

HUL to Launch a Natural Products' Brand to Cash in on Hygiene Boom

A New Range

Products to be launched across multiple markets

Most priced at par with existing brands

Developed in India; Company plan to take it to other South Asian markets



Sagar Malviya
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever (HUL) is launching a new brand, Nature Protect, under which it will sell more than a half-dozen products in the hygiene segment as part of its strategy to launch plant-based products in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This will be the first mother brand developed in India to be launched by the market-leading subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods company in 18 years. It will include products in categories such as laundry detergent, germ removal wipes, disinfectant surface cleaner spray and fruit and vegetable cleaner, all infused with neem and other naturally derived extracts.

"All through this pandemic, we have seen that consumer habits have shifted quite a bit. Therefore, all of the categories that play in the space of hygiene are becoming more and more relevant," Prabha Narasimhan, executive director — home care at HUL, told ET. "The pandemic and consumer anxiety around hygiene, and the fact that there aren't that many solutions in the country that pivot around the idea of catering to consumers while looking for natural products, gave impetus to the idea."

Ayush, in 2002, was the compa-

ny's last launch that covered several categories under a single brand. The company said its new brand has taken just over a month, a record time, from ideation to the final launch stage.

A recent report by market researcher Nielsen said consumer goods companies introduced 1,897 products in the health and hygiene segment in the March-August period, an 18-fold jump from the preceding six months, spanning categories such as liquid soaps, antiseptic liquids and analgesics, driven by reconfiguration of consumer budgets.

HUL alone launched more than 100 new products and variants over the past six months, mostly in the hygiene segment, including Surf Excel anti-germ wash booster, Vim anti-germ scrubbers and Domex wipes.

The country's biggest consumer firm said its new range will not cannibalise the existing ones, as the penetration of floor cleaners is less than 20% and less than a percent for other categories.

"We have also tried to price it at the belly of the market and not at a super-premium to make it accessible to most consumers in, at least, urban India. This is the first soft hygiene floor cleaner, and therefore, appeals to a broad-based audience," said Narasimhan, who was elevated as the head of home care in February.