

AMAZON SMBHAV SUMMIT

Pandemic highlights need for collaboration: Mehta

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Mumbai, 16 April

The Covid-19 crisis has driven home the need for collaboration, partnerships, and alliances among businesses like never before, Hindustan Unilever (HUL) Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Mehta said on Friday.

Mehta was delivering his keynote address virtually on the second day of the Amazon Smbhav Summit, where he pointed out that to stay resilient and agile, it was important to have a nimble supply chain and

a data-driven ecosystem that could be dynamically managed. "At HUL, for instance, we drove the fast recovery of operations through strategic partnerships. In some cases, even collaborating with manufacturers and other industries to meet the rising demand of some products," he said.

HUL was amongst the fastest to recover within the fast-moving consumer goods companies following a nationwide lockdown last year, which forced businesses to temporarily halt operations. HUL switched its attention to man-

ufacturing products that were high in demand, including hygiene, health care and nutrition products, launching over 50 new products and leveraging technology across the value chain.

"Our Shikhar app, which is a B2B ordering platform, enabled retailers to place contactless orders and provided them visibility into the fulfillment of those orders through logistic tie-ups and intuitive interfaces. We crafted communication keeping in mind changing consumer sentiments and put compassion at

the centre of leadership."

Mehta said the momentum on technology and digitisation, triggered by the pandemic, should be leveraged to make a fundamental shift across sectors, including education, health care and governance, besides business.

"The pandemic accelerated our nation's digital journey, many of our fellow citizens moved to online for the first time, whether to get news or to source essentials. City children had the first days of online schooling and office-goers adapted to working from home.

The digital opportunity has to be maximised, easing the pressure on big cities while bringing development across the country," he said.

Mehta reiterated the need for small and medium enterprises to adopt a digital-first business model. "The RBI's financial stability report of July stated it will be critical for small and medium businesses to navigate to a digital-first model. In fact, leveraging technology in businesses will have a bigger impact on collective productivity gain that comes from widespread digitisation," he said.



HUL CMD Sanjiv Mehta says small and medium enterprises need to adopt a digital-first business model