

Full resumption of court business and greater use of "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (February 18) announced that having regard to the latest public health situation, the Judiciary will fully resume court business in an incremental manner from February 22 (Monday).

To ensure that the courts can continue to carry on business as safely as circumstances permit, the Judiciary will continue to put in place appropriate social distancing and crowd management measures.

To enhance protection of court users against COVID-19 infection following the resumption of normal court business, the Judiciary will be making a greater use of the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app as part of the entry requirement of court premises in two stages from February 22 and March 1 (Monday) respectively.

Court proceedings

Court proceedings will fully resume from March 1 as far as possible. Subject to the court's directions, court hearings may run for the whole day instead of only half days. However, for social distancing and crowd management purposes, proceedings involving a large number of court users will continue to be fixed to be heard at appropriate times and intervals. If a hearing cannot be held as scheduled, the relevant parties have been or will be notified separately.

Registries and accounts offices

From February 22, the services of registries and accounts offices at various levels of court will resume as normal, including the opening hours (i.e. from 8.45am to 1pm and from 2pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, except public holidays).

Court users may continue to go directly to the relevant registries and accounts offices for services. Crowd management measures will be put in place where necessary throughout the opening hours for social distancing purposes.

The Judiciary appeals to all court users to avoid going to the registries/accounts offices at peak hours, e.g. late mornings and late afternoons.

Supportive offices of the Judiciary

From February 22 onwards, the other offices that provide support services to court users and the public will also resume their normal services. Their normal operating hours are shown in the Annex.

"LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app

Following resumption of normal services at court premises, all persons entering the Judiciary premises will be requested to use the app in two stages:

(a) In Stage 1, starting from February 22, all persons who enter the Judiciary premises will be encouraged to use the app. Persons who do not use the app will still be allowed to enter the premises but will be reminded to record their whereabouts through their own means;

(b) In Stage 2, starting from March 1, all persons who enter the Judiciary premises will be asked to use the app. Those who fail to do so will be asked to have their names, contact numbers and the dates and times of their visits recorded. The data collected will be used to facilitate the work of the Government in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and related purposes, and may be provided to the relevant government departments for epidemiological investigations and contact tracing. All persons who do not use the app and refuse to have their contact information recorded will be denied entry to the Judiciary premises.

While the Judiciary will make every effort to minimise inconvenience to court users, it is inevitable that the measure will mean more time required for court users to gain access to the Judiciary premises. As such, court users are advised to download and learn to use the app before going to the Judiciary premises and arrive in court earlier, particularly during the peak hours in the early morning or after the lunch break.

Preventive and crowd management measures

The Judiciary will continue to maintain other preventive measures including mandatory body temperature checks, requiring all people to wear surgical masks at all times unless otherwise directed by judges or judicial officers and reducing seating capacity of courtrooms, court lobbies, registries and accounts offices.

Any court users including parties and legal representatives who have a fever or a high body temperature; who are subject to any quarantine requirement, medical surveillance or compulsory testing while waiting for test results; or who have preliminary 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.

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

For enquiries regarding the technical or operational details of the app, court users may call the government hotline at 1823.

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 before they go to court.