

Cross-Agency Steering Group launches revamped website for sustainable finance

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Green and Sustainable Finance Cross-Agency Steering Group (Steering Group) has revamped its official website ([CASG website](#)) with enhanced database and tools to offer a one-stop green and sustainable finance information hub for financial institutions, corporates and the general public.

Key enhancements of the CASG website include:

Sustainability Disclosure e-Portal: The Climate and Environmental Risk Questionnaire for Non-listed companies (Questionnaire) has been digitalised. The Questionnaire is an easy-to-use template developed and launched in 2022 by the Steering Group and CDP to help corporates, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, get started in sustainability reporting. The digitalisation facilitates reporting and will support broader consent-based data sharing between corporates and financial institutions (Note).

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions calculation and estimation tools: Together with the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, the Steering Group has developed two tools to support the calculation and estimation of GHG emissions. The calculation tool enables users, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, to calculate their GHG emissions based on actual activity levels. The results can be automatically exported to answer relevant questions in the Questionnaire. The estimation tool enables users, primarily financial institutions, to estimate the GHG emissions associated with their investments or loans where data of underlying companies is limited.

Centralised sustainability data and information: Sustainability related data, regulation, news and events, training and internship opportunities will be featured on the CASG website with user-friendly browsing and search functions.

The Steering Group will continue to enhance the CASG website to support Hong Kong's decarbonisation efforts and role as a regional and global green and sustainable finance hub.

About the Steering Group

Established in May 2020, the Steering Group is co-chaired by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the Securities and Futures Commission. Members include the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Environment and Ecology Bureau, Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, Insurance

Authority, the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, and the Accounting and Financial Reporting Council. The Steering Group aims to coordinate the management of climate and environmental risks to the financial sector, accelerate the growth of green and sustainable finance in Hong Kong and support the Government's climate strategies.

Note: CDP is a global non-profit organisation that runs the world's environmental disclosure system for companies, cities, states and regions. Nearly 20 000 organisations around the world disclosed data through CDP in 2022, including more than 18 700 companies worth half of global market capitalisation, and over 1 100 cities, states and regions.

[SMS Sender Registration Scheme open to all sectors to further combat SMS fraud](#)

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) today (February 21) announced that the SMS Sender Registration Scheme is now open for application by all sectors to further help members of the public verify the identities of SMS senders, with a view to combating SMS fraud.

OFCA has been maintaining close liaison with Police and telecommunications operators to assist in combating telephone and SMS fraud from the perspective of telecommunications services. Since the implementation of the Scheme on December 28 last year, major telecommunications operators, the banking industry and individual government departments have joined the Scheme successively. OFCA is now further opening up the Scheme and welcomes the participation of public and private organisations from various industries with a practical need to communicate with customers/clients via SMS.

"Under the Scheme, only those companies or organisations being Registered Senders are able to send SMS messages using their Registered SMS Sender IDs with the prefix '#'. All other SMS messages with sender IDs containing '#' but not sent by Registered Senders will be blocked by the telecommunications networks. With such an arrangement, members of the public can easily identify whether an SMS message is received from a Registered Sender by the prefix '#' in the SMS Sender ID," a spokesman for OFCA said.

"Companies or organisations interested in joining the Scheme may visit OFCA's [website](#) for details and submit their completed application forms together with the required information to OFCA. OFCA will review the application and the SMS Sender ID(s) that can be used for registration if the application is approved," the spokesman added.

OFCA reminds that under all circumstances, members of the public should stay highly vigilant when receiving SMS messages from unknown senders, and must not disclose to unidentified senders any personal information, bank account numbers or credit card details, transfer money or access any hyperlink in the SMS messages, to avoid suffering any loss. Should there be any doubt, they should report it to Police immediately.

OFCA will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders and enhance publicity to raise public awareness of phone and SMS scams.

Missing man in Kwai Chung located

A man who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Cheung Shuet-lui, aged 70, went missing after he left his residence in Cho Yiu Chuen yesterday (February 20) morning. His family made a report to Police today (February 21).

The man was located at a pier on Wu Chui Road, Castle Peak this afternoon. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

Composite Interest Rate: End of January 2024

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (February 21) the composite interest rate at the end of January 2024 (Note 1).

The composite interest rate, which is a measure of the average cost of funds of banks, decreased by 7 basis points to 2.87 per cent at the end of January 2024, from 2.94 per cent at the end of December 2023 (see Chart 1 in the Annex). The decrease in composite interest rate mainly reflected a decrease in the weighted funding cost for deposits during the month (see Chart 2 in the Annex) (Note 2).

The historical data of the composite interest rate from the end of the fourth quarter of 2003 to the end of January 2024 are available in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin on the HKMA website (www.hkma.gov.hk).

Note 1: The composite interest rate is a weighted average interest rate of all Hong Kong dollar interest-rate-sensitive liabilities, which include deposits from customers, amounts due to banks, negotiable certificates of deposit and other debt instruments, and all other liabilities that do not involve any formal payment of interest but the values of which are sensitive to interest rate movements (such as Hong Kong dollar non-interest bearing demand deposits) on the books of banks. Data from retail banks, which account for about 90 per cent of the total customers' deposits in the banking sector, are used in the calculation. It should be noted that the composite interest rate represents only average interest expenses. There are various other costs involved in the making of a loan, such as operating costs (e.g. staff and rental expenses), credit cost and hedging cost, which are not covered by the composite interest rate.

