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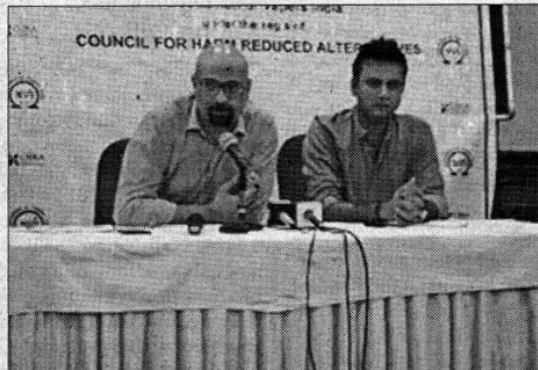
the daily newspaper

Banning e-cigarettes could harm public health: CHRA

GJ REPORT

JAMMU, AUG 22: Council for Harm Reduced Alternatives (CHRA), a national tobacco harm reduction organization that works towards reducing tobacco health burden through safer alternatives and Association of Vapers India (AVI), an advocacy group that represents e-cigarette users across the country, have warned the Central and State Governments against consequences of banning e-cigarettes, saying that it would deprive millions of smokers of safer choices and cause damage to public health.

CHRA further said that it is unfortunate that the Government is mulling banning e-cigarettes,



CHRA members addressing a Press Conference in Jammu.

which are 95% less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes, even as it promotes harm reduction programmes in interventions of addiction and communicable diseases. "Toxic chemicals and tar produced from the burning of cigarettes are the main

culprits for tobacco-related deaths across the world, not the nicotine. E-cigarettes have nicotine but not the tar, as there is 'no' combustion," pointed out AVI. Banning e-cigarettes would deny the country's 120 million smokers a lower-risk means of nicotine intake and cessation, stated AVI.

"Harm reduction is a concept we apply in our everyday lives by opting for safer products, be it refined oil or less-polluting cars. In tobacco use too, lives of users can be positively impacted with harm-reduced alternatives. The Government has so far relied on an emotional appeal to persuade tobacco users to kick the habit, but never offered an alternative beyond gums and patches, which have a very low

success rate.

Pratik Gupta, Director AVI, said, "The idea of banning e-cigarettes is premature given that no studies have been conducted by our health bodies on health impact of vaping. Meanwhile, multiple peer-reviewed scientific studies in countries such as UK and elsewhere have convinced health experts and governments to encourage smokers to switch to vaping. The hurry to ban e-cigarettes is therefore not understandable." E-cigarettes are not only less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes but also help smokers wean off the nicotine dependence. Besides, vaping poses far lower risk to bystanders than passive smoking. Regulatory permission for use of e-cigarettes in developed countries like US, UK etc has yielded positive results, with smoking rates falling in these countries in recent years. In contrast, smoking prevalence in India remains stubbornly high and needs to be done beyond banking on willpower of smokers to quit, as failure rates are as high as 95%. Further, increasing taxes beyond a point is counter-productive as it forces users to switch to cheaper and more harmful variants.