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Banning e-cigarettes could harm public health: CHRA

JAMMU, AUG. 22: Council for Harm Reduced Alternatives (CHRA), a national tobacco harm reduction organisation that works towards reducing the 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 central and states governments against the consequences of banning e-cigarettes, saying it would deprive millions of smokers of safer choices and cause damage to public health.

CHRA said it is unfortunate the government is mulling banning e-cigarettes, which are 95% less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes, even as it promotes harm reduction programmes in interventions on 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 the vapers' body. Banning e-cigarettes would deny the country's 120 million smokers a lower-risk means of nicotine in-

take 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, the 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. An attempt to ban e-cigarettes is regressive given that the government's stated policy is to provide wider choices to consumers for all products and services, and not restrict them, said Samrat Chowdhery, Director, CHRA. 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 the health impact of vaping. Meanwhile, multiple peer-reviewed scientific studies in countries such as the 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."