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Consumer body urges Rajasthan government to regulate, not ban e-cigarettes

Jaipur. Association of Vapers India (AVI), an organisation that represents e-cigarette users across the country, has offered to help the Rajasthan government with the formulation of a robust policy to regulate e-cigarette and vaping in the state. A ban would deprive people of access to safer alternatives while protecting the tobacco industry, it said. As per the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS)-2 survey, Rajasthan has over 68 lakh cigarette and bidi smokers who could die prematurely if not weaned off this habit in time. While the state government has made appreciable efforts to discourage smokers through taxation and tobacco control measures, the impact has been inadequate – the current 5.6% decline in smoking rate may not save many lives. That calls for rollout of additional intervention measures by the government, said Samrat Chowdhery, Director, AVI. Allowing smokers use of e-cigarettes, a less harmful alternative to tobacco smoking, is one possible intervention that would go a long way towards saving lives of smokers, as seen in developed countries like the US, UK and European Union, stated Chowdhery. The AVI function-



ary suggested that while framing a policy, the Rajasthan government take cognisance of the fact that potential harm to health of smokers could reduce by up to 95% if they switch to e-cigarettes. Further, he said, the state government should also keep in mind that world's leading public health organisations like Royal College of Physicians, UK; Public Health England; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering Medicine, USA; Cancer Research UK and American Cancer Society, among many others, have vouched for the relative safety of e-cigarettes for smokers. Why these public health watchdogs have endorsed vaping is easy to understand – unlike tobacco cigarettes,

e-cigarettes do not produce any tar or the toxic chemicals that cause tobacco-related deaths. E-cigarettes do contain nicotine, which is addictive but not fatal. "We are providing the Rajasthan government 120 studies on vaping conducted by reputed institutes, which the state's public health officials can peruse and draw their own conclusions," said Chowdhery. "We are also providing the government access to ex-smokers who have quit using e-cigarettes and noticed tremendous improvement in their lives. The government is welcome to medically assess the improvement in their health after quitting," said Pratik Gupta, a co-director of AVI.