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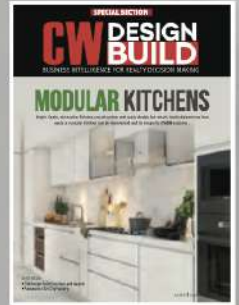
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- Outlook on the Indian Rupee...52
- Tunnelling & Trenching Equipment...66
- Optimising Gensets...78
- Quazigund-Banihal Tunnel, Jammu & Kashmir...72
- Interviews: Lucknow Metro Rail Corporation; Birla Corporation; Trimble Information Technologies India...84, 64, 86



page...91

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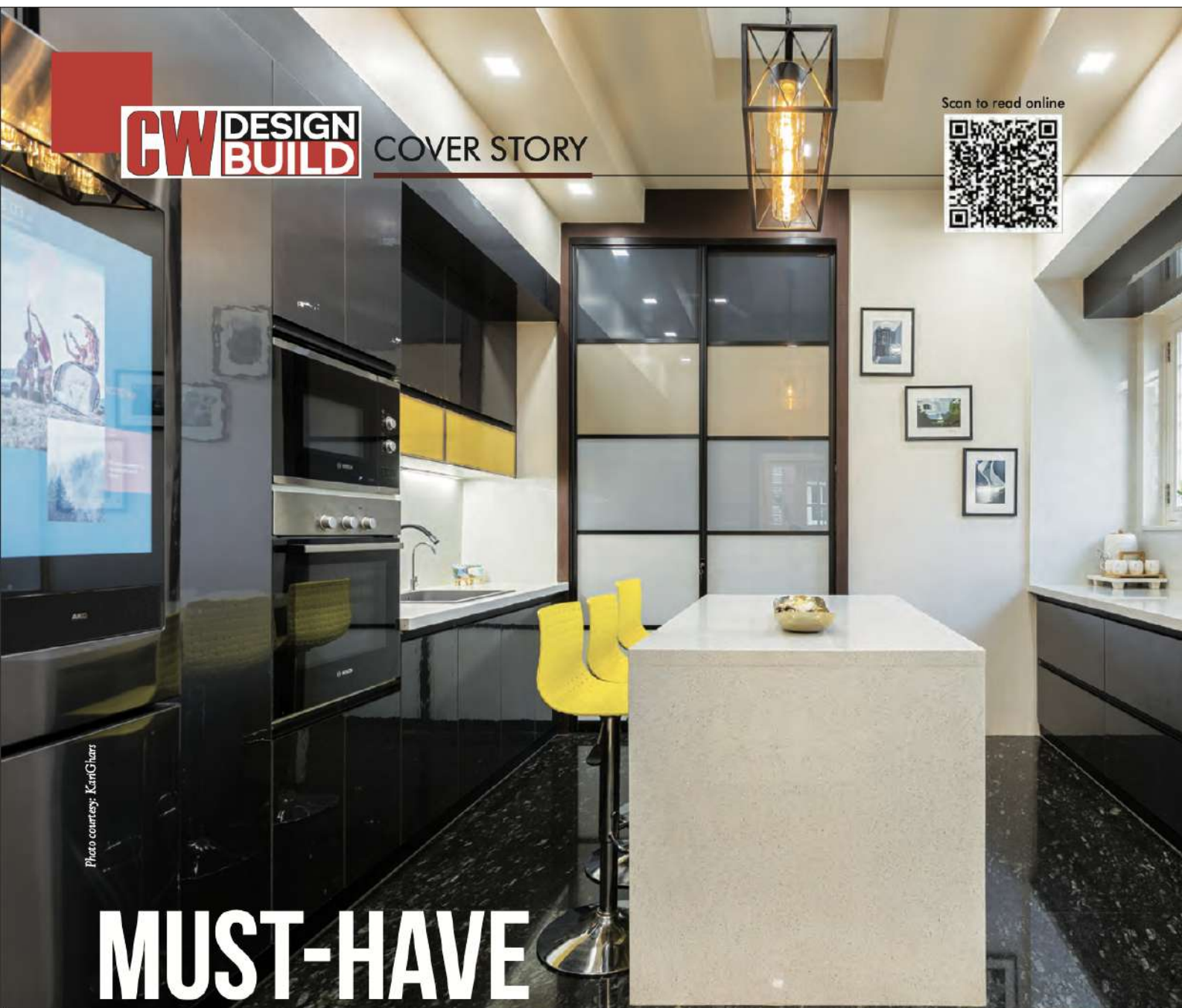


Photo courtesy: Kirti Ghosh

MUST-HAVE MODULAR KITCHENS

CW delves into everything you need to know about modular kitchens – from pricing to choosing materials, a colour scheme, design and vendor.

Modular kitchen (defined):
A kitchen made up of storage modules intelligently designed to facilitate everyday functionality. These components, including shelves, drawers, cabinets, shutters, et al, maximise the utilisation of space and can be dismantled and reassembled.

