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Unilever Opens AI-Led Fragrance Research Centre at IIT Bombay

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Mumbai: Consumer goods maker Unilever has opened a fragrance research and development centre at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, as part of a €100-million plan to use artificial intelligence to develop fragrances at its centres in India, the US and the UK.

This is the company's third global Unilever Fragrance House (UFH) and comes nearly three decades after it sold Quest International, its flavours and fragrances arm, in 1997.

"We see three models. One wherein we create the entire fragrance in-house with our creative experts and consumer and brand knowledge. The second is where we collaborate with fragrance houses, which will continue. The difference there is that we will now bring our creative expertise. The third is a fully outsourced model," Vivek Sirohi, head of UFH and R&D Partnerships, told ET.



The facility is Unilever's third globally and is part of a €100-m plan to use AI for developing fragrances

Unilever had formally announced the creation of the Unilever Fragrance House in November 2024. The company launched its first fragrance facility in May 2025 as part of this network at Port Sunlight, UK, entailing an investment of £80 million. Its US facility was announced in July 2025 in Connecticut.

Sirohi said Unilever remains one of the largest scaled players in fragrance globally, making it important for the company to "start owning the whole design".

The maker of Dove soap, however, said it will not replace existing fragrance partners completely, but instead leverage them during product development and consumer insights as it adopts a hybrid model that combines internal capabilities with partnerships with global fragrance houses.

Unlike the traditional model, where fragrance is developed separately from the product, the company is now looking to integrate both at the same time. "We want to co-innovate the product and fragrance at the same time, which means fragrance becomes an integral part of product innovation," Sirohi said.

The company said it is investing heavily in AI capabilities, predictive analytics and digital tools at the Fragrance House, accelerating product innovation and go-to-market timelines.