

Court to implement Vaccine Pass and further reduce court business

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (February 25) that in light of the latest public health situation and related developments, it will step up precautionary measures by implementing the Vaccine Pass arrangement on all indoor areas of its fourteen premises with effect from March 2 (Wednesday).

While the courts will continue to carry on business as safely as circumstances permit, the court business that can be handled will be further reduced as from the same day. Details of the arrangements are set out below.

Vaccine pass

Under the Vaccine Pass arrangement, all persons must have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine before they are allowed to enter Judiciary premises from March 2. Exemption will be granted to the following types of persons:

- (a) children aged under 12;
- (b) holders of the COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Certificate (Exemption Certificate); or
- (c) persons who must enter the relevant Judiciary premises to attend to court business on the day as parties to or witnesses in a legal proceeding, legal representatives with prior permission by the presiding judge or judicial officer concerned to attend a hearing on behalf of their clients, or jurors in a proceeding which has commenced before March 2, 2022.

The Judiciary will conduct active checking at the point of entry. With the exception of the above exempted persons, all persons seeking to enter Judiciary premises are required to present for checking by the Judiciary personnel their vaccination record or Exemption Certificate and the relevant QR code, including that saved in "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application or shown on mobile applications such as "iAM Smart" or "eHealth", or the QR code shown on their paper vaccination record.

Exempted persons in types (a) and (c), and persons whose vaccination records or Exemption Certificates do not contain a QR code are required to complete a prescribed record form to register their personal particulars, etc. and present relevant identification documents for verification by the Judiciary personnel.

This is an extension of the Vaccine Pass arrangement on Judiciary premises for all Judges and Judicial Officers and Judiciary staff which took effect on February 16.

Court proceedings

New jury proceedings and death inquests involving juries scheduled till the end of April 2022 will generally be adjourned except otherwise directed by the court.

All other court hearings will generally continue to proceed as scheduled unless directed otherwise by the court. Court proceedings and hearings will be scheduled with wider intervals where necessary and appropriate. Parties will be given specific directions by the court should there be any changes.

The Judiciary has reduced the seating capacity of the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies to enhance social distancing and limit people flow. Further reductions may be made as and when necessary. Broadcasting of proceedings will continue to be arranged where necessary and practicable.

For proceedings including civil and other suitable cases, the court will 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.

Registries and accounts offices

From March 2 onwards, the registries and accounts offices of all levels of courts will further reduce their operating hours to 9am to noon and 2.30pm to 4.30pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays). Delays are to be expected.

Taking into account the impact of the changing public health situation on the manpower support in the relevant offices, the Judiciary may need to further reduce the capacity of the registries and accounts services at short notice. Suitable adjustments may also need to be made to the practice and procedure in conducting registry business.

While all usual registry business will generally be made available during the reduced operating hours, those services as set out in Annex A will only be provided in the respective registry of the Court of Final Appeal, the High Court, the District Court, the Family Court and the Lands Tribunal in the afternoon from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

To enable registry business to be conducted in a more spacious and safe condition, the registry areas will be suitably expanded to other floors on the same building as necessary. Court users will be given specific instructions to go to the appropriate area. For this purpose, the Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants situated at LG105 of the High Court Building will be temporarily relocated to Court No. 45 on LG4/F of the High Court Building and its service will be confined to distribution of court forms only.

Drop boxes will be set up inside the High Court Registry and the District Court Registry to receive filing of documents that do not require immediate processing. Court users making use of the drop boxes for filing of documents are required to complete in duplicate a Document Deposit Form at Annex B (which can be downloaded from the Judiciary website) to be handed in together with the documents to be filed. They are urged to fill in the Document Deposit Form before coming to the registries so as to expedite the handling process.

The Judiciary appeals to all court users to avoid coming to the registries/accounts offices at peak hours, such as late mornings and late afternoons.

Supporting offices

Various offices that provide support services to court users and the public will also further reduce their operating hours as set out at Annex C.

Enquiries

For enquiries regarding the above arrangements, 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