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HUL sees strongest sales growth in 14 qtrs, net up 4%

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Consumer goods major Hindustan Unilever on Wednesday reported a 3.8% increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 2,796 crore in the Sept quarter, while revenue rose 14.4% to Rs 18,386 crore, indicating strong growth despite cost pressure.

Underlying sales growth stood at 15%, the highest in 14 quarters, while volume growth accelerated to 7% from 5% in the June quarter. HUL also recorded price growth of about 8% during the Sept quarter.

"We see both urban and rural growth at this moment," MD & CEO Priya Nair said. HUL said its rural business had improved sequentially over the past four quarters but did not disclose separate rural and urban growth rates.

The company is keeping a close tab on costs. "We took calibrated price increases only to cover the absolute impact of the higher cost," CFO Niranjan Gupta said during an analyst call. HUL will consider further increases depending on how input costs move. It expects commodity inflation to remain elevated in the near term, although management said the June and September quarters had borne much of the recent increase.

Nair said the company will look to shore up volumes to help deliver revenue and profit.

Home care led the quarter, with underlying sales rising 22% on double-digit volume growth. However, its segment profit grew only 2.6% to Rs 1,111 crore, while revenue rose 21.4% to Rs 6,878 crore. The segment's margin fell to 16.2% from 19.1%.

"When input costs go up steeply in a category like home care, there's always a lag in price versus cost," Nair said. Home care is particularly exposed to petrochemical-based raw materials.