

Court to enhance social distancing

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (January 6) that in light of the latest public health situation and related developments, with effect from Monday (January 10), the capacity limits of court premises will be adjusted to enhance social distancing, with a view to ensuring that the courts can continue to carry on normal business as safely as circumstances permit.

Court business is an essential public service. It enables the effective and efficient administration of justice. Striking a balance between public health and maintenance of normal court services, the Judiciary will reduce the seating capacity of the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies, as well as the capacity limits of registries and account offices where appropriate, to enhance social distancing and limit people flow. Broadcasting of proceedings will continue to be arranged where necessary and practicable. There will also be queuing or other crowd management arrangements where necessary.

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

For civil proceedings, the court may make greater use of remote hearings and/or paper disposal for proceedings where appropriate. The court will give directions for individual cases in this regard.

The operating hours of court registries remain unchanged.

For public health reasons, the Judiciary will continue to maintain all existing preventive and crowd management measures, including enhanced cleansing and disinfection of public and staff areas, mandatory body temperature checks and checks on use of the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app upon entry into Judiciary premises, mandatory wearing of surgical masks at all times unless otherwise directed by Judges or Judicial Officers, providing hand sanitisers at different locations, and installing protective shields and partitions in courtrooms as appropriate.

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 are not 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.

The Judiciary will continue to closely monitor the public health situation with a view to putting in place timely and appropriate measures. Court users should check the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk) for updated information, and follow the instructions of the Judiciary staff and security

personnel.