RAYANA HOSSAIN

Founder and Managing Director of ISHO and Director at Dekko ISHO Group, has helped shape Bangladesh's shift from imitation furniture to original, design-driven manufacturing. In this interview with The Daily Star, she discusses industry challenges, changing consumer tastes, and ISHO's role in leading that transformation.

Designing a NEW IDENTITY

The Daily Star (TDS): ***How has Bangladesh's furniture sector evolved over the past decade?***

Rayana Hossain (RH): Over the past decade, Bangladesh's furniture and interiors industry has evolved from imitation and imports to its own strong design and manufacturing identity, much like the RMG sector. The shift towards modern aesthetics, quality materials, and urban functionality has redefined the market.

TDS: ***What recent innovations have been game-changers for your brand?***

RH: Design, materials, and manufacturing have all evolved for us. We now create designs that reflect real Bangladeshi lifestyles, making them functional and relevant. With FSC certification and advanced machinery at Designscape, we maintain global standards while blending technology with local, sustainable materials like rattan and engineered wood.

TDS: ***What are the main challenges in this sector?***

RH: Quality raw materials remain a big challenge. While we use FSC-certified wood, local options

are limited, so we import some components. Testing facilities are also scarce, which slows smaller manufacturers. However, policies like bonded warehouses and growing awareness of certification are improving the landscape and helping brands like ours compete globally while staying sustainable.

TDS: ***How do consumer tastes and buying behaviour differ across Dhaka, Chattogram and other regional markets?***

RH: The current estimates put Bangladesh's domestic furniture market in the Tk 25,000 crore range; exports are low in range but getting there. In terms of regional tastes from our analysis, Dhaka skews design-forward with higher finish expectations and true omnichannel buying; Chattogram shows larger-format preferences and stronger B2B demand with more price sensitivity; regional cities are value-driven and remain predominantly offline.

TDS: ***How are you using technology and sustainable craftsmanship to strengthen the "Made in Bangladesh" brand—and what's the next big trend?***

RH: We've been omnichannel from the start, launching our e-commerce platform before opening any physical store and today most of our products include AR integration for real-time visualisation. This blend of technology with local craftsmanship and eco-materials strengthens the "Made in Bangladesh" identity, and I believe the next big trend will be the country's rise as a regional furniture hub, with sustainable production and circular design becoming the new standard.

R N PAUL

Managing Director of Regal Furniture, highlighted how Regal has led Bangladesh's furniture transformation. He discussed the brand's innovations and how it is shaping the future of "Made in Bangladesh" furniture.

Growth & Innovation in BANGLADESH'S FURNITURE INDUSTRY

The Daily Star (TDS): ***How has Bangladesh's furniture sector evolved over the past decade?***

R N Paul (RNP): Over the past decade, Bangladesh's furniture industry has evolved from traditional craft to a modern, design-focused sector. Regal Furniture has led this transformation with modular designs, precision manufacturing, and a distinctive retail experience. As one of the first brands with nationwide retail and automated production, we set a new industry benchmark.

TDS: ***Which recent innovations have been game changers for your brand?***

RNP: The biggest game-changer for us has been automation and engineered wood innovation. A decade ago, we relied heavily on solid wood. Now we use high-grade processed boards, laminates, and eco-friendly finishes that maintain durability while reducing waste. On the design side, 3D modelling has revolutionised our prototyping, allowing us to visualise and

modify designs instantly. We have introduced water-based lacquers and optimised our supply chain.

TDS: ***What are the main challenges in this sector?***

RNP: Raw material volatility and import dependence remain significant challenges. Skilled manpower is another concern, particularly as the industry adopts advanced manufacturing technologies. At Regal, we address these by developing long-term supplier partnerships and investing in training for our in-house teams. We conduct workshops for production staff and designers and collaborate with local universities to attract young talent for the industry.

TDS: ***How do consumer tastes differ across Dhaka, Chattogram, and other regions?***

RNP: The furniture market in Bangladesh is valued at around USD 2.5–3 billion, growing at an annual rate of 10–12 per cent. Dhaka's consumers are design-driven and brand-conscious, while Chattogram customers focus more on durability and premium materials. In regional towns, affordability and classic designs remain the top priorities.

TDS: ***How are you using technology and sustainable craftsmanship to strengthen the "Made in Bangladesh" brand, and what is the next big trend?***

RNP: We see "Made in Bangladesh" as a mark of smart craftsmanship that merges tradition with innovation. The next big trend will be hybrid furniture that integrates smart technology and sustainable design, created for compact, connected living spaces.

The Future of FURNITURE

TANZIM AHMED

Picture the furniture of 2025: a sleek armchair that gently warms on a cool night, a coffee table that charges your devices, and a bookshelf that doubles as a mini garden. The furniture of tomorrow isn't just functional, it is intelligent, efficient, and alive with technology.

WHEN YOUR CHAIR THINKS AND YOUR DESK LISTENS

The furniture of the future is no longer just a passive object; it's becoming an active participant in your home. The biggest change is the seamless integration of technology directly into the pieces you use every day. Imagine furniture that anticipates your needs and makes your life simpler. You can expect chairs and sofas with built-in heating and cooling systems. Desks will come standard with wireless charging pads. And voice activation will become common.

MAXIMISING SPACE IN A COMPACT WORLD

As our homes and apartments become more compact, furniture is being cleverly designed to be more flexible and serve multiple purposes. You'll find dining tables that can expand to accommodate extra guests. Sofas will do more than just provide seating; they will easily convert into beds.

FUSION OF HEALTH AND HIGH-TECH MATERIALS

With long hours spent sitting, ergonomic design has never mattered more. Expect chairs that support posture and height-adjustable desks for comfort. Advanced foams and gels now mould to your body, easing pressure and improving well-being. New types of memory foam and gel are being used to provide unparalleled support and pressure relief, conforming to your body for superior comfort.

DIGITAL WAYS TO DESIGN AND PURCHASE

Technology is reshaping not just what we buy, but how. 3D printing enables intricate, low-waste designs once impossible to make. Augmented Reality (AR) lets shoppers visualise furniture in their own homes before buying, bridging imagination and reality.

BRINGING NATURE BACK HOME

Finally, a growing "biophilic" movement blends greenery into furniture itself. Coffee tables sprout succulents, bookshelves host herb gardens, and lounge chairs cradle small plants. These touches of nature transform living spaces into calm, breathable sanctuaries.