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Revoke ban on new tea factories: Association

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Udhagamandalam: The Nilgiris Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers' Association (NBLTMA) and small tea farmers in the Nilgiris urged the Union government to lift the ban on new tea factories in the district.

In 2019, the Tea Board India passed an order banning new manufacturing units in the Nilgiris. "On receiving this circular, we made several representations to the board to lift the ban and to give opportunity to new entrepreneurs wanting to enter the industry," said NBLTMA president Dhananjayan. "The issue was discussed in detail in six board meetings held between June 2019 and Mar 2021."

The board issued a circular in January, stating that NOC or license could be issued to tea manufacturing units covering all regions under north India, Dhananjayan said. Subsequently, NBLTMA wrote to the Prime Minister, seeking his intervention on April 17. "It is clearly evident that there is a biased approach in addressing issues of the stakeholders of south India," the letter said.

"People having small tea gardens of 10-15 acres would want to have their own mini tea manufacturing factories. The proportion between the yield of green leaf tea and the number of bought leaf factories functioning in the Nilgiris do not match. We need more factories," said K Sivan, a small tea farmer. "This is the earnest, genuine and long unmet demand of the small tea growers in the district."

Revoking the ban would go a long way to strengthen the economy of the district where tea cultivation is the main activity, said vice chairman of Tea Board India B Kumaran. "The board is taking action to lift the ban in the Nilgiris."

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