

Announcement by the Judiciary

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (July 14) that in view of the latest public health situation, while court hearings and registry businesses will generally proceed, enhanced social distancing measures are being implemented to ensure that the courts can carry on business as safely as circumstances permit.

The enhanced social distancing measures will result in a reduction in the overall capacity of the courts to handle business. Court hearings may have to be spaced out and/or adjourned. For parties to the court proceedings, they should work on the basis that court hearings will proceed as scheduled unless directed otherwise by the court. If any proceedings need to be adjourned and re-fixed, parties will be given directions by the court. Capacity limits will continue to be imposed in court lobbies and courtrooms.

For the registries of various levels of courts, while they 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 people flow and possible over-crowding, special administrative measures will be introduced, including expansion of the current registry area to other areas of the same court building. Court users will be given more specific instructions on arrival at court buildings. Capacity limits will continue to be imposed in registry areas.

For other court offices such as accounts offices, their opening hours will be the same, though the Judiciary will continue to impose capacity limits for such areas as appropriate.

The court will continue to encourage court users to use electronic means to handle court business, including holding remote hearings using video-conferencing facilities and lodgment of documents to the court by electronic means as appropriate.

The Judiciary will closely monitor changes in the general public health situation and may adjust the social distancing measures as necessary.

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 these offices.

Preventive and crowd management measures

The Judiciary will strictly enforce appropriate preventive and crowd management measures having regard to the prevailing public health situation.

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, and putting in place necessary queuing 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 will be arranged if necessary and if practicable. In addition, capacity limits 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 must not come to the 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 for court business, the following hotlines will continue to operate from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, 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
- 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 advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.