



司法機構政務長

Judiciary Administrator

23 April 2020

Dr Hon Priscilla Leung, SBS, JP
Chairman
Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Chairman

**Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services
("AJLS Panel")
Resumption of Court Business**

Further to my letter of 9 April 2020, on the instruction of the Chief Justice, I am writing to provide information on the resumption of court business upon the end of the General Adjourned Period ("GAP") for the information of the AJLS panel.

General Position

2. The Judiciary announced on 22 April 2020 that GAP, which started on 29 January 2020, will end on 3 May 2020. From 4 May 2020, all court proceedings will generally resume as safely as circumstances permit. In the same way, court and tribunal registries will also start to re-open by stages from 6 May 2020, the first stage including the registries of the Court of Final Appeal and the High Court. Having regard to the public health situation and the need for social distancing, court business will initially be conducted under reduced capacity. This will be closely monitored and adjustments made where appropriate.

3. The Judiciary stresses that public health and safety, including that of court users, the Judiciary's staff and Judges and Judicial Officers (“JJOs”), continue to be paramount considerations in the handling of court operations by the Judiciary. The Judiciary will however conduct as much court business as practicable, having regard to the prevailing public health situation. The extent of court operations will be contingent on a number of factors, including the need to adopt measures to facilitate social distancing, e.g. setting limits on the number of hearings to be held on each court floor on all Judiciary premises, etc.

Resumption of court proceedings

4. From 4 May 2020, all hearings, both civil and criminal proceedings, including trials, will generally resume unless they are adjourned pursuant to specific directions by the court, but with reduced capacity. However, jury trials will only start after May. To ensure an orderly resumption of court proceedings, an appropriate buffer period will be provided before hearings, particularly trials, are resumed. Parties concerned, be they legally represented or litigants in person, will be given clear notification and directions on the mode of hearings with sufficient lead time for preparation. More details for stakeholders will be announced shortly.

5. For civil proceedings, the court will continue to adopt a flexible and multi-pronged approach. JJOs will continue to proactively manage their cases and directions will be given to the parties as necessary. Where appropriate, JJOs will consider disposing the cases on paper as far as possible. JJOs may also invite parties to explore the use of Video Conferencing Facilities or conduct hearings by telephone where appropriate.

Re-opening of court/tribunal registries and accounts offices

6. To coincide with the end of GAP, the Judiciary will re-open court and tribunal registries and accounts offices by stages and in a staggered manner. The re-opening schedule is set out at **Annex A**. The opening hours of the court registries and accounts offices will be reduced until further notice. Some registry business, such as search and inspection of case files, cause books and orders, will be conducted in the afternoon. More details will be announced closer to the time of the re-opening.

Re-opening of other offices of the Judiciary

7. A staggered approach will also be adopted for the re-opening of other offices that provide services to court users and the public. The re-opening schedule is set out at **Annex B**. The opening hours of these offices will also be reduced until further notice. However, the Canteen in the High Court Building and the Tuck Shop in the West Kowloon Law Courts Building will remain closed until further notice.

8. As for offices on Judiciary premises operated by Government Departments or outside organisations, court users should enquire with the relevant service providers direct for details relating to the re-opening of these offices.

Preventive and crowd management measures

9. The Judiciary will continue to put in place appropriate preventive and crowd management measures. These measures include requiring all people entering Judiciary premises to undergo body temperature check, to wear face masks, and putting in place necessary queuing, ticketing and triage systems, designated entry and exit points, as well as admission control to limit the number of court users entering and remaining on Judiciary premises.

10. To maintain social distancing, chessboard seating arrangement will continue to be adopted in courtrooms and court lobbies with seating capacity reduced to half. Broadcasting of proceedings will be arranged on a need basis. Capacity limits will also be set for areas such as court registries and accounts offices to avoid crowding.

11. Parties, legal representatives and other court users who are subject to any quarantine requirements or medical surveillance should not come to the Judiciary premises. They should as soon as practicable apply to the court for permission of absence or inform the court with reasons for absence as appropriate.

12. The Judiciary will continue to post updated information and detailed arrangements on the Judiciary website (www.judiciary.hk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Emma Lau', written in a cursive style.

(Miss Emma Lau)
Judiciary Administrator

c.c. Ms Teresa Cheng, GBS, SC, JP
Secretary for Justice

Mr Philip Dykes, SC
Chairman, Hong Kong Bar Association

Ms Melissa K Pang
President, The Law Society of Hong Kong

**Re-opening of Court/Tribunal Registries
and Accounts Offices**

The registries and accounts offices of the various courts and tribunals will be re-opened according to the following schedule:

Date	Registries/Accounts Offices
6 May 2020	Court of Final Appeal / High Court / Competition Tribunal
8 May 2020	District Court
13 May 2020	Family Court
15 May 2020	Lands Tribunal
19 May 2020	Magistrates' Courts / Coroner's Court / Obscene Article Tribunal
21 May 2020	Small Claims Tribunal / Labour Tribunal

2. The opening hours of the court and tribunal registries and accounts offices will be reduced to from 9:30 am to 12:30pm until further notice.

Re-opening of Judiciary offices providing non-court services

4 May 2020

- Court Language Section's Certification Counter in Wanchai Law Courts Building ("WLCB")
- Bailiff Offices' Public Counters at various court premises
- Integrated Mediation Office in WLCB
- High Court Library

11 May 2020

- Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants at High Court Building ("HCB")

15 May 2020

- The Building Management Mediation Co-ordinator's Office in Lands Tribunal

25 March 2020

- Small Claims Tribunal Information Centre
- Counter Services of Complaints Office at HCB

The opening hours for the High Court Library is 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm, while that of remaining offices is 9:30 am to 12:30 pm until further notice.