Note 2: Since June 2019, the composite interest rate and weighted deposit rate have been calculated based on the new local "Interest rate risk in the banking book" (IRRBB) framework. As such, these figures are not strictly comparable with those of previous months.

[Drug abuse and drug situation in Hong Kong in 2023](#)

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) noted at its meeting today (February 21) the figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) and other drug-related figures for 2023. The ACAN noticed that the total number of reported drug abusers in 2023 was higher than that in 2022.

Figures from the CRDA revealed that the total number of reported drug abusers in 2023 increased by 3 per cent (from 5 363 to 5 500) compared with that in 2022. The number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 declined by 11 per cent (from 744 to 659). The most common type of drugs abused in 2023 was heroin, followed by cocaine and methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"), while cocaine, cannabis and ketamine (commonly known as "K") remained as the three most common types of drugs abused among young drug abusers aged under 21.

According to the figures from law enforcement agencies, the number of persons arrested for drug offences in 2023 decreased by 15 per cent (from 4 005 to 3 406) compared with that in 2022. For the same period, the number of young arrestees aged under 21 decreased by 33 per cent (from 483 to 323), and cannabis and cocaine were the main drugs involved. In addition, according to the court cases concluded in 2023, among persons prosecuted for drug offences, the share among them being convicted was as high as 87 per cent.

Speaking on the 3 per cent increase in the total number of reported drug abusers in 2023, the ACAN Chairman, Dr Donald Li, said, "As Hong Kong resumed

normalcy in full in 2023 after the COVID-19 pandemic, changes are also observed in the drug situation. Although the total number of reported drug abusers in 2023 was still lower than the ones in 2019 or 2018, the ACAN has already reminded relevant government departments to pay close attention to the changes in the drug situation, and has also suggested that they should continue various anti-drug promotion."

The ACAN continues to express concern about the cocaine abuse situation. Cocaine was the most common type of psychotropic substance abused in 2023. For the same period, cocaine was also the most common type of drug abused among the reported young drug abusers aged under 21, with over half of them (55 per cent) having abused cocaine. When categorising arrests for drug offences by drug types, the number of persons arrested for offences related to cocaine was also the highest. Dr Li added, "Cocaine is rampant across the globe. The ACAN noted that the law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong have detected many cocaine trafficking cases, and have enhanced collaboration with the Mainland and other places overseas. As for dealing with the situation locally, the Narcotics Division (ND) has stepped up promotion of the harmful effects of cocaine abuse. The ACAN will support the Government to keep implementing measures targeting cocaine abuse, as this drug is highly addictive and could be fatal."

In order to enhance the public's understanding of the harmful effects of cocaine abuse, the Narcotics Division has launched a new TV Announcement in the Public Interest (API) and the corresponding radio API, which describe abusing cocaine as sinking deep into a quagmire. Cocaine abuse will not only cause physical and mental harm, but will also cost its abusers their life savings, and burden them with enormous debts since they cannot get rid of the addiction to the drug. Furthermore, the ND has also produced an animated video, which is about how a young person with bright prospects had been controlled by his "inner demons" and paid a heavy price for one wrong decision: trying cocaine. Both videos have been uploaded onto the ND's website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/cocaine_info.html).

In addition to cocaine, the ACAN also discussed online drug traps at today's meeting, which include different groups inviting others to join drug taking activities through instant messaging and dating applications. In some cases, drugs would also be associated with sex. The ND will continue to closely liaise with the anti-drug sector and co-ordinate relevant training. This will help frontline workers have a better understanding of the characteristics and culture of different communities, and make more timely interventions with suitable treatments, with a view to encouraging early help-seeking from drug abusers. The ND reminds members of the public that they should avoid drug traps by staying vigilant against drug traffickers when using social media and dating applications as drug dealers are also using those applications.

The Chairman and members of the ACAN visited the Kwai Chung Customhouse after the meeting to learn about the latest drug enforcement work of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), including the use of advanced examination equipment (such as ion scanners, raman spectrometers and mobile

X-ray vehicle scanning systems), and the deployment of Customs Detector Dogs during cargo clearance in order to detect drugs more accurately.

Dr Li said the C&ED has been making great efforts to combat drugs over the years. The ACAN expressed full support for the C&ED's upcoming international participation and commitments, including taking up the role of the next World Customs Organization Vice-Chairperson for the Asia-Pacific Region, which will further consolidate the leadership position of the C&ED in the global customs community. The ACAN believes such an international involvement of the C&ED will contribute to combating drug problems at source and building a drug-free Hong Kong.

The website of the ND (www.nd.gov.hk) contains detailed information about drugs, including frequently asked questions about cocaine, for the public's reference. Members of the public can send messages to 98 186 186 through instant messaging applications WhatsApp and WeChat, or call the 24-hour hotline 186 186, to seek information or assistance from professional social workers.

The figures of the CRDA for 2023 are also available on the website of the ND (www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html).