

# Announcement by Judiciary

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (March 6) that plans are being made for orderly resumption of court proceedings upon the cessation of the General Adjourned Period (GAP) on March 22, if the prevailing public health situation permits, and that court registries will start to re-open stage by stage from next week, the first stage including the Court of Final Appeal Registry, the High Court Registry, the Probate Registry and the Competition Tribunal Registry on March 9.

The Judiciary has been making active plans to resume court proceedings and re-open its registries and offices since early March. In working out the detailed arrangements of resumption, the Judiciary has given due consideration to the following:

- (a) an orderly resumption of both registry business and court proceedings is of paramount importance;
- (b) a staggered and progressive approach is to be adopted to ensure orderly resumption; and
- (c) parties concerned, whether legally represented or litigants in person, will be given clear notification and sufficient lead time for preparation of their cases, regardless of whether the hearings are to be re-fixed or proceed as scheduled.

## Gradual resumption of court proceedings

All hearings of the courts/tribunals originally scheduled between March 9 and 22 have been generally adjourned. The courts will however continue to handle urgent and essential hearings and/or matters during this period. The updated list of urgent and essential hearings and matters is uploaded onto the Judiciary website for reference of court users and the public.

The Magistrates' Courts will continue to adopt basically the Holiday or Saturday sitting arrangement in the light of caseload and other factors. They will handle urgent and essential cases, including fresh remand cases and eight-day cases. The detailed arrangements are as follows:

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| • March 9 (Monday):     | Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts will open |
| • March 10 (Tuesday):   | No Magistrates' Courts will open       |
| • March 11 (Wednesday): | Shatin Magistrates' Courts will open   |

- March 12 (Thursday): No Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 13 (Friday): West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 14 (Saturday): The usual Saturday sitting will be adopted, i.e. Eastern Magistrates' Courts, Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and Shatin Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 15 (Sunday): No Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 16 (Monday): Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 17 (Tuesday): No Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 18 (Wednesday): Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 19 (Thursday): No Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 20 (Friday): Fanling Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 21 (Saturday): The usual Saturday sitting will be adopted, i.e. Eastern Magistrates' Courts, Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and Shatin Magistrates' Courts will open
- March 22 (Sunday): No Magistrates' Courts will open

#### Re-opening of registries and offices

Court registries will be re-opened in stages between March 9 and 19. Special arrangements will be made during these two weeks for the registries to handle filing and other business in an orderly and effective manner. The details are set out as follows:

- March 9 (Monday): Re-opening of the Court of Final Appeal Registry, High Court Registry, Clerk of Court's Office, Probate Registry and Competition Tribunal Registry
- March 12 (Thursday): Re-opening of Family Court Registry

- March 13 (Friday): Re-opening of District Court Registry
- March 17 (Tuesday): Re-opening of registries and offices of Lands Tribunal, Magistrates' Courts, Coroner's Court, Obscene Articles Tribunal
- March 19 (Thursday): Re-opening of registries and offices of Labour Tribunal and Small Claims Tribunal (except the Information Centre)

It is important to note that while the above registries and offices will be generally re-opened for business with effect from the dates indicated above, some business will continue to be suspended during the period before March 23. A list of suspended business for the various registries is set out in the Annex. It is also uploaded onto the Judiciary website.

#### Re-opening of other offices of the Judiciary

In view of the need to minimise people flow for public health considerations, a staggered approach will also be adopted for the re-opening of the Judiciary's other offices providing services to court users and the public. The details are as follows:

- March 9 (Monday): Re-opening of the Certification counters of the Court Language Section in Wanchai Law Courts Building (WLCB), Public counters of Bailiff Offices at various court premises and Integrated Mediation Office in WLCB
- March 17 (Tuesday): Re-opening of the Building Management Mediation Co-ordinator's Office at the Lands Tribunal
- March 23 (Monday): Re-opening of the High Court Library, Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants at the High Court Building (HCB), Small Claims Tribunal Information Centre and Counter Services of Complaints Office at HCB

The Canteen in the HCB and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Court Building will remain closed until further notice having regard to public health considerations.

As regards offices providing services located in the judiciary premises but are operated by other government departments or outside organisations, court users may wish to enquire with the relevant operators direct for details relating to the re-opening of these offices.

## Preventive and crowd management measures

Having struck a careful balance between public health considerations and the orderly reopening of registries with effect from March 9, the Judiciary will continue to put in place appropriate preventive and crowd management measures for the health protection of all people who enter and remain in the court premises. Court users are required to have their body temperature taken and wear a surgical mask before they are allowed to enter and remain in the court premises. The Judiciary will constantly review the situation and introduce any new measures as appropriate.

It is expected that there will be more court users visiting the courts, in particular the HCB starting from March 9. The Judiciary considers it important to put in place special arrangements to regulate the entry of court users into and inside the court premises. These measures will include queuing, the introduction of a ticketing and triage system to ensure efficient processing of applications, the provision of expanded registry areas (and additional manpower where appropriate) and designated entry and exit points to facilitate orderly people flow, etc. Detailed arrangements for different court registries in different court premises will be provided and uploaded onto the Judiciary website before their re-opening. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information from the Judiciary website, and follow the advice of the Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend for court business upon the re-opening of the court registries.

## Enquiries and information update

From March 9, for general enquiries, the following hotlines will be operated from Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 1pm and 2pm to 5.30pm:

- 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
- Bailiff Section: 2802 7510
- Court Language Section: 2388 1364

The Judiciary will continue to post updated information, including Daily Cause Lists, messages related to the Judiciary's arrangements arising from public health considerations, and advice to court users visiting the courts during the GAP, on the Judiciary website ([www.judiciary.hk](http://www.judiciary.hk)). Court users are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.