

Diageo CEO Ivan Menezes dies shortly before retirement

British multinational premium drinks giant Diageo has announced that its chief executive officer Sir Ivan Menezes has died following a brief illness.



Diageo CEO Ivan Menezes. Source: Supplied

Menezes has served as chief executive officer since July 2013. He was due to retire at the end of this month on 30 June, with chief operating officer [Debra Crew appointed](#) to succeed him as CEO.

Menezes was born on 10 July 1959 in Pune, India. He held UK and US citizenship, and overseas citizenship for India. He joined Diageo at its creation in 1997 and held many senior positions in a career spanning over 25 years at the company. During his stint as global marketing director in the late 1980s, he was responsible for developing the now iconic 'Keep Walking' campaign for Johnnie Walker.

“ pic.twitter.com/oKzmg6wNws— Diageo News (@Diageo_News) [June 7, 2023](#) ”

Diageo chairman Javier Ferrán commented on his passing, “This is an incredibly sad day. Ivan was undoubtedly one of the finest leaders of his generation.

“Ivan was there at the creation of Diageo and over 25 years, shaped Diageo to become one of the best performing, most trusted and respected consumer companies. I saw first-hand his steadfast commitment to our people and to creating a culture that enabled everyone to thrive. He invested his time and energy in people at every level of the company and saw potential that others may have overlooked. This is one of many reasons why he was beloved by our employees, past and present.

“Ivan’s energy and his commitment to diversity created a truly inclusive business and enabled Diageo to have a positive impact on the communities we serve. His passion for our brands was second-to-none and in his heart, he remained the Johnnie Walker marketer from his early days. The desire to build the world’s best brands never left him.

“We are truly privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside such a thoughtful and passionate colleague and friend - a true gentleman. He has built an extraordinary legacy. Ivan leaves behind many friends and a beloved family, and our thoughts are particularly with his wife, Shibani and his two children, Nikhil and Rohini. On behalf of the board, executive committee and all our employees, we extend our deepest sympathies to them.”



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Leaving a legacy

Diageo said in a statement that during his decade as CEO, Menezes oversaw an outstanding period of change, growth and high performance. Having steered Diageo through the Covid-19 pandemic, he delivered a company with net sales value 36% larger than in 2019.

Menezes was described as an inspirational champion for both women and ethnic minorities in business.

“In 2008 there were no women on Diageo’s executive committee, today over half are women, including his successor as CEO, the CFO and the presidents of Diageo’s largest markets - North America, Europe and India, and almost half of the executive committee are ethnically diverse. Over 40% of Diageo’s senior leadership positions globally are held by women, while 37% are ethnically diverse, well on the way to his target to achieve gender parity in senior leadership and 45% of our leadership to be ethnically diverse by 2025,” Diageo said.

The company added that he was determined to be a pioneer on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. Diageo halved carbon emissions in absolute terms under his leadership – even as the company significantly increased production and sales – and water efficiency also improved by almost half.



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Beyond Diageo, Menezes was chairman of ‘Movement to Work’ between 2017 and 2020, a UK voluntary collaboration of businesses committed to tackling youth unemployment, in partnership with government, unions and charities, delivering 100,000 structured work placements for young people in the UK, with over 55% of participants securing permanent jobs.

He also had a long involvement with the Pratham charity as an ongoing donor. Pratham is a charity which promotes literacy and provides education to underprivileged children in India.

In January 2023, Menezes was awarded a Knighthood for services to business and to equality in His Majesty The King's 2023 New Year Honours List.

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