

Nestle challenges noodles ban in Indian court

MUMBAI: Nestle said on Thursday it is challenging a ban imposed by India on its hugely popular Maggi instant noodles brand after tests showed they contained excessive levels of lead...



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Nestle said it had approached the high court in the city of Mumbai seeking a judicial review of a 5 June order from the government's food safety regulator banning the product.

"Nestle India Limited has today approached the Hon'ble Bombay High Court raising issues of interpretation of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2011," said a statement posted on the company's website.

It said it was also challenging a separate order from the state government of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital.

Nestle, which says the noodles are safe to eat, had already announced it was pulling the product from sale when the ban was imposed.

On Thursday it said it would keep the product off store shelves despite the court action.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said last week it was banning the company from producing and selling the noodles after tests by some states found lead levels above statutory limits.

The safety scare is a huge blow to the company, which has been selling its Maggi brand for over three decades in India, and has 80 percent of the country's instant noodle market.

Shares in Nestle India, a subsidiary of the Swiss-based giant, fell more than 9.0 percent on the Bombay Stock Exchange last week as the controversy escalated.

The company's global chief executive Paul Bulcke flew to India last week to try to reassure consumers over the safety

scare, telling a press conference on Friday that the noodles were "safe for consumption".

But the move failed to convince India's government, which on Monday said it would seek damages from Nestle for false advertising.

Maggi noodles - marketed as a quick and healthy snack - grew increasingly popular as more and more Indians moved away from their homes to study or seek work.

It emerged as one of India's five most trusted brands in a consumer survey conducted last year.

Several celebrities have endorsed Maggi over the years, including Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan.

Nestle, which markets a huge range of food items from Nescafe instant coffee to KitKat bars, said last week that Maggi noodles would return to the market "as soon as the current situation is clarified".

The court will hear submissions from both sides on 18 June, according to a listing on its website.

Source: AFP

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