

ACAN welcomes law enforcement agencies' crackdown on "space oil"-related crimes

The following is issued on behalf of the Action Committee Against Narcotics:

With regard to public concerns over youngsters abusing an emerging drug called "space oil", the Chairman of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), Dr Donald Li, said today (November 28) that the ACAN supports the Government's proposal of amending the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance for stepping up the control of etomidate at the earliest opportunity. Etomidate is the main active ingredient of "space oil". The ACAN also welcomes crackdown by the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) on "space oil"-related crimes.

Dr Li said, "I noticed that in recent months, the LEAs have been taking a series of actions targeting 'space oil'. During these actions, the LEAs successfully seized a considerable amount of 'space oil' as well as etomidate, and made multiple arrests. These results not only reflect the LEAs' determination and ability to combat 'space oil'-related crimes but also send a clear message to offenders, especially drug traffickers, that any individuals committing 'space oil'-related crimes will never be able to escape from legal sanctions.

"I appreciate the efforts of the LEAs in combating 'space oil'-related crimes. For the sake of protecting the public from the harms of this emerging drug, the ACAN supports continuing efforts by the LEAs to bring offenders committing 'space oil'-related crimes to justice."

A spokesman for the Security Bureau said, "Legislation and Law Enforcement forms an important part of the Government's multipronged anti-drug strategy. The Government will strive to continue combating 'space oil' at source with a view to cutting off its supply."

The spokesman continued that the LEAs have stepped up various inspections including cyber patrols and have carried out intelligence-based law enforcement actions targetting "space oil". For example, the Customs and Excise Department launched a series of anti-"space oil" operations in November and uncovered nine cases of possession of etomidate. A total of 191 alleged "space oil" infused capsules, and 16 kilograms of alleged etomidate powder that can be used to produce about 48 000 "space oil" infused capsules, were seized. In addition, the Police uncovered 88 "space oil"-related cases and made 132 arrests in the first 10 months of this year.

The spokesman reminded members of the public not to take chances and illegally bring "space oil" into and out of Hong Kong, as well as illegally bring e-liquid into Hong Kong. Offenders are liable to imprisonment upon conviction.

In October this year, the Chief Executive stated in the Supplement to his Policy Address that measures will be proposed to step up the control of etomidate in view of its abuses. In this regard, the Government has already proposed bringing etomidate under tighter control through legislation. Dr Li said, "I fully concur with the Government's proposal to control etomidate under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance; this will deter people from abusing 'space oil', and more severe punishment can be imposed on drug traffickers. The ACAN supports the Government to complete the relevant legislative procedures at the earliest opportunity."

Preventive education and publicity is important in reducing the demand for drugs. The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Preventive Education and Publicity of the ACAN, Mr Chan Wing-kin, said the ACAN will continue to work with the Government and stakeholders in the anti-drug sector to dispel the misconceptions about "space oil" with a view to preventing the public, especially youngsters, from falling into the trap of this emerging drug unwittingly. He added that the abovementioned work will include briefing teaching staff of schools on techniques for identifying those who abuse "space oil" or other drugs, as well as how to improve the capabilities of frontline workers for handling "space oil" cases.

Mr Chan said, "As a former school principal, I would like to call on colleagues in the education sector to be more vigilant against the vaping of alternative smoking products among students, as this behaviour could be a sign of drug abuse.

"Support and encouragement from family members, teachers and friends have always been the buttress of young people in times when they are fighting against drug temptation. I urge that we should show care to those around us and maintain good communication with them. If we find that people around us are facing difficulties or even suffering from drug abuse, we should lend them a helping hand and encourage them to seek professional help. I also hope that schools can step up their efforts in promoting a healthy lifestyle and fostering a drug-free culture among students."

Those who need assistance from professional social workers or would like to receive more information about "space oil" can message 98 186 186 on instant messaging applications WhatsApp and WeChat, or call the 24-hour hotline 186 186. "Space oil" abusers may also seek assistance from organisations providing drug treatment and rehabilitation services. Their contact details have been uploaded onto this Narcotics Division (ND)'s webpage (www.nd.gov.hk/en/list_of_major_organisations_providing_drug_treatment_and_rehabilitation_services.html).

In addition, members of the public are welcome to visit the ND's dedicated webpage (www.nd.gov.hk/en/space_oil.html) about "space oil", which contains a "space oil"-themed animated video and other relevant information.