

## Unilever strengthens Indian flavour with Paranjpe as COO

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**MUMBAI:** Indian executives continue to work their way up the Unilever leadership ladder with the Anglo-Dutch company on Thursday elevating Nitin Paranjpe, 56, who heads its foods and refreshments business, as its chief operating officer (COO), the second Indian after Harish Manwani to hold the position.

Simultaneously, the company included Sanjiv Mehta, chairman and managing director of Hindustan Unilever Ltd, into its Unilever leadership executive (ULE) team, making him the third Indian in the exclusive 11-member body that runs the €51 billion consumer goods maker.

Mehta will join Leena Nair, chief human resource officer, and Paranjpe.

In addition to being part of the ULE and chairman and managing director of Hindustan Unilever, Mehta will also be the president of the company's South Asia operations.

ULE is Unilever's top executive team and includes C-Suite executives such as heads of finance, human resources, research and development, marketing and supply chain, besides chiefs of key markets such as Europe, North America and North Asia.

The latest promotions are a continuation of a decades-long trend of executives from its successful Indian operation taking up top leadership roles at its parent. Prior to Manwani, Manvin-



■ Nitin Paranjpe.

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der Singh Banga served as president for global foods, home and personal care. Banga, a former Hindustan Unilever chairman, was also part of the ULE.

Manwani, the longest serving non-executive chairman of India's largest household goods maker, retired in 2018 after being in that position for 13 years. He was also the first ever chief operating officer of Unilever.

Prior to his current elevation, Paranjpe was managing director and chief executive of HUL from 2008 to 2013, before becoming president of Unilever's foods and refreshments division. Hanneke Faber, president of Europe, will replace Paranjpe as president, foods and refreshment.

"Today's increasingly fragmented consumer, channel and media environment requires us to operate with more speed and agility than ever before. With his

deep knowledge and experience of our markets, Nitin is ideally placed to work with me and the Unilever Leadership Executive to drive our performance and help deliver our growth ambitions," Alan Jope, chief executive of Unilever, said in a statement.

Sandip Ghose, a former managing director of Nepal Levers, a unit of Hindustan Unilever, and now executive president of Birla Corp., remembers Paranjpe as a people's person.

"He has been a very mature professional. I remember there was a massive protest in Kerala against HUL products and he happened to be working there. The way he handled the situation showed his ability to be level-headed during a crisis. When it comes to working with people, he is not someone who would be brash," Ghose said in a phone interview.