

Nestle restarts Maggi noodle production in India

MUMBAI - Nestle said Tuesday it had restarted production of Maggi noodles in India after a government ban was overturned, in a major step towards getting the hugely popular brand back on shelves.

"We have resumed manufacturing of Maggi noodles at three of our plants, at Nanjangud (Karnataka), Moga (Punjab) and Bicholim (Goa)," the Swiss food giant said in a statement.

India's food safety watchdog slapped a nationwide ban on the noodles in June, saying lead levels exceeded statutory limits.

But the Bombay High Court, the highest court in the western city now known as Mumbai, overturned the ruling two months later, calling it "arbitrary" and ordered fresh tests.

Earlier this month Nestle said the laboratory tests had found that Maggi noodles were safe to eat.

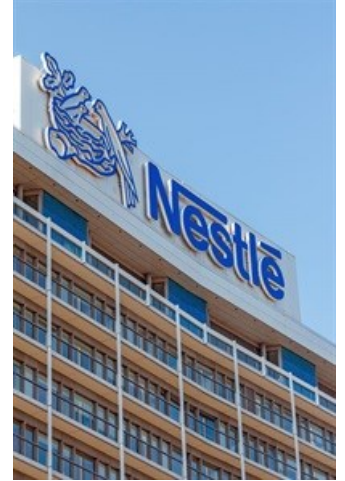
In its statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange on Tuesday, Nestle's Indian arm added that fresh samples from the newly produced batches will be sent for testing.

"We shall commence sale only after the samples are cleared by these laboratories," it said. Although it's not clear when the noodles will be back in Indian shops, an official at the company told AFP on condition of anonymity that the testing process would take a few weeks.

Nestle had sold the product for over three decades in India, and had 80 percent of the country's instant noodle market before the ban. Nestle's Indian arm has estimated that its run-in with Indian regulators will cost the company 3.2 billion rupees (\$50 million).

The company has always maintained the product was safe to eat, and has continued to sell it in other countries.

Source: AFP



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