

Publication : The News Now	Subject : Banning e-cigarettes could harm public healthsp
Date of Publish : 23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2018	Edition : Jammu

# The NEWS NOW

## Banning e-cigarettes could harm public health: CHRA

### TNN REPORT

**JAMMU:** 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 percent less harmful compared to tobacco cigarettes, even as it promotes harm reduction programmes in interventions on addiction and communicable diseases.

"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".

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 the use of e-cigarettes in developed countries like the US, EU and the UK has yielded positive results, with smoking rates falling in these countries in recent years.

"We request the government and health authorities to seriously consider the role of tobacco harm reduction in combating the tobacco epidemic which is killing a million people in our country every year," Chowdhery said, adding that lower-risk alternatives are also available for smokeless tobacco in the form

of Swedish snus, which like e-cigarettes, has been found to reduce harm by over 95%. "This would require a shift from the current moralistic approach of 'quit or die' to a more pragmatic one," he added.

The government can regulate the sale of e-cigarettes under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Product Act to prevent teens from using them, the AVI director added.