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'Ban on e-cigarettes to reduce safer choices for smokers'

Groups warn governments, say e-cigarettes are 95% less harmful compared to those containing tobacco

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The Council for Harm Reduced Alternatives (CHRA), a national tobacco harm reduction organisation, and the Association of Vapers India (AVI), an advocacy group that represents e-cigarette users, have warned the Central and State governments about the consequences of banning e-cigarettes.

They said that a ban would deprive millions of smokers of safer choices and cause damage to public health.

The CHRA said it is unfortunate that the government is mulling banning e-cigarettes, "which are 95% less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes", even as it promotes harm-reduction pro-



E-cigarettes also help smokers wean off the nicotine dependence. • FILE PHOTO

grammes in interventions on addiction and communicable diseases.

'Regressive attempt'

"Harm reduction is a concept we apply in our every-

day 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, that 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 CHRA director Samrat Chowdhery.

'Premature idea'

Director of AVI Pratik Gupta said, "The idea of banning e-cigarettes is premature, given that no study has been conducted by our health organisations on the health impact of vaping. Meanwhile,

multiple peer-reviewed scientific studies in the U.K. and elsewhere have convinced health experts and governments to encourage smokers to switch to vaping. The hurry to ban e-cigarettes is not understandable."

E-cigarettes are not only less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes, but also help smokers wean off the nicotine dependence," he said.

"Besides, vaping poses far lower risk to bystanders than passive smoking. Regulatory permission for the use of e-cigarettes in developed countries like the U.S., E.U. and the U.K. has yielded positive results, with smoking rates falling in these countries in recent years," noted a release issued by the group.