

# Business Today

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## Govt says no proposal to ban junk food advertisements on television



Putting speculations to rest, the government today said there was no proposal at present to ban advertisements of junk food on television. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore told the Parliament that bodies like the Food and Beverage Alliance of India have already decided to voluntarily restrict food and beverage advertisements concerning children.

On whether the government proposes to impose a ban on telecast of junk food and cold/soft drinks ads on TV, Information and Broadcasting Minister Smriti Irani said that "presently there is no such proposal". Nine major food business operators have decided not to advertise products with high fat, salt or sugar on children's channels, the Minister said.

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Some member of parliaments had raised concerns about junk food affecting the health of children. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India had constituted an expert group to address the issue of high fat, sugar and salt foods. "The expert group in its report made a recommendation regarding ban on food with high fat, sugar and salt advertising on children's channels or during children shows. On this recommendation, the remarks of the FSSAI were that the food businesses could be asked to voluntarily desist from advertising high fat, sugar and salt foods on children's channels," Irani said.

The debate over banning TV ads on junk food is not only happening in India, but in several other countries. In 2014, the World Health Organisation had called for protecting children from the harmful effects of junk food and drink marketing. It said: "Food and drink marketing is a vast and increasingly sophisticated industry, and children are among its prime targets. Advertisements on TV, the Internet and mobile phones are being integrated with sponsorship agreements and product placement to maximize their impact." It further said that many advertisements promote foods high in fats, sugar and salt, consumption of which should be limited as part of a healthy diet.

*(With inputs from PTI)*