

Announcement by Judiciary

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (March 28) announced that in view of the latest public health considerations, the General Adjourned Period (will continue from March 30 (Monday) to April 13 (Monday), and be subject to review having regard to the prevailing public health situation. It is important to underline the fact that the public's health and safety, including that of court users and court staff, remain paramount considerations in the handling of court operations by the Judiciary.

While during GAP, courts will continue to handle certain urgent and essential business, the Judiciary will put in place public health measures to ensure appropriate social distancing for court users attending to court business.

Social Distancing

The Judiciary has to strike a careful balance between the due administration of justice (particularly given the uncertainty of the duration of GAP) and the latest public health situation. Individual court cases or businesses on their own may not add very much to public health risks. However, if many cases or business are conducted at the same time at same court premises, their combined impact on public health risks as a whole may increase. As such, the Judiciary has been adopting a "space-out" approach to ensure that people flow in court premises is smooth and that court premises, including office areas, are not overcrowded. This is reflected in the limited scope of business, including registry business (as revised from time to time), the manner in which cases are listed for hearing, the number of courts that are opened for hearing, the number of and manner in which magistrates' courts (MCs) are opened for business, and the preventive and crowd control measures implemented.

In particular, the Judiciary will continue to use various means to space out court proceedings, with suitable adjustments as appropriate to suit the latest situation. Where appropriate, the number of cases to be handled in the same courtroom at any one session will be reduced. This will in turn reduce the number of people who will need to be in a courtroom at any point in time. Additional holding space or waiting area(s) in other courtroom(s) or at court lobbies will be provided whenever possible so that fewer people will need to gather in a courtroom. Broadcasting of proceedings will be done on a needs basis. For certain levels of court such as the MCs, more court buildings will operate on any given day so that the cases may be spread out for handling in more courtrooms.

There will also be capacity limits for each courtroom, court lobby, and registry areas to contain the people flow within reasonable limits and having

regard to the need for social distancing. To help enforce such controls, queuing system will be implemented as appropriate. The Judiciary also urges court users, including legal practitioners, to minimise the number of people coming to the court.

Court Proceedings

All court/tribunal hearings will generally be adjourned during this period unless they are urgent and essential business as directed by the presiding Judge or Judicial Officer. Parties will be notified only if their hearings will be held as scheduled during this period.

Other urgent and essential hearings will continue to be handled in accordance with the established mechanisms, including the Duty Judge system. The updated list of urgent and essential hearings and matters is uploaded onto the Judiciary website. Court users and the public are strongly urged to check the website regularly as the list may be subject to change at short notice due to rapidly changing public health situation.

Starting from March 30, three MCs will operate each day from Monday to Friday (except public holidays) and the holiday sittings will be adopted for public holidays. The detailed arrangements are as follows:

March 30 (Monday)	Kwun Tong MCs, West Kowloon MCs and Fanling MCs will open
March 31 (Tuesday)	Eastern MCs, Kowloon City MCs and Tuen Mun MCs will open
April 1 (Wednesday)	Eastern MCs, West Kowloon MCs and Shatin MCs will open
April 2 (Thursday)	Kwun Tong MCs, Kowloon City MCs and Fanling MCs will open
April 3 (Friday)	Eastern MCs, West Kowloon MCs and Tuen Mun MCs will open
April 4 (Saturday)	Holiday sitting will be adopted and Shatin MCs will open
April 5 (Sunday)	No MCs will open
April 6 (Monday)	Eastern MCs, Kowloon City MCs and Shatin MCs will open
April 7 (Tuesday)	Kwun Tong MCs, West Kowloon MCs and Fanling MCs will open
April 8 (Wednesday)	Eastern MCs, Kowloon City MCs and Tuen Mun MCs will open
April 9 (Thursday)	Eastern MCs, West Kowloon MCs and Shatin MCs will open
April 10 (Friday)	No Magistrates' Courts will open
April 11 (Saturday)	Holiday sitting will be adopted and Eastern MCs will open

April 12 (Sunday)	No Magistrates' Courts will open
April 13 (Monday)	Holiday sitting will be adopted and Eastern MCs will open

Registries and Offices

Court/tribunal registries and offices will generally be closed during this period, but enhanced measures will be introduced so that more business will be handled. The list of business that will be handled by the registries during this period is uploaded onto the Judiciary website. Again, court users and the public are strongly urged to check the website regularly as the list may be subject to change at short notice due to rapidly changing public health situation.

