

E-cigarette makers go to war with EU

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Makers and users of electronic cigarettes on Tuesday (3 September) went to war against the European Union's plans to class the devices as medicinal products, saying any such move would end up harming public health.



Days before members of the European Parliament vote on a raft of new anti-smoking measures, organisers of the Save E-cigs Campaign said medical regulation of the product would condemn Europe's seven million e-cigarette users to a premature death.

"Medicinal regulation will impose limitations on e-cigarettes and will restrict their availability, raise costs and reduce innovation," a statement from the campaign organisers claimed.

"If MEPs vote for medicinal regulation more people will smoke (tobacco) and we will all be forced back to the nightmare we thought we had left behind," they added.

Parliament next week examines new legislation to be introduced across the European Union to replace rules dating back to 2001, in hopes of reducing the 700,000 deaths attributed to tobacco across the bloc each year.

The UN's World Health Organisation (WHO) has said the safety of e-cigarettes has not yet been scientifically demonstrated and the potential risks they pose for the health of users remains undetermined.

But e-cig users and makers, who say turnover has doubled since 2010, claim the electronic product represents a public health revolution that has the potential to save millions of lives.

Citing academic studies, they say e-cigarettes are safer than tobacco and are rapidly building market share.

Electronic cigarettes look like their traditional counterparts but are powered by a battery and vaporise a solution containing nicotine or flavours, which the user then inhales.

The new EU rules include a ban on menthol and other flavoured cigarettes as part of a crackdown on youth smoking while ordering mandatory health warnings on packaging.

If approved, the new law could be in force across the 28-nation bloc within three years.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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