

Court to further enhance social distancing

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (February 4) that in light of the latest public health situation and related developments, with effect from Monday (February 7), the seating capacity of courtrooms will be further reduced and new jury proceedings will generally be adjourned except otherwise directed by the court. These measures will be put in place in addition to the recently announced adjustments to capacity limits of court premises and reductions in the operating hours of court registries and other offices.

Court business is an essential public service which enables the effective and efficient administration of justice. The above measures seek to further enhance social distancing and limit people flow, so as to ensure that the courts can continue to carry on business as safely as circumstances permit.

Court proceedings

New jury proceedings and death inquests involving juries scheduled from February 7 till the end of February will generally be adjourned except otherwise directed by the court. If any new jury trial is to proceed, the relevant parties will be informed by the court separately.

Where jury proceedings have to take place, additional measures are or will be taken to ensure enhanced social distancing of jurors.

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

The seating capacity of the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies will be further reduced to enhance social distancing. Broadcast of proceedings within the same court building may be arranged if necessary and practicable.

Enhanced social distancing measures

Further to the recent announcements by the Judiciary, the following social distancing measures will continue:

1) the seating capacity of the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies as well as the capacity limits of registries and account offices will be further reduced where appropriate. More stringent queueing and crowd control

measures will be adopted if necessary; and

2) the operating hours of the registries, accounts offices and other supporting offices of all levels of court would be reduced to 8.45am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays).

Public health measures

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, medical surveillance or compulsory testing while waiting for test results; or who have preliminarily tested positive or tested positive for COVID-19 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.

Enquiries

For enquiries regarding the above arrangements about registries, accounts offices and supporting offices, court users may call the following hotlines during office hours:

General Information: 2869 0869
Court of Final Appeal: 2123 0123
High Court: 2523 2212
Probate: 2840 1683
Competition Tribunal: 2825 0426
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
Obscene Articles Tribunal: 3916 6303

Coroner's Court: 3916 6204
Bailiff Section: 2802 7510
Court Language Section: 2388 1364