

Press Releases

Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building to be re-commissioned in October

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary announced today (September 16) that the Tsuen Wan Law Courts Building (TWLCB) at 70 Tai Ho Road, Tsuen Wan, will be re-commissioned with effect from October 4.

A Judiciary spokesman said, "The re-commissioned TWLCB will mainly be used for hearing cases of the District Court (DC) which do not involve or attract many court users. This would free up courtrooms in the DC at Wanchai Law Courts Building (WCLB) for cases related to social events (SE cases)."

The re-commissioned TWLCB comprises four small courtrooms, each capable of handling cases involving up to five defendants, 15 legal representatives and around 20 members of the public or media. Other supporting facilities include consultation rooms, witness waiting rooms, court extension areas for broadcasting of court proceedings and robing facilities for legal representatives. Planning for the re-commissioning project commenced in mid-2020 and the construction works were completed in August this year at an estimated cost of \$29 million.

Built in the 1970s, the TWLCB was de-commissioned after the relocation of the then Tsuen Wan Magistrates' Courts to the West Kowloon Law Courts Building (WKLCB) in 2016. It has since been used mainly as the Judiciary's storage facilities for court files.

"The rapid and substantial upsurge in SE cases has brought unprecedented challenges to the Judiciary in terms of court premises and judicial resources, mainly because quite a number of them involve a large number of defendants, legal representatives, media and public viewers, and evidence in the form of voluminous video recordings.

"The Judiciary has been making continued efforts to increase judicial manpower through recruitment of judges and appointment of deputies. We have also been making the best possible use of all the 130 existing courtrooms suitable for criminal cases in 10 law court buildings at an average of 80 hearings each week to expedite the processing of SE cases.

"As at end July 2021, over 1 900 cases were brought before various levels of courts and around 1 400 (around 74 per cent) have already been disposed of. It is expected that the vast majority of cases at the Magistrates' Courts would have been disposed of by the end of this year. The upcoming challenge lies mainly with cases to be handled by the DC. By the end of July 2021, over 300 criminal cases were received, with about 250 cases yet to be disposed of. Many of them involve 10 or more defendants, entailing long trials, some of which lasting over 20 to 30 days," the spokesman explained.

Given the limited number and capacity of existing courtrooms suitable for criminal cases, most of which were designed for cases with less than 10 defendants, the Judiciary has been adopting various measures to cope with the huge and rapid upsurge in SE cases -

(a) carrying out conversion works in existing courtrooms to enlarge their capacity -

(i) 10 courtrooms in the WCLB from handling cases with a maximum of six defendants to up to 10-12; and

(ii) the mega court of the WKLCB from accommodating cases with a maximum of 12 defendants to up to 50, 100 legal representatives and 50 family members or members of the general public;

(b) using adjacent courtrooms for broadcasting court proceedings at the WCLB and the WKLCB to enlarge the effective capacity of courtrooms (the paired courtroom arrangement); and

(c) relocating suitable DC cases with more than 10 defendants to the WKLCB (including the newly renovated mega court capable of handling cases involving up to 50 defendants which was open for use as from September 14), taking into account the need for the latter to accommodate cases with multiple defendants at other levels of court.

The above measures, particularly the paired courtroom arrangement, will however reduce the number of courtrooms that may otherwise be used for other criminal cases at the WCLB. The Judiciary sees the imminent need to re-commission the TWLCB for providing timely additional courtroom facilities to help address this shortfall so as to increase the overall capacity of the DC for handling SE and other criminal cases.

The Judiciary will monitor the situation with a view to identifying appropriate and feasible ways and means of expanding courtroom facilities for the same purpose.

Ends/Thursday, September 16, 2021
Issued at HKT 15:00

NNNN

新聞公報

荃灣法院大樓十月重新投入運作

下稿代司法機構發出：

司法機構今日（九月十六日）公布，位於荃灣大河道70號的荃灣法院大樓由十月四日起重新投入運作。

司法機構發言人說：「重用的荃灣法院大樓將主要處理區域法院一些法庭使用者為數不多的案件，以騰出灣仔法院大樓的法庭處理社會事件相關案件。」

重用的荃灣法院大樓共有四個小型法庭，每個法庭可處理涉及最多五名被告人、15名法律代表及約20名公眾或傳媒旁聽人士的案件。其他支援設施包括會見室、證人等候室、供轉播法庭程序的法庭延伸部分，以及法律代表專用更衣室。司法機構於二〇二〇年中開始籌劃重用荃灣法院大樓，改裝工程預算2,900萬元，於今年八月竣工。

荃灣法院大樓建於七十年代，於荃灣裁判法院二〇一六年遷往西九龍法院大樓後關閉，其後一直主要用作司法機構儲存法庭檔案的設施。

發言人解釋：「社會事件相關案件大幅激增，在法院大樓空間及司法資源方面給司法機構帶來前所未有的挑戰，主要因為這些案件當中有不少涉及眾多被告人、法律代表、傳媒人士和旁聽公眾，以及大量錄像證據。」

「司法機構一直透過招聘法官和委任暫委法官，致力增加司法資源，並盡可能利用10座法院大樓的所有130個適合用作刑事案件聆訊的法庭，每周平均處理80宗聆訊，以加快處理社會事件相關案件。」

「截至二〇二一年七月底，各級法院接獲超過1 900宗社會事件相關的案件，接近1 400宗案件（約74%）已結案。預期大部分在裁判法院處理的相關案件可於今年年底結案。現時的挑戰主要集中在區域法院要處理的社會事件相關案件。截至二〇二一年七月底，區域法院接到超過300宗刑事案件，當中約250宗案件仍在處理，不少涉及10名或以上的被告人，所需的審訊時間較長，或超過20至30日。」

由於現有適合用作刑事案件聆訊的法庭數目及空間有限，且當中大部分的原先設計是用作處理少於10名被告人的案件，司法機構一直採取多項措施，以應對大幅並急速增長的社會事件相關案件：

（一）在現有法庭進行改裝工程，增加其可容納人數—

（i）在灣仔法院大樓10個法庭處理的案件所涉被告人數目，將由最多六人增加到10至12人；

（ii）在西九龍法院大樓大型法庭聆訊的案件所涉被告人數目，將由最多12人增加至多達50人，該法庭並可容納100名法律代表、50名被告人家屬或其他公眾人士；

（二）於灣仔法院大樓及西九龍法院大樓利用毗連法庭轉播法庭程序

（配對法庭安排），擴大法庭的實際可容納人數；及

（三）把多於10名被告人的區域法院案件移至西九龍法院大樓處理（包括新改裝的大型法庭，該法庭可處理涉及多達50名被告人的案件，並已於九月十四日重開進行聆訊），亦同時顧及西九龍法院大樓也需用作處理各級法院涉及多名被告人的案件。

然而上述措施，特別是配對法庭安排，會減少灣仔法院大樓內用作處理區域法院其他刑事案件的法庭數目。為協助應對法庭短缺問題，司法機構有急切需要重用荃灣法院大樓，以適時提供額外的法庭設施，提升區域法院可處理社會事件相關及其他刑事案件的數目。

司法機構會繼續監察情況，以期提出適合及可行方法擴建法庭設施，應付上述所需。

完

2021年9月16日（星期四）

香港時間15時00分