

Child rights body to ensure junk food is off school menus

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The FSSAI had formed guidelines for making hygienic food available to schoolchildren.

Will hold meeting of stakeholders to work out alternatives

In a bid to ensure schoolchildren stay healthy, the Tamil Nadu Commission for Protection of Child Rights (TNCPCR) will be holding a meeting to arrive at alternatives that can be served in school canteens instead of junk food.

In November last year, the National Commission For Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) had written to all State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights to inspect schools in their jurisdiction and ensure that food high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) were not provided in schools.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had framed guidelines for making wholesome, nutritious, safe and hygienic food available to school children in the country to promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risk of diseases.

Subsequently, M.P. Nirmala, chairperson, TNCPCR, had written to all collectors to inspect canteens of schools in their districts to ensure no HFSS food was supplied in the canteens.

“During the checks it was found that most schools were serving HFSS food. But they were willing to serve healthy food and were unsure of the type of food,” said Ms. Nirmala.

Involving stakeholders

The TNCPDR will therefore be holding a meeting with experts, representatives of school managements, parents, nutritionists, those running school canteens and other stakeholders soon.

“Chefs will also be roped in to provide recipes. The healthy food should also be palatable. There are a lot of healthy local food,” she added.

Sources from the FSSAI also pointed out that it was essential to create awareness in schools about healthy food.

“Teachers should educate children on foods to avoid and those that should be eaten to lead a healthy life. This is not being done in most schools,” said a food safety official.

NCPCR officials said that further course of action would be arrived at after all State panels submit their reports.