

# Drug abuse and drug situation in Hong Kong in first three quarters of 2024

â€‹The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) noted at its meeting today (December 13) the statistical figures of the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) and other drug-related figures in the first three quarters of 2024. ACAN noticed that the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2024 was lower than that for the first three quarters in 2023, whereas the number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 increased. ACAN will closely monitor the situation in the remaining quarter of 2024, and will carry out anti-drug work according to the latest situation.

Figures from the CRDA revealed that the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2024 decreased by 9 per cent (from 4 485 to 4 082) when compared with that of 2023. The three most common types of drugs abused in the first three quarters of 2024 were heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"). Nevertheless, the number of reported young drug abusers aged under 21 in the first three quarters of 2024 increased from 538 to 593 when compared with the same period last year. Among these reported young drug abusers, 139 of them abused "space oil". In this group, the most common type of drugs abused was cannabis, followed by cocaine. Since the first half of 2024, "space oil" has continued to be the third most common type of drugs abused by young drug abusers aged under 21.

The Chairman of ACAN, Dr Donald Li, said "Without a doubt, vaping 'space oil' by e-cigarettes is the same as taking drugs. The abuse of etomidate, the main ingredient of 'space oil', could lead to addiction, memory loss, seizure, unconsciousness, and even death."

Dr Li reminds the public that they should never try "space oil" out of curiosity. It will cost one's health and career. He also called on the education and social welfare sectors to be vigilant about several signs of young people in the hope that early intervention can prevent the abuse situation from getting worse. These signs include possession of suspected e-cigarette products, and display of a vacant expression, an unsteady gait, unexplained bruises, etc.

Dr Li continued, "The Government has made it clear that it will step up the control of etomidate by amending the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance in the first quarter of next year. I welcome this initiative. No member of our society can get away from the problem of emerging drugs. We must take action by working together so that our younger generation would not fall prey to this new drug."

The Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau is highly concerned about the abuse of "space oil". It has adopted the suggestions from ACAN and launched education and publicity initiatives targeting "space oil" to enhance the public's abilities to protect themselves against this emerging drug. In

the second half of this year, the ND co-organised multiple exchange sessions with the Hospital Authority, social welfare service organisations and relevant government offices to help frontline social workers and teaching staff exercise extra vigilance against "space oil", and improve their capabilities for providing services to "space oil" abusers.

The ND and ACAN will launch a new TV Announcement in the Public Interest (API) on the theme of saying no to "space oil" abuse this month. Apart from this API, the ND will also broadcast a series of feature stories about "space oil". Through interviews with people from different sectors, including former drug abusers, professional social workers and a psychiatrist, these feature stories discuss the factors behind "space oil" abuse, the harmful effects caused by this new drug, the common misconceptions about "space oil" and the importance of promptly listing etomidate as a dangerous drug to protect the public from its abuse. Citizens are welcome to visit the ND's "space oil" dedicated webpage ([www.nd.gov.hk/tc/space\\_oil.html](http://www.nd.gov.hk/tc/space_oil.html)), which contains a "space oil"-themed animated video and relevant information.

According to the statistical figures from the law enforcement agencies, the number of persons arrested for drug offences in the first three quarters of 2024 dropped by 9 per cent (from 2 615 to 2 386) when compared with that of 2023. The number of young arrestees aged under 21 decreased by 20 per cent (from 246 to 196). Cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine were the main drugs involved in these arrests. According to the 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. The ND reminds young people to remain vigilant against drugs when attending gatherings or travelling abroad during the long holidays in December. Never try drugs out of curiosity and never take part in drug trafficking activities out of greed. Otherwise, there will be lifelong regrets. Young age is not a valid mitigating factor. Anyone who commits a drug offence is liable for serious criminal punishment. The maximum penalty for drug trafficking is life imprisonment and a fine of \$5 million.

In addition, the ND reminds members of the public again that cannabidiol (CBD) has been listed as a dangerous drug since February 1, 2023. When travelling outside Hong Kong, members of the public need to stay vigilant and avoid purchasing products containing CBD. Food and drinks, or even health supplements, skincare products (such as facial masks, massage oils), etc, may also contain CBD. No product containing CBD, regardless of its concentration, is allowed into Hong Kong.

The statistical figures of the CRDA for the first three quarters of 2024 are available on the website of the ND ([www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda\\_main\\_charts\\_and\\_tables.html](http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/crda_main_charts_and_tables.html)). The ND's website ([www.nd.gov.hk](http://www.nd.gov.hk)) as well as its official accounts (narcotics.divisionhk) on Facebook and Instagram also contain detailed information about drugs, including frequently asked questions about "space oil", cocaine and cannabis for the public's reference. If members of the public encounter any drug

problems, they can send messages to 98 186 186 on instant messaging applications WhatsApp and WeChat, or call the 24-hour hotline 186 186 to seek information or assistance from professional social workers.

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## [Hong Kong commits to implementing Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework](#)

The Government informed the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (Global Forum) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) today (December 13) of Hong Kong's commitment to implementing the Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF) for enhancing international tax transparency and combating cross-border tax evasion.

In June 2023, the OECD published CARF with a view to ensuring that global tax transparency would be maintained in light of the rapid growth of the crypto-asset market. As an extension of the existing Common Reporting Standard for Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information in Tax Matters (AEOI), CARF provides for a similar mechanism for annual automatic exchange of tax-relevant crypto-asset account and transaction information among jurisdictions where crypto-asset users or controlling persons are tax residents. To ensure an effective global implementation of CARF on a level playing field, the Global Forum has invited all tax jurisdictions that host a relevant crypto-asset sector and have been identified as immediately relevant to CARF (including Hong Kong) to implement it.

The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, said, "CARF is the latest global standard on tax transparency. Its implementation is crucial for maintaining Hong Kong's reputation as an international financial and business centre. It also reflects Hong Kong's ongoing efforts in promoting international tax co-operation as a responsible tax jurisdiction."

Hong Kong is committed to implementing CARF on a reciprocal basis with appropriate partners that meet the required standards for protecting data confidentiality and security. Based on the latest timetable set by the Global Forum, the Government aims to commence the first automatic exchanges with relevant jurisdictions under CARF from 2028, based on the initial plan that the necessary local legislative amendments can be put in place by 2026.

Mr Hui added, "The Government will engage relevant stakeholders and members of the public when preparing the necessary legislative amendments."

Hong Kong has been rendering unwavering support to international efforts to promote tax transparency and combat tax evasion. Since 2018, Hong Kong has conducted annual AEOIs with partner jurisdictions. The information can be

used by the relevant tax authorities to conduct tax assessments and to detect and counter tax evasion.

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## **Fraudulent websites and internet banking login screens related to Chong Hing Bank Limited**

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Chong Hing Bank Limited relating to fraudulent websites and internet banking login screens, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the websites or login screens concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

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## **Fraudulent website and internet banking login screen related to China Construction Bank (Asia) Corporation Limited**

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

â€‹The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of

the public to a press release issued by China Construction Bank (Asia) Corporation Limited relating to a fraudulent website and an internet banking login screen, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on [the HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website or login screen concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

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## **Fraudulent website and internet banking login screen related to Shanghai Commercial Bank Limited**

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

â€‹The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Shanghai Commercial Bank Limited relating to a fraudulent website and an internet banking login screen, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on [the HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website or login screen concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.