QUOTE by **Samrat Chowdhery, director, Council for Harm Reduced Alternatives,** *marking one year since the Indian government introduced a ban on e-cigarettes through an ordinance on September 18, 2019.*

A year in, the folly of the vape ban is coming into sharp relief. The goal of protecting youth is anything but met as e-cigarettes are still available in the black market, putting them at greater risk as now there are no checks and balances to prevent teen access which regulation could have achieved. Bans have also not worked in other comparable nations such Mexico, Thailand and Brazil, so India's failure comes as no surprise.

Since India's ban, more nations have moved towards regulation, including New Zealand, Philippines and Russia in our neighbourhood, which indicates our policy was not in sync with the global understanding around lower-risk tobacco alternatives.

The haste with which the government acted by banning e-cigarettes through an executive order is not validated since we have seen no major clampdowns which would justify the urgency of bypassing Parliament. If there was no great risk, using a blunt tool such as an ordinance points to other driving forces than protection of public health.

The ban has forced many vapers, especially women who had successfully made the switch to a less harmful alternative, back into smoking as they are unwilling to take the continued risk of purchasing through the black market. Perpetuating smoking in this way, which kills over 10 lakh Indians every year, further jeopardises wellbeing of our country. Those who continue to buy black market products are not assured of quality and safety, which too can have serious negative consequences.

In these lean economic times, the misstep of banning e-cigarettes is becoming ever more apparent. The nascent vape industry in India was driven by socially-minded entrepreneurs who wanted to make money while making a difference by helping India quit deadly smoking. This also had the downward benefit of creating an alternative source of revenue for India's tobacco farmers. Now while China's $5 billion vape industry is booming, we have destroyed an entire industry.

We request the Indian government to reconsider the ban in view of public health and economic imperatives, which are the to end deadly smoking and create economic activity in these troubled times. There is no better alignment of both health and wealth than the sensible regulation of e-cigarettes.