Modular kitchens are no longer seen as a luxury in a residential property. "A modular kitchen is an

expected feature," says **Rajkumar Singh, Senior Director, Residential Sales (Mumbai), ANAROCK Group.** "Projects that don't offer a modular kitchen are becoming rarities; in fact, in larger cities, we are seeing these even in lower-budget housing projects. If a modular kitchen isn't available, the homebuyer has to spend a lot of time and money to get one put in. Developers, on the other hand, can

get much cheaper deals on them because they buy at scale. Of the various grades of modular kitchens, the more luxurious designer options are seen in upper-end projects."

So, however challenging it is to pinpoint how much a modular kitchen increases the price of a property, the fact is, "the absence of a modular kitchen and other expected modern accoutrements like parking spaces may cause



QUICK BYTES

- Modular kitchens enhance the living experience of the homeowner and also ensure safety.
- Absence of a modular kitchen and other expected modern accoutrements may cause buyers to drop the property from their shortlist.
- Designing a modular kitchen: minimum of ₹100,000; subject to design philosophy and materials used, can go up to ₹2 million.

buyers to drop the property from their shortlist," points out Singh.

Indeed.

The kitchen is one of the key influences on a real-estate buyer's decision, which is why developers focus on modular kitchens, opines **Aiyappa Alemada, Executive Vice President & Business Head, Purva Streaks, Interiors Division, Puravankara.**

While some developers today are offering modular kitchens as an amenity, many have started giving bare shell kitchens so homeowners can design the kitchen themselves, shares **Sarthak Seth, Vice President and CMO, Tata Realty and Infrastructure.** "Some developers are also offering personalised kitchens at an added cost. These are created in keeping with the homeowner's choice."

It is expensive — or is it?

The only negative associated with modular kitchens is the price tag.

"A factory-made modular kitchen will cost roughly twice as much as a handmade one depending on the size of the kitchen, the selection of accessories and materials," estimates **Meenakshi Jessani, Founder, MJ Architects.**

Speaking of numbers, a fully functional modular kitchen design can cost up to ₹500,000 or more, says **Abhishek Chadha, CEO & Co-Founder, The KariGhars.**

Seth points out that designing a modular kitchen costs a minimum of ₹100,000, and subject to the design philosophy and materials used, the price can rise to ₹2 million.

While that may seem steep, Alemada believes the higher initial costs are offset by long-term benefits such as superior functionality, customisability, standardised sizes (allowing easy upgrades in parts) and longevity.



"The price of a modular kitchen can be comparable to an old style kitchen."

- **Bharat Pathak, of BP's Modular Solutions**



"Only modular kitchens allow the deep cleaning of hidden corners and edges."

- **Keerthana N, Interior Designer, SS Interiors & Infrastructure**



"A factory-made modular kitchen will cost roughly twice as much as a handmade one."

- **Meenakshi Jessani, Founder, MJ Architects**

"Modular components are far more precise and of a superior quality, besides being reusable," adds Jessani.

And **Keerthana N, Interior Designer, SS Interiors & Infrastructure,** maintains: "Only modular kitchens allow the deep cleaning of hidden corners and edges because their fittings can be detached, cleaned and reattached."

Clearly, the advantages are too many to be ignored. As for the high price, Chadha points out that the design can be tailored to the customer's budget and

Current Trends

Open modular kitchens extending into living spaces are gaining popularity among the younger urban population, says **Keerthana N, Interior Designer, SS Interiors & Infrastructure**. "Kitchens are no longer synonymous with cooking; they are seen as places where food becomes as much a part of the conversation as the people who talk."

A clean-lined, handle-less design style is a current trend, a concept that has outlasted its early acceptance, adds Keerthana. "L, U, straight and parallel are the most common kitchen shapes. If a kitchen is very large or the plan is open, an island fits in."

"While L-shape designs, U-shape designs or multiple slabs may provide more workspace, it is equally important to have flexible kitchen spaces that can be used for more than one purpose," opines **Sarthak Seth, Vice President & CMO, Tata Realty and Infrastructure**. "Also, properties should be oriented in a way that kitchens receive more ventilation and light to ease cooking and cleaning."

needs, quite unlike traditional carpentry methods.

With the price of modules depending on their design and the quality of the material used, customers have the flexibility and power to get a kitchen meeting their requirements and budget, points out **Bharat Pathak of BP's Modular Solutions**, a modular kitchen consultant. "Consequently, the price of a modular kitchen

can be comparable to an old style kitchen."

What is inside?

Bright, flashy, decorative finishes are attractive and easily doable but what's inside determines how easily a modular kitchen can be maintained, and its longevity.

The ease of maintaining a modular kitchen is directly proportional to the quality of the



"In larger cities, we are seeing modular kitchens even in lower-budget

housing projects."

- **Rajkumar Singh**, Senior Director, Residential Sales (Mumbai), ANAROCK Group



"The ease of maintaining a modular kitchen is directly proportional to the quality

of the materials and hardware used."

- **Devika Khosla**, Creative Director, The Works Interiors

materials and hardware used, explains **Devika Khosla, Creative Director, The Works Interiors**. "If these are compromised,



The kitchen is a key influencer in a real-estate buyer's decision, which is why developers focus on modular kitchens.