Preventive and crowd management measures

The Judiciary will continue to put in place appropriate preventive and crowd management measures for the health protection of all people who are required to enter and remain in the court premises for urgent and essential business. Court users are required to have their body temperature taken and wear a surgical mask before they are allowed to enter and remain in the court premises.

To support the above arrangements, necessary queuing and other crowd management measures, as well as security controls to limit the number of court users entering and remaining in the Judiciary premises, will be put in place as appropriate. To maintain social distancing, the seating capacity of courtrooms and lobbies are reduced by about 50 per cent. In addition, capacity limits are set for confined areas such as registries and offices to avoid crowding of users.

Parties, legal representatives and other court users are reminded that they should not come to the Judiciary premises to attend court proceedings or conduct businesses at court registry/office if they are subject to quarantine requirement or medical surveillance of the Government. Court users who are subject to any quarantine requirement or medical surveillance of the Government should as soon as practicable apply to the court for permission of absence or inform the court with reasons for absence as appropriate.

Information on the detailed arrangements will be provided and uploaded onto the Judiciary website. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information on the Judiciary website, and follow the advice of the Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend court premises for court business.

For enquiries regarding general arrangements on the court businesses during the period, the following hotlines are being operated from Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm:

- 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

The Judiciary will continue to post updated information, including Daily Cause Lists, messages related to the Judiciary's arrangements arising from public health considerations, and advice to court users visiting the courts, on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk). Court users are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.

Recycling Fund continues to disburse anti-epidemic and rental support subsidies to recyclers

To help the recycling industry cope with the current economic situation and recent operational difficulties arising from the COVID-19 epidemic, the Advisory Committee on Recycling Fund (RFAC) announced in mid-March to reserve \$100 million to launch the One-off Recycling Industry Anti-epidemic Scheme (ORIAS). The RFAC has also allocated additional funds to extend the earlier-launched One-off Rental Support Scheme (ORSS) for another six months, providing a total funding of \$200 million to fight the virus and help the recycling industry ride out the difficult times. A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said today (March 28) that the Recycling Fund has been disbursing the subsidies to the first batch of successful ORIAS applicants progressively.

The ORIAS aims to provide timely financial support to help with recyclers' operational costs for six months. The funding limit for each recycler is \$20,000 per month from January 1 to June 30, 2020, for a total maximum subsidy of \$120,000. The EPD spokesman said, "The application period for the ORIAS commenced on March 16. As of today, over 200 applications have been received, involving subsidies of \$24 million. The first batch of 18 applications has been approved and \$1.08 million in subsidies has been disbursed. The Recycling Fund will process the applications promptly to

provide assistance to eligible recyclers."

The ORSS, benefiting street-corner recycling shops and recycling sites, originally ran from October 2019 to March this year. It has been extended for six months until September this year, totalling 12 months. The monthly rental subsidy for each recycler is capped at \$25,000, setting the maximum total rental subsidy at \$300,000. The scheme has approved 84 applications since December last year, involving subsidies of \$12 million. The Recycling Fund has disbursed the first instalment of over \$4.5 million. Other applications will also be processed as soon as possible so as to provide assistance to eligible recyclers promptly.

The above two relief measures for recyclers have received applications involving subsidies of \$36 million. The first batch of subsidies amounting to \$5.6 million has been disbursed.

The application deadline for the ORIAS is June 30, while that of the ORSS has been extended for six months to September 30. For more information about the two schemes, please visit the Recycling Fund website (www.recyclingfund.hk).

Service arrangement for Appeal Panel (Housing)

In response to the latest situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, for the sake of enhancing social distancing, the Secretariat of the Appeal Panel (Housing) announced today (March 28) that appeal hearings on termination of tenancy agreement scheduled from March 30 to April 3 have been rescheduled. The secretary has informed the parties concerned separately.

