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Knights of the Night

The city that never sleeps

NIGHT WORKFORCE PULSE



10,000 - 12,000
night workers including
medical staff, drivers,
vendors, police, sanitation

Between 12 to 5 am, countless people sacrifice their sleep to keep the city moving.

EMERGENCY LIFELINES



200+
ambulances
8-10 emergency
calls per night

"If I miss one call, someone might lose their loved one."
- Subhash Pandey

HOSPITAL HEROES



48+
hour shifts
trauma care

"If I rest, who will check their drips?"
- Nursing Staff



MIDNIGHT MEALS

Roadside stalls
in Alambagh

CHARBAGH STATION HUSTLE

30-40 trains
60 porters



"We don't get time to sit as in summers people mostly prefer to travel at night"
- Porter

LUCKNOW CITY SNAPSHOT (2025)

Population: 4.13 million
Area: 349 sq. km
Density: ~8,100 people/sq. km
Literacy Rate: 82.5%
Urban Population: 3.04 million
(66.2% of total)



DAWN AWAKENS

5 am
Vegetable markets open
Early risers walk at Gomti
Riverfront & Lohia Park,
greeting the new day



KNIGHTS OF THE NIGHT

No shining armour though!



“

My feet used to ache after standing all night watching over trauma patients. But if I rest, who will check their drip? These people don't know me yet they trust me completely. Night shifts are hard, but the only thought in my head during this time is to safely hand them over to the morning staff.

”

MARIA SIDDIQUI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

As the city of Lucknow slows down after midnight, a different world quietly awakens. Between midnight and 5 am, time tells the stories of countless individuals who sacrifice their sleep to keep the city moving.

Ambulance drivers, with sirens piercing through the silent night, navigate through the empty city. "I can't afford to sleep right now. If I miss even one phone call, someone might lose their loved one," says Subhash Pandey, an ambulance driver for the past 20 years. These drivers serve as the last link between a patient's hope and a hospital bed. Their own families waiting, they do not make the patients wait!

As the patient reaches the hospital, the next set of warriors takes over. Nurses and doctors, who go for hours without

sleep, become the saviours during such difficult times.

"My feet used to ache after standing all night watching over trauma patients. But if I rest, who will check their drip? These people don't know me yet they trust me completely. Night shifts are hard, but the only thought in my head during this time is to safely hand them over to the morning staff," said a nurse at the trauma centre.

In the Alambagh area, overflow zones are dotted with simple, roadside dhaba-style stalls offering piping hot tea and fresh parathas to auto drivers, their helpers, and night-shift staff. Krishna, who runs a small dusk-to-dawn stall near Alambagh, is grateful for the steady stream of customers. "I love working at night, customers keep coming and their hunger keeps my hand busy, so I don't have time to feel tired," he says, with a smile.

Meanwhile, at Charbagh Railway

Station, trains arrive and depart nonstop. Porters in their faded red shirts weave through sleepy passengers, carrying their heavy luggage. For many of them, night shifts mean better pay. We don't usually get time to sit, especially in summers when people mostly travel at night," says a porter.

Near 5 am, as the darkness recedes, the city exhales a new dawn, with vegetable markets near Alambagh and Aminabad bustling with early customers eager to strike quick deals before breakfast time. Early risers step out for their morning walk at Gomti Riverfront and Lohia Park, exchanging sleepy smiles and sharing the quiet relief of a new day's beginning.

As Lucknow stretches, yawns, and readies itself for another busy day, the invisible night workers quietly retreat, heading home for a few precious hours of sleep, before the city again summons them back to serve the night. ■

Far from the spotlight

The unsung heroes behind the scenes



Pictures: SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

For most of us, an event starts when the lights turn on. But behind every dazzling stage, lies a world of silent struggles. While guests enjoy the glam and glitter, a group of unseen heroes such as technicians, vendors, decorators, and labourers work tirelessly behind the scenes. For them, the event begins days earlier. Tents must be stitched, wires dragged through the dust, and much more.

