

**Notification for Stakeholders about
Resumption of Court Business
from 23 March 2020
(position as at 20 March 2020)**

(I) Resumption of Court Business

The Judiciary previously announced that the General Adjourned Period (“GAP”) would end on March 22 if public health situation permits. Having considered the latest public health situation and all the other relevant factors, the Judiciary considers that while GAP may end on March 22 as scheduled, enhanced health preventive measures would need to be introduced for court proceedings and court users coming to court buildings. Moreover, some of the measures introduced during GAP to reduce people flow and crowds at court buildings will need to continue until further notice.

2. Parties, legal representatives and other court users are reminded that they should not come to Judiciary premises to attend court proceedings or conduct business at court registry/accounts office if they are subject to quarantine requirement or medical surveillance of the Government. Please also see paragraph 20 below.

3. Stakeholders are also reminded that they should read this notification carefully and act accordingly.

(II) Court Proceedings

(A) General Resumption of Court Proceedings

4. Despite the end of GAP, hearings will be reduced in the initial period of resumption having regard to public health concerns as well as to facilitate orderly resumption. Parties have been or will be notified whether their hearings originally listed in this period will proceed as scheduled, to be adjourned by

consent for paper disposal or to be re-fixed. Parties will be given lead time to prepare if the hearings are to proceed as scheduled.

5. Details of some of the general arrangements for the different levels of courts to facilitate gradual and orderly resumption of court proceedings were announced on March 6. The relevant extracts are set out at **Annex A**.

6. For the Magistrates' Courts ("MCs"), normal operation will resume on weekdays. For Saturdays and holidays, the usual arrangements for Saturday or Holiday sitting will apply.

7. Besides, there will be some general enhanced crowd control measures for court buildings. Details are set out in paragraphs 19 to 23 below.

(B) Special Email Accounts

8. During GAP, special one-way "no-reply" email accounts have been set up to enable the electronic submission of documents to :

- (a) the Duty Judges; and
- (b) the court for specified purposes, including lodging documents, submissions and authorities etc. with the court to facilitate paper disposal.

In the light of the prevailing public health situation, these email accounts will continue to be available for use until further notice.

(III) Registry Operations

9. Court registries have re-opened in a staggered and progressive manner from March 9 to 19. During the initial

period following the re-opening of the court registries, the Judiciary has put in place some special arrangements to deal with the generally expected high volume of registry business. With the workload of most of the registries having gradually returned to a more normal level, beginning the week of March 23, the special arrangements will be removed for most of the registries while some refinements will be made to the other registries.

10. Importantly, the suspended business of all the registries will be resumed.

11. Details of the arrangements for the registries are set out in paragraphs 12 to 18 below. There may be further refinement on account of the actual operational experience. Moreover, while these arrangements will generally last until March 31, some of them may be further extended on a need basis, in which case the Judiciary will make further announcement.

(A) Court of Final Appeal (“CFA”) Registry

12. Except the general crowd control arrangements set out in paragraphs 19 to 23 below, all special arrangements for the CFA registry will cease.

(B) High Court (“HC”) Registries

13. The following refined special arrangements will be in place for the HC registries :

- (a) court users intending to do filing and other registry business (including making the related payment at the accounts office) must access from LG4 of the High Court Building (“HCB”);

- (b) there will continue to be a ticketing and, if necessary, a triage system. Each ticket normally admits one person; and
- (c) for filing of originating process, parties and legal representatives are advised to first make payment of the prescribed fee at the accounts office before going to the registry.

(C) District Court (“DC”) and Family Court (“FC”) Registries

14. The following refined special arrangements will be in place for the FC and DC registries :

- (a) court users intending to do filing and other registry business (including making the related payment at the accounts office) must access from G/F of the Wanchai Law Courts Building (“WLCB”), unless specifically directed to do otherwise;
- (b) there will continue to be a ticketing and, if necessary, a triage system. Each ticket normally admits one person. There will be no restriction on the number of transaction that may be handled with one ticket; and
- (c) for filing of originating process, parties and legal representatives are advised to first make payment of the prescribed fee at the accounts office before going to the registry.

(D) Lands Tribunal (“LandsT”) Registry

15. The following refined special arrangements will be in place for the LandsT registry :

- (a) court users intending to do filing and other registry business or make payment at the accounts office must access from the main entrance of the LandsT;
- (b) there will continue to be a ticketing and triage system for court users intending to use the registry at the LandsT. Each ticket normally admits one person; and
- (c) there will be a separate queue for litigants in persons intending to file originating process.

(E) MC Registries

16. Except for the general crowd control arrangements set out in paragraphs 19 to 23 below, all special arrangements for the registries of MCs will cease.

