

CAIT stresses on regulations, over a blanket ban on E-cigarettes

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The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), in a letter to the government, has opposed the ban and stressed on the need for regulations with respect to the distribution, sale, trade and manufacturing of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) in India. CAIT has pointed that post assessment of research, many advanced economies have come up with robust frameworks that ensure stringent and transparent regulation that address the risks and benefits of the category adequately.

This letter was in the light of the latest development wherein the health ministry has reportedly proposed to classify electronic smoking devices, as "drugs" under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, in an endeavour to ban the category. According to official sources, the proposal has been approved by the Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), the government's top advisory body on technical matters related to medicines in the country.

"CAIT recognises and supports Government's tobacco control strategies. However, we also remain cognizant that technological innovation in the field of tobacco harm reduction offers an opportunity to smokers through products such as ENDS that significantly reduce the risks of tobacco consumption", the letter said. They have also opposed the ban on ENDS by stating the harm it brings to the government, traders and consumers as a prohibition would cause an increase in illicit trade, counterfeit & spurious products, revenue loss and most importantly, an increased risk to the health of consumers.

"It is our strong belief that allowing sale and access to less harmful alternatives as ENDS at such outlets, with appropriate regulatory measures and safeguards including age verification, will help in curbing cigarette smoking while ensuring sustained revenue for the traders and the government", the letter added.

As per studies assessed by CAIT's research wing, advanced economies such as United States, UK, and Canada among 98 other countries have already debated this and come up with robust frameworks that ensure stringent and transparent regulation that address the risks and benefits of the category adequately.

Many countries such as UAE, UK, Canada and New Zealand have invested in researching the public health impact of these

devices to develop appropriate regulations for optimizing its positive impact, instead of imposing outright prohibition. Infact, according to the assessment made by Public Health England, ENDS are at least 95 per cent less harmful than combustible cigarettes and the Government of UK views ENDS as a potential tool to reduce their public health-care expenditure incurred on account of tobacco related illnesses.