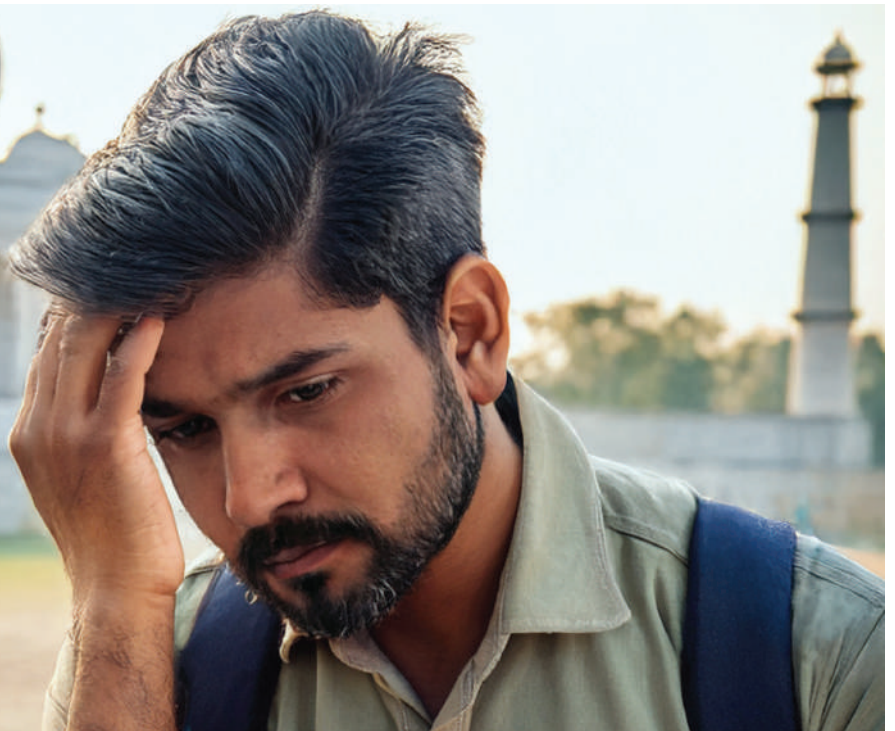
"We begin our work at 5 a.m. and carry on until midnight. Occasionally, there's no accommodation arranged, forcing us to sleep on the ground, right beneath the stage," explains Sandeep Yadav, a 24-year-old lighting technician who has been in the events industry for the past seven years. "There is no air conditioning or fan. It's just us and the mosquitoes. We come back to prepare for events, even in the face of rough weather, discomfort, and perilous working conditions because that's the only way to feed our families for a week."

Speaking to Expressions, 62-year-old Shankar chacha, who has worked for an event management company for over 15 years, states, "My family still lives in our village, but my 18-year-old son and I have moved to Lucknow. I worked day and night to get money for his coaching classes because he is a bright youngster who aspires to become a CA. To help my son achieve his aspirations, I work on back-to-back events tirelessly."

Their contribution is often ignored, and payments are sometimes delayed or deducted for reasons as trivial as a curtain being "slightly uneven."

"There's no stability in this job. One week, we're working nonstop, and the next, we have nothing. We don't have fixed salaries or job security," says Rajesh, a driver who transports event equipment across cities. "On many occasions, I drive overnight without sleeping, just to reach the venue on time. It's risky, but I have no choice. If I say no, someone else will get hired." It's high time we start treating them with the respect they deserve, by ensuring better working conditions, fair wages, and a little kindness. ■

The off season struggles of tourist guides



AAROHI SEEM

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

As the sun dips lower over the historic temples of Khajuraho and Chirakoot, the darkness in the lives of the tourist guides creeps up. As the shops shutter down early and boats sail in the still waters, guides wait in vain.

When the tourists leave and the cameras stop clicking, a heavy silence settles over Khajuraho and Chitrakoot. But for the guides who breathe life into these places, this silence is not peace. It's a struggle.

Across Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country, seasonal unemployment emerges as a silent devil after every tourist season is over.

Anish Khan, a tourist guide at Khajuraho—the UNESCO World Heritage site—shared his hardships. “We only earn around 20000 to 30000 per month during peak seasons. However, between April and June, we are back to zero.” He also highlighted the struggle of his family. “During off seasons it is very difficult to run the household and pay the school fees of my two children.”

Another tourist guide at Khajuraho, Jagan Verma laments the lack of initiatives from the government. According to many tourist guides, while the government is actively promoting tourism, it is

I earn almost 2000 per day but it doesn't last long. It is very difficult for my family to survive on this income. To support the household, my wife also works as a cook so that we can give a decent life to our only daughter.

Ramaiya Singh

ignoring the people who are running it at the ground level.

This wave of the 'seasonal unemployed' has spread wide and has reached the peaceful ghats of Chitrakoot, said to be one of the most spiritual towns on earth.

Ramaiya Singh, who has been guiding the tourists of Chitrakoot for the past two decades, mentioned his struggles, with a weak smile. “I earn almost 2000 per day but it doesn't last long. It is very difficult for my family to survive on this income. To support the household, my wife also works as a cook so that we can give a decent life to our only daughter.”

The problems are multi-layered. No year-round work, no vocational training, and no access to social security programmes, not to mention unstable tourism patterns caused by the weather, political atmosphere, and even pandemics, all add up to this perpetual crisis.

Moti Mishra, a 52-year-old guide, stated: “Three years ago, my son threw me out of the house after my wife passed away. I had spent my entire life working as a tourist guide. During the off-season though, this job turns into a curse as I hardly earn anything to support a decent living. I don't have any other skills!

