

# Orders to amend Dangerous Drugs Ordinance and Control of Chemicals Ordinance to be gazetted on February 14 and etomidate to become dangerous drug on same date

A spokesperson for the Security Bureau said today (February 12) that etomidate and its three analogues will be listed as dangerous drugs following the publication of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2025 (DDO Order) in the Gazette on Friday (February 14). On the same date, the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 2) Order 2025 (CCO Order) will also be published in the Gazette.

The DDO Order will take effect upon its gazettal on February 14, 2025. The CCO Order is expected to become effective on April 11, 2025. Both Orders are subject to the negative vetting procedure of the Legislative Council (LegCo). Details, including the justifications for the legislative proposal, can be found in the brief for LegCo issued today in the Annex.

The DDO Order will add six substances, namely, butonitazene, bromazolam, etomidate, metomidate, propoxate, and isopropoxate, to the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO) (Cap. 134). Among them, metomidate, propoxate, and isopropoxate are analogues of etomidate. "In view of the recent abuse situation of etomidate, which is the main active ingredient of a new substance with the street name 'space oil drug', the Government is expediting the process and has arranged for the DDO Order to take effect immediately upon gazettal on February 14 in order to significantly enhance deterrence and enable effective law enforcement action against the 'space oil drug'," the spokesman said. Under the strict control of the DDO, trafficking and illicit manufacturing of these substances are liable to a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million. Possession and consumption of these substances in contravention of the DDO will be subject to a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment and a fine of \$1 million.

"The Government has been combating the 'space oil drug' on all fronts," the spokesman said. The Government has renamed "space oil" as "space oil drug" to make clear to the public its nature as a dangerous drug and its harmful effects. In addition, the Government has formulated preventive education and publicity strategy against the "space oil drug" in collaboration with various agencies, encouraging them to explain the harmful effects of the "space oil drug" to the public through different channels, raise self-awareness on drug prevention among the public, and seek more ways to reach out to hidden drug abusers.

To tie in with the legislative work, the Government will launch a new TV

Announcement in the Public Interest, namely "Don't fall into 'space oil drug' traps!" starting from February 14, and will continue placing advertisement through various online and offline channels and at different locations to promote the relevant message in different ways.

As young people are the target of "space oil drug" sellers, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau and the Education Bureau will jointly launch an anti-"space oil drug" week in schools in end-February. During the period, a series of activities will be held, including talks, anti-drug videos broadcasts and drama shows, with a view to preventing the spread of the "space oil drug" among the younger cohort.

Regarding the CCO Order, 18 precursor chemicals, namely, BMK glycidic acid and its methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, sec-butyl and tert-butyl esters (nine substances), PMK ethyl glycidate, and six additional esters of 3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid, namely, the propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, sec-butyl and tert-butyl esters (seven substances), 4-piperidone and 1-boc-4-piperidone, will be added to Schedule 2 to the Control of Chemicals Ordinance (CCO) (Cap. 145). It is an offence to possess, manufacture, transport or distribute any substance controlled under the CCO for the unlawful production of dangerous drugs, or to import or export the substance not under and in accordance with a licence issued by the Customs and Excise Department. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for 15 years.

The spokesperson said, "The amendments aim to deter any potential trafficking and abuse of these dangerous drugs and precursor chemicals. This will help fortify Hong Kong's defence against drugs. Our law enforcement agencies are ready to enforce the new regulation, including taking action against the 'space oil drug'."