

Court to adopt enhanced social distancing measures

The Judiciary announced today (July 28) that in view of the latest public health situation and related developments, there will be additional adjustments to the social distancing measures to further reduce crowd gathering and people flow in court premises.

Court business is an essential public service. It enables the effective and efficient administration of justice. However, given that the COVID-19 epidemic may last for a prolonged period of time, the Judiciary will continue to monitor the public health risks with a view to putting in place timely and appropriate measures to ensure that the courts can continue to carry on business safely as circumstances permit.

Court hearings will generally proceed as scheduled unless directed otherwise by the court. Parties will be given directions by the court should there be any changes.

New jury trials and new death inquests involving juries scheduled to commence between August 3 to 14 will be relisted. Parties will be contacted by the court on rescheduling arrangements.

In light of the Government's latest prohibition on dining-in arrangements, the court may give suitable directions by holding hearings in the mornings or afternoons only, or allowing a longer lunch duration, where appropriate. For public health reasons, court users will continue to not be allowed to bring food to the court premises for consumption.

The seating capacity of the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies will be further reduced to enhance social distancing. Instantaneous viewing of proceedings within the same court building may be arranged if necessary and practicable. Capacity limits and admission controls for areas such as court lobbies, registries and accounts offices will be tightened to limit people flow.

From July 30 onwards, the registries and accounts offices of various levels of courts will reduce their operating hours, i.e. from 8.45am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays). As a result, the capacity of the registry and accounts services will be further reduced. Further delays are expected.

Also from July 30 onwards, the other offices that provide support services to court users and the public will also reduce its operating hours as shown below :

Offices/Public Counters	Adjusted Operating Hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court Language Section's Certification Counter in Wanchai Law Courts Building (WLCB) 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bailiff Offices' Public Counters at various court premises 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Mediation Office in WLCB 	9am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Court Library 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants at High Court Building (HCB) 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Management Mediation Co-ordinator's Office in Lands Tribunal 	9am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Claims Tribunal Information Centre 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Office at HCB 	8.45am to 12.30pm 2pm to 5pm

Remarks: The above offices are open from Mondays to Fridays (closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays).

Starting from the same date, the counter service of the Complaints Office will also be suspended until further notice.

For enquiries regarding general arrangements on the businesses, the following hotlines will be operated with reduced operating hours from Monday to Friday 8.45am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm (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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