These narratives point to a paradox. Travel guides, who are frequently the initial contact for tourists, constructing their first impressions of India's cultural richness, themselves get erased when the limelight fades.

What is required now is a policy-level focus and grassroots-level intervention. Governments and tourism boards need to do more than just infrastructure and online promotion. Upgradation programmes, off-season training for alternative revenue streams (such as handicrafts, online marketing, or hospitality services), and microloans or insurance coverage could do much to bring dignity and continuity into their lives.

Indian tourism, more than the monuments and memory, is about the people who explain, guide and connect them. ■

From campus to corporate

The huge leap forward

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Fresh from their end-semester exams, undergraduate and postgraduate students embarked on their internship journey, exploring, and entering across fields such as event management, communication, journalism, social media, marketing, and advertising. While Amity University has done its best to both educate and train them, there is nothing like a real organisation, situations and scenarios.

Gen Z, being surrounded by a plethora of technologies and advancements, think that they know it all. But do they? Within days of joining their internships, many students found out that shortcuts are ineffective when deadlines are real and rigid, and managers do not hesitate to pull you over for even the smallest of deviations.

Hansal Kesari, a bachelor's student and intern at Medanta Hospital, Lucknow, shares, "Stepping into a professional environment like Medanta Hospital was both exciting and eye-opening. It helped me understand how theory translates into actual work. It took me a couple of days to adjust to the workflow and understand the work in a sensitive place like a hospital," he added.

Stepping into a professional environment like Medanta Hospital was both exciting and eye-opening. It helped me understand how theory translates into actual work. It took me a couple of days to adjust to the workflow and understand the work in a sensitive place like a hospital.

Hansal Kesari

On the other hand, Anant Raj Pandey, a master's student, interning at Integrated Health and Wellbeing Council, Delhi, shared how his prior experience at previous internships helped him to adapt quickly and contribute effectively from day one. Aarohi Seem, an intern at AwesomeSauce Creative, shared how her perception of advertising agencies changed as soon as she stepped into the industry.

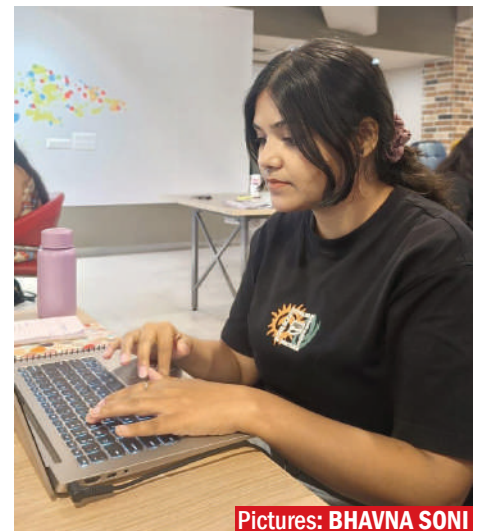
However, while meeting the deadlines at the workplace, meeting her friends was missed!

"Though it is my first experience, my passion for journalism helped me in adjusting effortlessly," said Shivam Singh Chauhan, an intern at India TV. He was ecstatic with some incredible real-time workplace experience of studios, output, PCR, archives and assignment desk. Shubh Abrol, an intern at CMO Axis, Haryana, calls his first internship experience to be a great learning journey. "I gained practical skills, professional insights, and more confidence," he said.

When asked about the work-life balance, Kanan Yadav, a master's student and an intern at Value 360, said, "Even though it is difficult, I can manage because I put in the appropriate amount of work at the proper time, making certain that both are fostered."

Richa Goel, a master's student, said, "I have worked with many organisations before this and have learnt valuable skills from each of my roles. When you work in a professional environment, there's a lot you can learn from the people around you. It's all about what you choose to take away from the experience."

As Gen Z transitions from campus to corporate, they carry with them a blend of digital fluency, curiosity, and a strong sense of purpose. ■



Pictures: BHAVNA SONI

Water wastage in some areas, dry taps in others...

Lucknow, known for its culture and heritage, is today grappling with a growing issue that threatens its daily life—uneven access to water.

While some neighbourhoods waste gallons of water due to overflowing tanks, leaking pipelines, and careless usage, others suffer from completely dry taps, waiting hours or even days for a basic supply. This stark contrast highlights the serious water mismanagement plaguing the city.

Mr. Suresh Sahu, the Campus Sr. Photographer went round different localities of the city – Charbagh, Chowk, Aminabad, Rakabganj, Shastri Nagar, Aishbagh, Mawaiya, Moti Nagar and Lalkuan, for a Photo Story on the Water Management in Lucknow.

To address this crisis, Lucknow urgently needs reforms such as modernised water systems, strict maintenance protocols, rainwater harvesting, and public awareness campaigns on water conservation. Citizens too must act responsibly.



