

Announcement by Judiciary

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (March 20) announced that the General Adjourned Period (GAP), which began on January 29, will end on March 22. Court business, unless otherwise indicated, will generally resume on March 23.

The Judiciary previously announced that GAP would end on March 22 if public health situation permits. Having considered the latest public health situation and all the other relevant factors, the Judiciary considers that while GAP may end on March 22 as scheduled, enhanced health preventive measures would need to be introduced for court proceedings and court users coming to court buildings. Moreover, some of the measures introduced during GAP to reduce people flow and crowds at court buildings will need to continue until further notice.

Resumption of court proceedings

Court proceedings will generally resume on March 23 unless they are adjourned pursuant to specific directions by the court. To ensure an orderly resumption of court proceedings, an appropriate buffer period would be provided before hearings, particularly trials, are to be resumed. Parties concerned, be they legally represented or litigants in person, will be given clear notifications and sufficient lead time for preparation of their cases, regardless of whether the hearings are to be re-fixed or proceed as scheduled.

Those who have been summoned for jury empanelment in the High Court and the Coroner's Court during GAP are not required to attend court until further notice in writing.

Court registries/offices have been re-opened in a staggered and progressive manner since March 9. Business of the registries previously suspended will resume normal from March 23. Furthermore, the Judiciary's other offices providing services to court users and the public will also re-open. However, the Canteen in the High Court Building and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Court Building will also remain closed until further notice having regard to public health considerations.

Preventive and crowd management measures

Having struck a careful balance between public health considerations and the orderly resumption of court proceedings and registry services, 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.

To support the above arrangements, necessary queuing, ticketing and triage system, as well as security controls to limit the number of court users entering and remaining in the Judiciary premises, will be put in place as appropriate. To maintain social distancing, the seating capacity of courtrooms and lobbies are reduced by about 50 per cent. In addition, capacity limits are set for confined areas such as registries and offices to avoid crowding of users.

Parties, legal representatives and other court users are reminded that they should not come to the Judiciary premises to attend court proceedings or conduct businesses at court registry/office if they are subject to quarantine requirement or medical surveillance of the Government. Court users who are subject to any quarantine requirement or medical surveillance of the Government should as soon as practicable apply to the court for permission of absence or inform the court with reasons for absence as appropriate.

Information on the detailed arrangements will be provided and uploaded onto the Judiciary website. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information on the Judiciary website, and follow the advice of the Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend court premises for court business.

The Judiciary will remain vigilant and continue to review if any further refinements to the above arrangements would be needed in the light of any changes in the public health situation. The Judiciary will also continue to engage the stakeholders and keep the court users posted as appropriate.

Enquiries and information updates

For general enquiries, the following hotlines will be operated from Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 1pm and from 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, on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk). Court users are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.