquiries regarding general arrangements on the businesses, the following hotlines are being operated from Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm (except public holidays).

- General Information: 2869 0869
- Court of Final Appeal: 2123 0123
- High Court: 2523 2212
- Probate: 2840 1683
- District Court: 2845 5696
- Family Court: 2840 1218
- Lands Tribunal: 2771 3034
- Labour Tribunal: 2625 0020
- Small Claims Tribunal: 2877 4068
- Magistrates' Courts: 2677 8373
- Coroner's Court: 3916 6204
- Bailiff Section: 2802 7510
- Court Language Section: 2388 1364

The Judiciary will continue to post updated information, including Daily Cause Lists, all arrangements in relation to Judiciary business and advice to court users, on the

Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk). Court users are strongly advised to check the website for updated information.

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