

Court to further enhance social distancing

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (January 26) that in light of the latest public health situation and related developments, with effect from tomorrow (January 27), the operating hours of the registries, accounts offices and other supporting offices of all levels of court will be reduced, following the reduction in capacity limits of court premises announced on January 6.

Court business is an essential public service which enables the effective and efficient administration of justice. The above measure, together with the reduced capacity limits of court premises, seeks to reduce both total number of court users and support staff in court premises as well as their duration of stay, so as to ensure that the courts can continue to carry on business as safely as circumstances permit.

Registries, Accounts Offices and Supporting Offices

From January 27 onwards, the registries and accounts offices of all levels of courts will reduce their operating hours to 8.45am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays). As a result, the capacity of the registry and accounts services will be reduced. Delays may be expected.

Similarly, from January 27 onwards, various offices that provide support services to court users and the public will also reduce their operating hours as set out at Annex.

To tie in with the reduced operating hours, the Judiciary will put in place more stringent crowd control and social distancing measures to keep the total number of court users present in such offices within the reduced capacity limits throughout the operating hours. Where necessary, there will also be special queuing arrangements at designated areas.

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

Court Proceedings

All 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.

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.

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 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.

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