(F) Labour Tribunal (“LabT”) Registry

17. The following refined special arrangements will be in place for the LabT registry :

- (a) court users intending to do filing and other registry business or make payment at the accounts office must access from the main entrance of the related court building; and
- (b) there will be a ticketing system for court users intending to use the registries/accounts office at the LabT. Each ticket normally admits one person;

(G) Small Claims Tribunal (“SCT”) Registry

18. The following refined special arrangements will be in place for the SCT registry :

- (a) court users intending to do filing and other registry business or make payment at the accounts office must access from the main entrance of the West Kowloon Law Courts Building; and
- (b) there will be a ticketing system for court users intending to use the registries/accounts office of the SCT. Each ticket normally admits one person.

(IV) Preventive Measures and Crowd Management

19. Having regard to the prevailing public health situation, the Judiciary considers it necessary to continue putting in place a whole range of preventive measures and crowd management arrangements to regulate the people flow within the Judiciary premises, and avoid any gathering of crowds in confined areas including courtrooms and registry areas.

20. 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/inform the court with reasons for absence as appropriate.

21. The preventive and crowd management measures which have been implemented earlier during GAP will remain in force and a few measures have been strengthened. They include :

- (a) court users are required to undergo body temperature check and wear a surgical mask before they are allowed to enter and remain in the court premises. Any court user who has a fever / refuses to undergo body temperature check / does not wear a surgical mask will be refused entry into or directed to leave the court premises;
- (b) court users entering the court premises are required to walk on the disinfectant floor mat at the entrances;

- (c) cleaning and disinfection of public areas, frequently-touched surfaces (such as door handles, lift buttons and escalator handrails) and public toilets are performed at a higher frequency;
- (d) the Canteen in the High Court Building and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Courts Building will remain closed having regard to public health considerations;
- (e) to maintain social distancing, the seating capacity of courtrooms and lobbies are reduced by about 50%. In addition, capacity limits are set for confined areas such as registries and account offices to avoid crowding of users; and
- (f) court users are strongly advised to maintain good personal hygiene at all times and disinfect their hands frequently during their stay in the court premises. Alcohol-based handrub is provided at entrances, registries and courtrooms of all Judiciary premises.

22. Queuing, ticketing and triage system that are necessary to support the above arrangements, 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.

23. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information from the Judiciary's website, and follow the advice of the Judiciary staff and security personnel when they attend for court businesses.

(V) **Contacts**

24. If stakeholders have any questions about the arrangements above, please contact the following officers during office hours :

(a) **HC**

HC Registry

- Mr Kenneth Tsang, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Resource Centre) at 2825 0571
- Mr Larry Ngan, Senior Judicial Clerk II (High Court Registry) at 2825 0401
- Hotline : 2523 2212

Appeals Registry & Criminal and Civil Registry

- Ms Terri Tang, Clerk of Court at 2825 4383
- Miss Cynthia Leung, Judicial Clerk (Civil) at 2825 4672
- Hotline : 2523 2212

Probate Registry

- Ms Memory Wong, Chief Probate Officer at 2825 0619
- Mr William Chong, Senior Probate Officer at 2825 0620
- Hotline : 2840 1683

(b) **DC**

- Ms Clare Tsang, Chief Judicial Clerk (Courts) at 2582 4000
- Ms Anny Tam, Chief Judicial Clerk (Registry) at 2582 4200
- Mr Wing Lau, Senior Judicial Clerk II (Registry)1 at 2582 5368
- Miss Jenny Kwok, Senior Judicial Clerk II (Registry)2 at 2504 0766

- Hotline : 2845 5696

(c) FC

- Ms Jolly Lam, Chief Judicial Clerk (Family Court) at 2582 5370
- Ms Sharon Wong, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Family Court) at 2582 5373
- Hotline : 2840 1218

(d) LandsT

- Miss Amy Leung, Chief Judicial Clerk (Lands Tribunal) at 2170 3815
- Miss Elizabeth Lee, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Lands Tribunal) at 2170 3818
- Hotline : 2771 3034

(e) LabT

- Mr Jackson Chan, Registrar at 2625 3200
- Ms Heidi Ma, Deputy Registrar at 2625 3226
- Hotline : 2625 0020

(f) SCT

- Ms Wendy Chui, Chief Judicial Clerk (Small Claims Tribunal) at 3916 6401
- Ms Ada Law, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Small Claims Tribunal) at 3916 6459
- Hotline : 2877 4068

(g) MCs

- Ms Pauline Kwok, Senior Judiciary Executive (Magistracies) at 3916 6389
- Hotline : 2677 8373

Eastern Magistrates' Courts

- Mr Jack Suen, First Clerk at 2886 6756
- Mr Danny Tse, Second Clerk at 2886 6496

Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts

- Miss Alice Yip, First Clerk at 2767 3281
- Ms Debby Ho, Second Clerk at 2767 3283

Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts

- Ms Eva Kong, First Clerk at 2772 9230
- Ms Veronica Lee, Second Clerk at 2772 9232

West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts

- Miss Phoebe Hung, First Clerk at 3916 6152
- Mr C M Au, Second Clerk at 3916 6154

Fanling Magistrates' Courts

- Ms Helen Lai, First Clerk at 2682 7710
- Ms Rita Chan, Second Clerk at 2682 7711

Shatin Magistrates' Courts

- Mr Buddy Chan, First Clerk at 2694 2309
- Mr H C Leung, Second Clerk at 2694 2310

Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts

- Mr Sunny Chung, First Clerk of the at 2452 8222
- Miss Eva Leung, Second Clerk at 2452 8134

(h) Crowd management arrangements

- Mr Jonathan Man, Chief Judiciary Executive (Accommodation) at 2867 2140
- Mr Gary Lau, Chief Judiciary Executive (Court Security) at 2867 2172

(VI) Further Updates

25. The Judiciary will keep in view developments. If it should become necessary to introduce any further changes, we will notify the stakeholders as soon as practicable.

26. Besides, 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 during this period, on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk). A dedicated webpage has also been set up with all the information relevant to GAP and resumption matters. This and subsequent notifications will also be uploaded. Stakeholders are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.

27. In particular, for the Bar Association and the Law Society, we should be grateful if you would continue to advise your members to check the website for updated information and to study the notifications as necessary.

Judiciary Administration
20 March 2020

**Resumption Plan of Court Proceedings
at Various Levels of Courts**

Details of the resumption plan for court proceedings at various levels of courts for the week starting from March 23 are set out below. More details may be issued by the relevant courts and tribunals.

2. In line with usual practice, parties will be separately notified of any change in the hearing date etc. of their cases, regardless of whether the hearing has been affected by the General Adjourned Period (“GAP”).

(a) For Civil Cases in the Court of Appeal (“CA”)

Weeks of March 23 and 30

(i) for appeals originally scheduled between March 23 and April 3, Judges will case manage them prior to March 23. Appeals which are ready will be heard as scheduled.

Otherwise, Judges will consider if paper disposal is appropriate and seek parties’ views on the same. If paper disposal is considered not to be appropriate, the appeal will be re-fixed by the Listing Officer;

(b) For Criminal Cases in the CA

(i) cases scheduled from March 23 will proceed as scheduled; and

(ii) cases adjourned during GAP have been or will be re-fixed as soon as practicable after resumption of

court proceedings, in consultation with counsel's diaries where possible;

(c) **For Civil Cases in the Court of First Instance ("CFI"), District Court ("DC") and Family Court ("FC")**

- (i) in default of any application under (iv) and (v) below, the courts will give 7-day lead time to interlocutory hearings and 14-day lead time to trials after the end of GAP for cases in CFI and DC. But no such lead time will be given for cases in FC;

Weeks of March 23 and 30

- (ii) for CFI and DC : due to the lead time policy in para 2(c)(i) above and subject to specific direction by a Judge in a case as stated in para 2(c)(iii) and (iv) below, only limited number of interlocutory matters will be heard in the week of March 23 and limited number of trials will take place prior to April 6;
- (iii) for cases originally scheduled between March 23 and April 3, Judges have case managed them prior to March 23. Cases for which direction to override the lead time has been given will be heard as scheduled. Hearings which cannot be heard have been or will be adjourned either for paper disposal or to a date to be fixed in consultation with counsel's diaries;
- (iv) for cases scheduled for March 23 to April 3, Judges may override the lead time policy in para 2(c)(i) above and hear cases as originally scheduled up to April 3 on the **joint application of all parties concerned** if all the necessary

papers can be lodged in good time and all parties are ready. Such joint applications should be made as soon as practicable. **Late applications** (i.e. those giving **less than 7 working days' notice** to the relevant Judges) **may not be entertained**;

- (v) if there is disagreement between the parties on whether a case listed between 23 March and 3 April should be heard as scheduled, they can apply by letter to the Judge for direction **at least 7 working days** before the date of hearing. **Late applications** (i.e. those giving **less than 7 working days' notice** to the relevant Judges) **may not be entertained**. The Judge would assess the situation based on the materials available and give a determination on the papers;
- (vi) for the Employees Compensation cases in the DC, unless otherwise directed, the Employees' Compensation List on March 27 and April 3 would be heard as scheduled;
- (vii) For FC : as the lead time policy does not apply to FC, in default of any application, all matters listed from March 23 will be heard as scheduled; and
- (viii) For CFI, DC and FC : despite the re-opening of the relevant registry starting from March 9, Judges may give special directions for filing and lodging of documents beyond the re-opening date of the relevant registry in respect of cases listed up to April 3;

