

Notification for Stakeholders about the General Arrangement of Court Business

(position as at 14 July 2020)

(I) Overall Arrangement

The Judiciary has made a public announcement on July 14 that in view of the latest public health situation, while court hearings and registry business will generally proceed, enhanced social distancing measures are being implemented to ensure that the courts can carry on business safely as circumstances permit.

(II) Court Proceedings

General Arrangements

2. The Judiciary has been implementing quite a number of social distancing measures for court proceedings. The Judiciary will enhance some of these measures to achieve greater social distancing. All these measures, taken together, include the following :

- (a) spacing out the use of courtrooms by reducing the courtroom usage and staggering the listing of court hearings whenever possible;
- (b) a 50% capacity reduction in the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies in general;
- (c) where necessary and technically feasible, court hearings are broadcast to other courtroom(s) and/or court lobbies;
- (d) if no more seats are available for court users despite any broadcasting arrangements, court users will be asked to leave the courtrooms and/or court extensions;
and

- (e) if necessary, the court may set a ceiling on the number of members for each legal team for sitting in the main courtroom (including legal representatives' seating areas and public seats, if any). The ceiling will be dependent on, among others, the nature of the court hearing, the total number of parties who will be present, the capacity of the main courtroom and the total number of legal teams.

3. The enhanced social distancing measures will result in a reduction in the overall capacity of the courts to handle business. Court hearings may have to be spaced out and/or adjourned. For parties to the court proceedings, they should work on the basis that court hearings will proceed as scheduled unless directed otherwise by the court. If any proceedings need to be adjourned and re-fixed, parties will be given specific directions by the court. Capacity limits will continue to be imposed in court lobbies and courtrooms.

Greater Use of Electronic Means

4. The Judiciary has been encouraging the greater use of electronic means in conducting court business under the prevailing law in order to reduce court visits.

5. For the High Court, the District Court, the Family Court and the Lands Tribunal, the Judiciary has set up special “no-reply” email accounts and the e-Lodgment Platform so that court users may, under the direction of a Judge or Judicial Officer, lodge documents to the court electronically. The Judiciary will continue to encourage the greater use of these electronic means.

6. Moreover, the Judiciary has been encouraging the greater use of remote hearings for suitable civil cases, using video-conferencing facilities (“VCF”) or phones. For this purpose, the Judiciary has issued two guidance notes setting out

the practices and arrangements for conducting remote hearings for civil proceedings, including trials, at the High Court, the District Court and the Family Court. A more cost-effective technical option involving VCF software has been made available to court users since 15 June 2020. The Judiciary has also been facilitating court users, including law firms, to conduct compatibility tests with the VCF facilities of the court.

7. Quite a number of hearings using VCF have been held and the experience has so far been positive. To minimize the need to attend court hearings in the light of the prevailing public health situation, the court will consider inviting court users to use more remote hearings for civil cases. Parties may also make such applications to the court.

(III) Registries and Accounts Offices

8. For the registries and accounts offices of various levels of courts, while they will continue to operate normal operating hours, i.e. from 8:45am to 1:00pm and from 2:00pm to 5:30pm (Monday to Friday, except public holidays), in order to reduce people flow and possible over-crowding, special administrative measures will be introduced.

9. In particular, we are considering to expand as far as practicable the registry areas for the High Court and possibly some other courts so that registry business may be conducted in a more spacious area. If necessary, we may issue further notifications to the stakeholders when the arrangements are confirmed and ready. If such arrangements are made, court users will be given specific instructions on the ground to go to the appropriate area for their respective registry work.

10. Moreover, we urge that, where possible, court users should avoid coming to the registries/accounts offices at peak hours, e.g. late mornings and late afternoons. This will help even out the people flow at different times of a day.

11. Moreover, depending on the actual situation, we may also reduce the total number of operating counters operating in the same area to achieve more social distancing.

12. Court users queuing for registry and accounts services may be asked to queue outside the relevant area if the capacity limit for the area concerned has been exceeded.

(IV) Other Offices of the Judiciary

13. The Canteen in the High Court Building (“HCB”) and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Courts Building will remain closed until further notice, having regard to public health considerations.

14. As regards offices providing services located in the Judiciary premises but are operated by Government Departments or external organizations, court users are advised to enquire with the relevant operators direct for details relating to the operation of these offices.

(V) Contacts

15. If stakeholders have any questions about the detailed arrangements for the above matters, please contact the following officers for the respective courts during the office hours :

(a) Court of Final Appeal

- Ms Theresa Au, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Court of Final Appeal) at 2123 0054
- Hotline : 2123 0123

(b) High CourtHigh Court 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

(c) Competition Tribunal

- Ms Priscilla Wong, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Competition Tribunal) at 2825 0347
- Hotline : 2825 0426

(d) District Court

- 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

(e) Family Court

- 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

(f) Lands Tribunal

- Miss Amy Leung, Chief Judicial Clerk (Lands Tribunal) at 2170 3815
- Miss Elizabeth Lee, Senior Judicial Clerk I (Lands Tribunal) at 2170 3818
- Mr Mike Chan, Senior Judicial Clerk II (Lands Tribunal) at 2170 3825
- Hotline : 2771 3034

(g) Labour Tribunal

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

(h) Small Claims Tribunal

- 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

(i) Magistrates' Courts

- 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 at 2452 8222
- Miss Eva Leung, Second Clerk at 2452 8134

(j) Obscene Articles Tribunal

- Miss Rachel Wan, Officer-in-charge of Registry at 3916 6302

(k) Coroner's Court

- Ms Connie Lee, Clerk to Coroners at 3916 6201
- Mr K L Lee, Deputy Clerk to Coroners at 3916 6202

(I) 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) Preventive and Crowd Management Measures

16. The Judiciary will strictly enforce appropriate preventive and crowd management measures having regard to the prevailing public health situation. These measures include enhanced cleansing and disinfection of public areas, requiring all people entering the Judiciary premises to undergo body temperature checks and wear surgical masks at all times unless otherwise directed by the judge, and putting in place necessary queuing and other crowd management arrangements to regulate the people flow and avoid crowding.

17. Chessboard seating arrangements will continue to be applied in the public gallery of courtrooms and court lobbies, with seating capacity reduced to half. Broadcasting of proceedings will be arranged if necessary and if practicable. In addition, capacity limits will remain in force for areas such as court lobbies, registries and accounts offices to avoid crowding.

18. 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 must not come to the 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.

19. Court users should maintain good personal hygiene at all times and disinfect their hands frequently while they are in

Judiciary premises. Alcohol-based handrub is provided at entrances, registries and courtrooms of all Judiciary premises.

20. The Judiciary will keep reviewing the situation and refine the arrangements as appropriate. Court users are strongly advised to check the updated information on the Judiciary website, and follow the instructions of the Judiciary staff and security personnel.

(VII) Further Updates

21. The Judiciary will keep in view developments. If the Judiciary decides to introduce any further changes, we will continue to keep the stakeholders posted as soon as practicable.

22. Besides, the Judiciary will continue to post updated information, including Daily Cause Lists, all arrangements in relation to Judiciary business and advice to court users, at a dedicated webpage on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk). Stakeholders are advised to check the website for updated information as necessary.

23. 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
14 July 2020