Acrylic can be chosen for durability or colourful polyurethane finishes can be incorporated to offer an elegant look.

maintenance can take a toll. If these are well chosen, the kitchen can last a lifetime."

So, what materials are recommended?

"We prefer high-density high moisture resistance (HDHMR) boards and plywood for the skeleton or carcass, while for the exteriors, we use ply laminates, PVC laminates and acrylic sheets with hyper bond, responds Keerthana. "Aluminium, marble, lacquered wood or even steel are alternative options for cabinets and drawers. Prelaminated particleboard is the most cost-effective core material for cabinetry that isn't exposed to water. Prelaminated medium density fibreboard is thicker, heavier and stronger, and so more durable, but more expensive."

For Indian cooking styles, granite is the best material for countertops, continues Keerthana. "The alternatives are a solid surface top, granite-lite, granite-premium quality and boiling water proof plywood with lamination. Premium quality granite resists heat, scratches and



"It is important to read the terms and conditions (of after-sales service

agreements) as they vary."

- Aiyappa Alemada, Executive Vice President & Business Head, Purva Streaks, Interiors Division, Puravankara

stains; protects against mould and mildew; and offers an endless variety of patterns like veins, specks and swirls."

"As Indian cooking extensively uses water, we prefer waterproof, termite-proof, marine-grade plywood, not medium density fibreboard or particle board," says Jessani. "We prefer finishing materials that are durable and low maintenance. Laminate is great for under counter storage. PU or lacquered glass for overhead storage in combination with the laminate looks fabulous. Granite remains the most

practical countertop material because of its sturdiness and ability to resist stains."

"We recommend branded hardware and marine-grade plywood or HDHMR to extend the life of the kitchen as it is extensively used," adds Pathak.

"HDHMR board is a popular cabinetry material for being sustainable and durable; plywood is another environment-friendly material," says Sarabjit Singh, Founder & Architectural Designer, Villa Ortiga.

"At Puravankara, we prefer ply, HDHMR board, medium-density fibreboard and prelaminated particle board," shares Alemada. "Our properties also house products made in acrylic, paint, membrane, veneer, solid wood, lacquered glass and metal. These are preferred because they add natural strength to the material, guard against moisture and moulds, lend medium density, are cost-effective, and enhance the aesthetics and visual appeal of the space."

"The most used material in making a modular kitchen is marine

Safety First

It's widely known that modular kitchens enhance the living experience of the homeowner but these spaces also ensure safety.

"Modular kitchens are seamless and handle-less, making them a child-friendly option," explains Devika Khosla, Creative Director, The Works Interiors. "Their minimal usage of wood reduces the possibility of termites. Moreover, as they can be paired and designed with a diverse range of appliances, electrification and plumbing are safer and easy to maintain with fewer possibilities of a burnt wire or water leakage."

Additionally, branded modular kitchens offer volatile organic compounds (VOC)-free products unlike conventionally designed kitchens that often use high VOC materials like medium density fibreboard, cheap quality plywood and glues," points out Khosla. "Metal cabinets in particular reduce VOC emissions, making them safer and healthier."

Opting for waterproof and fire-retardant materials in the kitchen cabinetry adds safety while using anti-termite and moisture-resistant shutters and cabinets enhances durability, adds Sarabjit Singh, Founder & Architectural Designer, Villa Ortiga.

Some key safety factors customers consider, according to Aiyappa Alemada, Executive Vice President & Business Head, Purva Streaks, Interiors Division, Puravankara, are non-slippery floors, smooth edges and finish of the surface to avoid injuries of all forms, termite-resistant material, child-safety knobs and gas cut-off safety features.

ply as it is more resistant to water along with glass and other materials," shares Seth.

"White acrylic is a conventional choice among neutral shades but we prefer a colourful palette that sets the tone as vibrant and energetic," adds Chadha.

"Acrylic should be chosen for its durability or colourful polyurethane finishes can be incorporated for an elegant look."

Choosing a vendor

Today, some of the world's best modular kitchen manufacturers are



"We have seen plenty of diversification of choice but we are still lacking in the range of finishes and in design customisation."

- Sarabjit Singh, Founder & Architectural Designer, Villa Ortiga



"A fully functional modular kitchen design can cost up to ₹5 lakh or more."

- Abhishek Chadha, CEO & co founder at The KariGhars

present in India, Jessani points out. She looks for suppliers who are well updated on the latest trends and futuristic kitchen concepts; who innovate and keep design, functionality and usage on a par; who can deliver the highest quality on time, and handhold the customer through the journey of understanding requirements, evaluating innovative solutions and options in fixtures and finishing materials. Warranty and after-sales service are also deciding factors.

"We consider the customer's requirements and budget to recommend an overseas or Indian brand," adds Pathak. "The technology and machines the manufacturer uses determine the finesse of the end product, so that is something to check."

Convenience, aesthetics, design, efficiency, ease of assembly and finish are the utmost criteria to be considered while buying a modular kitchen, opines Chadha.



Photo courtesy: Puravankara

The higher initial cost in designing are offset by long-term benefits such as superior functionality, customisability, standardised sizes and longevity.