Housing Authority adjusts its public services

The following press release is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

In response to the latest situation of the pandemic, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) announced today (March 28) that, for the sake of reducing social distancing, public services will be adjusted and special work

arrangements will be implemented from March 30 (Monday) to provide essential and limited basic public services until further notice.

â€§ All Estate Management Offices (EMOs) of public housing estates will be open from 10am to 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to provide limited general management services for public housing estates and handle cases with prior appointments. For enquiries outside the opening hours, residents may call the contact telephone numbers provided by the respective EMOs, and staff will render assistance as much as practicable. EMOs' shroff offices may adjust their opening hours according to the conditions of respective public housing estates. Residents are advised to pay heed to the notices placed at the EMOs. They can also pay rent at more than 1 000 locations, such as convenience stores and supermarkets. They may also make payments via the Payment by Phone Service (PPS). For details, please browse the following website:

www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/public-housing/rent-related-matters/rent-payment-methods/index.html;

â€§The following subsidised housing offices will provide limited services from 10am to 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays:

- The White Form Secondary Market Scheme Unit in the Lok Fu Customer Service Centre;
- The Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Secondary Market Scheme Unit in Lung Cheung Office Block, Wong Tai Sin; and
- The Home Assistance Loan Unit in Lung Cheung Office Block, Wong Tai Sin;

â€§ The HOS Sales Unit in Lok Fu Customer Service Centre and the Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme Sales Unit in Kwun Tong will only be open to applicants with prior appointments. All HOS flats selection sessions will be suspended until further notice. For enquiries, please contact the HA Sales Hotline on 2712 8000;

â€§ In order to deploy our staff resources to provide effective service at the Public Rental Housing (PRH) office in Lok Fu Customer Service Centre, the Sham Shui Po Housing Information Centre will be temporarily closed from March 30 (Monday) until further notice. The PRH application office in Lok Fu Customer Service Centre will be open from 8am to 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to provide limited services in relation to matters involving PRH application;

â€§The Clearance Housing Office and the Redevelopment Sub-section offices (Pak Tin and Mei Tung) will be open from 10am to 4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to provide limited services in relation to matters involving clearance housing or redevelopment¹;

â€§The Shroff Office on the Ground Floor of the HA Headquarters will be open from 10am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 4pm on Mondays to Fridays to provide limited services. All payment collection services (including premium payments by Subsidised Sale Flats Scheme owners to enable them to complete transactions of their flats) with the exception of rental payment collection

will be in operation.

In addition, due to the current work arrangements, the HA may not be able to reply to public enquiries, requests or complaints in a timely manner.

For enquiries, please call the HA hotline on 2712 2712.

[“Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector” under “Anti-epidemic Fund” continues to disburse subsidies \(with photo\)](#)

To support the anti-epidemic work of the property management sector, the Government has set up the "Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector" (ASPM) under the "Anti-epidemic Fund". As of today (March 28), the Property Management Services Authority (PMSA), which has been commissioned to implement the ASPM, has received about 1 700 applications, out of which 205 applications have been approved, involving subsidies of around \$5.6 million and benefiting over 1 500 building blocks. The relevant property management companies (PMCs) and owners' organisations (OOs) will receive notifications for disbursement of subsidies shortly. The list of properties for which applications have been approved has been announced on the website of the PMSA (www.pmsahk.org.hk/en/aspm/subsidy_list.html).

In addition, the Home Affairs Department and the PMSA conducted several briefing sessions earlier to introduce the ASPM to the property management sector and OOs. A video of the briefing sessions has been uploaded to the website of the PMSA (www.pmsahk.org.hk/en/aspm/brief.html) for viewing and the reference of the PMCs and OOs that were unable to attend.

The ASPM aims to provide an "Anti-epidemic Cleansing Subsidy" to the PMCs or OOs in private residential and composite (i.e. commercial cum residential) buildings, and subsidise them to provide the "Anti-epidemic Hardship Allowance" to front-line property management workers (i.e. cleansing and security workers). The application deadline for the ASPM is April 15. Eligible PMCs and OOs which have not applied are reminded to submit their applications to the PMSA as soon as practicable. For details on the ASPM, please contact the PMSA at 3696 1156 or 3696 1166, or visit the website of the PMSA (www.pmsahk.org.hk/en/index.html).