From April 6

- (ix) court business returns to normal;

(d) **For Criminal Cases in the CFI**

Weeks of March 23, March 30 and April 6

- (i) Judges will handle all cases/matters, excluding new jury trials, originally scheduled during this period or which may be adjourned from GAP and re-fixed to be heard during this period;

Week of April 14

- (ii) new jury trials will resume in a staggered manner;

(e) **For Proceedings for Admission as a Barrister or a Solicitor**

Week of March 30

- (i) applications for admission to be a barrister or a solicitor originally scheduled to be heard during the GAP and on March 28 will be adjourned to be heard in the week of March 30. Notice of the new hearing date and arrangements have been sent to the applicants or their solicitors;

(f) **For cases before HC Masters**

- (i) in default of any application under 2(f)(iii) and (iv) below, the court will give 7-day lead time to interlocutory hearings and 14-day lead time to hearings involving witnesses after the end of GAP;

Weeks of March 23 and 30

- (ii) in general, due to the lead time policy in para 2(f)(i) above, no hearings will be held in the week

of March 23 and no hearings involving witnesses will be held before April 6;

- (iii) Masters may override the lead time policy in para 2(f)(i) above and proceed with hearings as originally scheduled on the **joint application of all parties concerned** if the necessary papers can be lodged in good time and all parties are ready. Such joint applications should be made to the relevant Master as soon as possible and **at least 7 working days before the date of hearing**. **Late applications may not be entertained**; and
- (iv) if there is disagreement between the parties on whether the hearing should proceed as scheduled, they can apply by letter to the Master for direction **at least 7 working days** before the date of the hearing. **Late applications may not be entertained**. The Master would assess the situation based on the materials available and give a determination on the papers;

Week of April 6

- (v) court business returns to normal;

(g) **For Criminal Cases in the DC**

Week of March 23

- (i) while there will be no trials unless otherwise directed, plea and sentence hearings, Pre-trial Reviews (“PTRs”) and Plea Day on March 24 (Tue) and March 26 (Thur) will proceed as scheduled;

From March 30

- (ii) court business returns to normal; and
- (iii) cases set down on a Plea Day during GAP (except those disposed of on paper) have been rescheduled to be heard in this period. Parties have been or will be notified of the new hearing date;

(h) For cases before DC Masters

- (i) in general, the court will give 7-day lead time to interlocutory hearings and 14-day lead time to hearings involving witnesses after the end of GAP;

Week of March 23

- (ii) in general, due to the lead time policy in para 2(h)(i) above, no hearings will be held;
- (iii) Masters have case managed cases listed for hearing in this period, and may, with the agreement of the parties, deal with them by paper disposal. In appropriate cases, such as case management summons and case management conference, order nisi might have been given; and
- (iv) the other cases have been or will be re-fixed and parties have been or will be notified of the re-fixing arrangements. Either a new hearing date or a listing appointment has been or will be given;

Week of March 30

- (v) court business returns to normal;

(i) **For Lands Tribunal (“LandsT”)**

- (i) in default of any application under 2(i)(ii) and (iii) below, the court will give 7-day lead time to interlocutory hearings and 14-day lead time to trials after the end of GAP;

Weeks of March 23 and 30

- (ii) the presiding Judge and Judicial Officer (“JJO”) may override the lead time policy in para 2(i)(i) above and proceed with a hearing or trial as originally scheduled on the **joint application of all parties concerned** and the case is ready to proceed. Such joint applications should be made as soon as practicable to the relevant JJO and **at least 7 working days before the date of hearing.** **Late applications may not be entertained;** and
- (iii) if there is disagreement between the parties on whether the hearing or trial shall proceed, they can apply by letter to the JJO for direction **at least 7 working days before the date of hearing.** **Late applications may not be entertained.** The JJO would assess the situation based on the materials available and give a determination on the papers;

From April 6

- (iv) court business returns to normal;

(j) **For Magistrates’ Courts (“MCs”)**

Week of March 23

- (i) while there will be no trials unless otherwise directed, cases which are set down for plea,

mention, sentence, PTRs, etc. will proceed as scheduled; and

- (ii) hearings adjourned during GAP will be heard with priority given to cases in which the defendant is remanded in custody;

From March 30

- (iii) court business generally returns to normal; and
- (iv) trials adjourned during GAP will be heard with priority given to cases in which the defendant is remanded in custody;

(k) *For Labour Tribunal (“LabT”) and Small Claims Tribunal (“SCT”)*

Week of March 23

- (i) call-over and mention hearings adjourned during GAP would start to be heard, but trials would only resume on March 30;

From March 30

- (ii) court business generally returns to normal;

(l) *For Obscene Articles Tribunal and Coroner’s Court*

From March 23

- (i) court business generally returns to normal unless otherwise directed.