

## **Notification for Stakeholders**

### **Enhanced Court Business from 4 to 11 April 2022 and Gradual Resumption of Court Business from 12 April 2022**

#### **General**

1. In light of the latest public health situation and related developments, as well as the impacts on parties, court users, stakeholders and the Judiciary, the Judiciary has decided that the period of General Adjournment of Proceedings (“GAP”) will end on 11 April 2022.
2. The Judiciary will expand the scope of court business that may be conducted during the last week of the GAP period, i.e. from 4 to 11 April 2022.
3. After the cessation of the GAP from 12 April 2022, the Judiciary will gradually resume court business under reduced capacity, striking a balance between public health considerations and due administration of justice.
4. Parties, their legal representatives, court users and all stakeholders should read the details set out in the Annexes carefully and the earlier notification issued on 4 March 2022 (“last notification”) as appropriate to conduct their affairs with the court accordingly, without seeking further directions from the court unless it is really necessary. For convenience, a brief summary is provided as follows.

#### **Enhanced court business during the remaining GAP period**

5. Unless otherwise specified below, the arrangements set out for the GAP in the last notification remain valid for the remaining period of the GAP.

#### **Court proceedings**

6. All hearings of the courts/tribunals will continue to be generally adjourned during the GAP period until 11 April 2022. The arrangements as set out in paragraphs 4 to 15 of the last notification (repeated at **Annex 1**) will continue to apply.

## Registries

7. All registries, accounts and other court offices will remain closed during the GAP period until 11 April 2022, except for providing necessary support to the court's business as set out in **Annex 1**.
8. While all registries and accounts offices will remain closed, the High Court Registry, the Probate Registry at the High Court, the District Court Registry and the Family Court Registry will conduct more registry business from 4 to 11 April 2022. Details are set out in **Annex 1**.
9. From 4 to 11 April 2022, drop boxes will be provided on LG4/F of the High Court Building and 6/F of the Wanchai Law Courts Building for the High Court Registry and the District Court Registry respectively to receive specific documents that do not require immediate processing. They have been marked with asterisks in **Annex 1**.
10. In general, parties and practitioners should continue to rely on section 71(1A) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap.1) which deals with the computation of time during the GAP period.
11. For the avoidance of doubt, on the issue of how a party can comply with a court order that mandates a party to file documents when the registry is closed and whether a party should proceed to serve documents even if such cannot be filed, it should be noted that the closure of the court's registry will not affect parties to serve documents during the period as required by the legislation and/or court order, though the documents concerned cannot be physically filed with the registry for the time being.

## **Gradual resumption of court business after GAP from 12 April 2022**

### Court proceedings

12. From 12 April 2022, **all hearings** for both criminal and civil proceedings, including trials, **will generally resume**, unless otherwise directed pursuant to specific directions by the court. Given the fluctuating public health situation, the court may reduce its total capacity for handling hearings to further enhance social distancing.

Court hearings will be scheduled with wider intervals where necessary and appropriate.

13. New jury proceedings and death inquests involving juries scheduled till the end of May 2022 will generally be adjourned except otherwise directed by the court.
14. Relevant parties will be given specific directions by the court accordingly.
15. For suitable civil proceedings, the court will continue to make use of remote hearings and/or paper disposal to dispose of them as far as appropriate and practicable. The court will give directions for individual cases.
16. For hearings of criminal proceedings at the Court of First Instance and the District Court, the court may continue to deal with them on paper or remotely insofar as such cases can be so disposed of under the law.
17. Applications for admission as a barrister or solicitor originally listed within the GAP period will be handled during the period from 12 to 22 April 2022. Applications originally scheduled for 23 April 2022 will proceed as scheduled. All these applications will be subject to the procedures and special arrangements as previously announced. Applicants will be separately informed by the court of the specific time allotted for their applications.

### Registries

18. Registries and accounts offices will re-open progressively by phases starting from 12 April 2022. The re-opening dates for the respective registries and accounts officers are set out as follows :

12 April 2022	High Court
	Competition Tribunal
	Magistrates' Courts
	Small Claims Tribunal
	Obscene Articles Tribunal
	Coroner's Court

13 April 2022	Court of Final Appeal Labour Tribunal
14 April 2022	District Court
20 April 2022	Family Court
21 April 2022	Lands Tribunal

19. The e-appointment system for individual court registries (namely the Appeals Registry at the Clerk of Court's Office of the High Court, the High Court Registry, the Probate Registry, the Family Court Registry, the Lands Tribunal Registry and the Labour Tribunal Registry) will resume booking by court users from 12 April 2022. Court users may make bookings for dates starting from the re-opening of the relevant registry as indicated above.
20. The operating hours of the registries and accounts offices will be reduced, i.e. from 8:45 am to 12:30 pm and 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm (Mondays to Fridays, except public holidays). To enable registry business to be conducted in a more spacious environment, the registry areas may be suitably expanded to other floors or areas in the same building as necessary. Court users will be given specific instructions to go to the appropriate area.
21. While the registries will resume full operation progressively, there are special arrangements during the initial re-opening period for the High Court Registry, the Probate Registry and the District Court Registry as set out in **Annex 2**.
22. In anticipation of a huge volume of registry business during the initial re-opening period, court users may be required to line up in different queues at designated areas of the court buildings. Specific instructions will be given to the court users as appropriate. In particular, a ticketing system may be adopted at individual registries as appropriate, including the Court of Final Appeal Registry, the High Court Registry, the District Court Registry, the Family Court Registry, the Lands Tribunal Registry and the Small Claims Tribunal Registry. Tickets will be required for services at these registries.

23. Depending on circumstances and public health situation, the special arrangements mentioned in paragraphs 21 and 22 above may be adjusted as appropriate without further notice.

#### Other supporting offices

24. Other offices that provide support services to court users and the public will be re-opened by phases. Details are at **Annex 3**.
25. The e-appointment system for the Integrated Mediation Office will resume booking by court users upon its re-opening on 12 April 2022.

#### **Possible Further adjustments**

26. As the public health situation may change rapidly, the Judiciary will continue to monitor the situation and review the impacts on the court's operations and business with a view to putting in place timely and appropriate measures.
27. The Judiciary will continue to post updated information on the Judiciary website ([www.judiciary.hk](http://www.judiciary.hk)). Stakeholders are urged to regularly check the website for updated information as necessary.

**Judiciary Administration**  
**March 2022**