

Drug abuse and drug situation in Hong Kong in 2024 (with photos)

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) noted at its meeting today (March 7) the figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) and other drug-related figures for 2024. ACAN noticed that the total number of reported drug abusers in 2024 was lower than that in 2023.

Figures from the CRDA revealed that the total number of reported drug abusers in 2024 decreased by 9 per cent (from 5 540 to 5 068) compared with that in 2023. The three most common types of drugs abused in 2024 were heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"). Nevertheless, the number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 in 2024 increased by 8 per cent (from 664 to 720), of which 226 vaped the "space oil drug". In this group, the most common type of drugs abused was cannabis, followed by cocaine and the "space oil drug". Since the first half of 2024, the "space oil drug" has continued to be the third most common type of drugs abused by this group.

To step up the control of the "space oil drug", the Government has listed etomidate, the main ingredient of the "space oil drug", and its three analogues, (metomidate, propoxate and isopropoxate) as dangerous drugs.

A spokesman for the Security Bureau (SB) said, "Etomidate, the main ingredient of the 'space oil drug', has been listed as a dangerous drug, which has significantly enhanced deterrence against 'space oil drug'-related crimes. The move has also facilitated the law enforcement agencies to take more stringent enforcement actions against 'space oil drug'-related crimes."

Recently, Hong Kong Customs arrested a 20-year-old man who carried a vape stick containing the suspected "space oil drug". In addition, the Police have arrested an 18-year-old man, a 16-year-old male and a 16-year-old female on suspicion of "outraging public decency". Police later seized "space oil drug" electronic cigarette cartridges suspected to contain etomidate from the residences of two of the arrested persons. The Police arrested the three persons on suspicion of "possession of dangerous drugs" and other offences.

The Chairman of ACAN, Dr Donald Li, said, "I am glad to see that the Government has adopted the suggestions from ACAN and promptly listed the main ingredient of the 'space oil drug' as a dangerous drug. I suggest that the Government continues to step up anti-drug publicity on all fronts. I also hope that primary and secondary schools can take the initiative to continuously inculcate in their students the proper knowledge and values of resisting drugs." He added, "The wickedness of the 'space oil drug' has been laid bare in recent controversial incidents. Teenagers who have mistaken vaping the 'space oil drug' as just a trivial matter should come to realise the drug harm of the 'space oil drug' from the cases in which young people have been arrested. I urge everyone to stay away from the 'space oil drug'."

The Government's new TV Announcement in the Public Interest (API), "Don't fall into 'space oil drug' traps!", has been launched on various television and radio channels. In addition, relevant advertisements and publicity materials have been displayed on public transport networks, large outdoor advertising spaces, cinemas, public housing estates, private housing estates, Community Living Rooms and villages in the New Territories, etc. The advertisements will also be pushed to mobile phone users on popular mobile application websites. Information and videos about the 'space oil drug' have been uploaded onto the dedicated webpage of the Narcotics Division (ND) of the SB (www.nd.gov.hk/en/space_oil_drug.html) for reference by the public.

The Anti-"Space Oil Drug" Week has just been co-organised by the ND and the Education Bureau, which was held in all schools in Hong Kong. At the time, teachers and students participated together in a number of interactive activities, which included game booths and interactive drama shows, to enable students to understand the harm of the "space oil drug" and the severity of committing "space oil drug" crimes. Anti-drug education activities in schools will not stop after the Anti-"Space Oil Drug" Week. The Government will continue to spread anti-"space oil drug" messages through different activities in schools, with a view to cultivating proper values among students and building a stronger anti-drug barrier for them.

As regards drug treatment and rehabilitation services, the Government will continue to foster cross-sectoral collaboration, including the social welfare, healthcare and education sectors, to enhance the awareness and handling capability of social workers, healthcare professionals and teaching staff in relation to the "space oil drug" to facilitate early identification of and assistance to "space oil drug" abusers.

According to statistical figures from law enforcement agencies, the number of persons arrested for drug offences in 2024 dropped by 5 per cent (from 3 407 to 3 243) when compared with 2023. The number of young arrestees aged under 21 decreased by 7 per cent (from 323 to 301). Cannabis, cocaine and "Ice" were the main drugs involved in these arrests. According to court cases concluded for the same period, the conviction rate of persons being prosecuted for drug offences was as high as nearly 90 per cent. As for young offenders aged under 21 who were sentenced to imprisonment for drug trafficking, more than half of them were sentenced to over five years in prison, and the longest period of imprisonment was 22 years.

This year marks ACAN's 60th anniversary. ACAN and the ND are taking the opportunity to co-organise a series of commemorative events, including an interactive roving exhibition in education institutions and the community, community engagement activities and competitions, with a view to consolidating anti-drug awareness in the community. In addition, the roving exhibition features a theme zone dedicated to the 60th anniversary of ACAN, where a number of precious historical posters, photos, anti-drug videos and TV APIs are displayed. The roving exhibition is divided into different theme zones with interactive games and digital exhibition panels etc. By incorporating the old and the new, visitors will be able to learn from the

past and have a better understanding of the harm caused by drugs. The next stop of the roving exhibition will take place at City University of Hong Kong from March 11 to 14. For more details of the roving exhibition, please visit the dedicated webpage on the ND's website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/ACAN60A_exhibition.html).

The statistical figures of the CRDA for 2024 are available on the ND website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html). The ND's website (www.nd.gov.hk) as well as its official accounts (narcotics.divisionhk) on Facebook and Instagram also contain detailed information about drugs including the "space oil drug" for the public's reference.

