

## Government Clarifies Health Advisory Amidst Misleading Label Reports on Samosas, Jalebis



Recent reports suggesting that popular Indian snacks like samosas and jalebis would carry explicit health warning labels have been clarified as misleading by the Indian government. The Union Health Ministry, through the Press Information Bureau (PIB), has asserted that while it is promoting healthier dietary habits, its advisory does not mandate warning labels directly on food products sold by vendors, nor does it specifically target traditional Indian snacks.

The clarification emerged after several media outlets indicated that cherished Indian delicacies might soon be subject to warnings akin to those on tobacco products. However, the PIB confirmed on Tuesday, July 15, that "The advisory of the Union Health Ministry does not carry any warning labels on food products sold by vendors and has not been selective towards Indian snacks." Instead, the government's initiative is framed as a "behavioral nudge" aimed at raising general awareness about hidden fats and excess sugar in a variety of food items.

The actual directive from the Health Ministry advises central institutions, offices, and public spaces to install "Oil and Sugar Boards." These visual aids, which can be digital or static posters, are intended to be displayed in common areas such as cafeterias, lobbies, and meeting rooms. Their purpose is to inform individuals about the caloric content and potential health risks associated with high levels of hidden fats and sugars often present in everyday foods. For instance, officials at AIIMS Nagpur have confirmed receiving this directive and are preparing to implement these informative boards across their facilities.

This measure is part of a broader public health campaign to combat India's escalating non-communicable disease (NCD) burden, particularly the rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and

heart disease. Government data indicates a concerning trend, with projections suggesting that over 449 million Indians could be overweight or obese by 2050, positioning India as the world's second-largest hub for obesity. Furthermore, one in five adults in urban areas is already classified as overweight, and childhood obesity is a growing concern, fueled by modern dietary patterns and sedentary lifestyles.

The Health Ministry has underscored that this advisory does not aim to undermine India's rich street food culture but rather to empower citizens to make more informed dietary choices. By providing clear information on common food components, the government seeks to foster a greater understanding of healthy eating and living, promoting moderation rather than outright prohibition of traditional foods.