No hiding, no more: inking permanent stories on your hide

ASHKA JAIN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Once seen as rebellious or edgy, tattoos have now become a powerful way to express emotions, tell stories, and embrace individuality. Historically, sailors, motorcyclists, and rebels were the ones who typically had tattoos. They were a mark of toughness and uniqueness. But things have changed. Nowadays, you're likely to see people with ink in most places. Coffee shops, universities, offices, and gyms, are everywhere. The concept that a few years ago used to cause a stir, is now seen as something normal and cool, even celebrated!

But there is more to this change than a mere shift in beauty standards. It's about the way people, particularly the younger generation, use their bodies as canvases, to express their identities and values. Whether it's a memorial to a loved one, a remembrance of a personal struggle, or a sign of hope, tattoos nowadays can have profound meaning.

Unlike trends that come and go, tattoos tend to stay. People often say, "I got this for myself," meaning that doing something for us matters more than impressing others and that's exactly what makes tattoos different from other fashion trends. In today's tattoo culture, mental health has become a prominent theme. Tattoos of phrases such as 'breathe' or 'enough' serve as gentle reminders of one's inner strength. Silently, they help people feel seen and understood.

Every tattoo has a purpose, regardless of how loud, intricate, or concealed it is. Inishika Sharma, a 20-year-old BA-JMC student, proudly wears her tattoo of a snake with daffodils, which stands for transformation and healing.

"It's my way of paying respect to my own journey, from being completely hopeless to finally finding a reason to live and be happy again," Sharma told Expressions.



Pictures: **ASHKA JAIN**

For her, it's both a piece of art and a piece of her new beginning in life. Similarly, Anjali Sharma, as a tribute, got her pet dog's paws tattooed on her arm. It had recently passed away.

"It makes me feel like he is still with me." Nowadays, people fly across states, cities, and even nations, to get tattoos from artists they like. Parishi, 28, has a

small 'Carpe Diem' tattoo, in her parents' handwriting, near her collarbone. "It's like carrying a piece of them with me everywhere I go," she says.

To a stranger, a modest design on the wrist, a message on the rib cage, or a symbol behind the ear might not mean much, but to the wearer, it could be a mark of a lifetime. ■

From boxes to the heart

The legacy of *bakse waale khaste*

Between 6 and 8 AM, it's so busy that I barely get time to talk. That's our peak hour, even tourists line up in the morning!

Akash



Picture: RAMZI HASAN

RAMZI HASAN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Nestled in the heart of Chowk, just outside the Kotwali gate, you'll find the legendary *bakse waale khasta*—crisp *khasta kachoris* served from traditional iron boxes, a beloved morning treat of old Lucknow.

This shop is run by 21-year-old Akash Gupta, following the legacy of his grandfather and father. Akash began selling *khaste* at the tender age of nine and has continued ever since. When asked about his daily routine, he shared that the stall operates from 5:00 AM to 12:00 noon, and by 1:00 PM, everything is usually sold out.

In an era where food presentation

and packaging are rapidly modernising, what keeps this dish rooted in tradition is its signature box-style (*bakse*) serving. "Bhaiya, *bakse se hi to naam hai. Bakse na hote to itna naam thodi hota*," Akash shared with Expressions. He explained that the dish was originally sold in boxes, and sticking to this tradition is part of its identity. "If I change the setup and stop using the box, it will lose its popularity," he added.

The accompanying potato curry made without onion and garlic and infused with a secret spice blend of 35 ingredients is what makes this *khaste* so special. "There are three types of *khaste* available: *karare* (crispy), medium, and *mulayam* (soft), with *karare khaste* being the most popular. However, all variants are priced the same, ₹30 for two pieces," he shared.

Back when Akash started selling, the price was only ₹8 for two *khaste*. Over the years, he has added a special spicy chutney to complement the *imli* (tamarind) chutney, adding another layer of flavour to the meal.

Speaking about the crowd, Akash said, "Between 6 and 8 AM, it's so busy that I barely get time to talk. That's our peak hour, even tourists line up in the morning!" On being asked how much he earns, he revealed approximately ₹25,000–₹30,000 per month.

In these times when big brands dominate the food scene, *bakse waale khaste* stands as a symbol of heritage and authenticity. Not just Lucknowites but also tourists relish this simple yet soulful dish, which leaves a lasting impression on the hearts of all who taste it. ■

Misfit: no pretence, just people and real connections



Picture: RICHA GOEL

RICHA GOEL

Master of Journalism & Mass Communication

In a world full of pretence, perfection, and disconnection, four friends from IIT—Shashwat Narhatiyar, Chaitanya Dhawan, Saurabh Sharma, and Shaswat Kar—have launched Misfit, an app now active in Delhi NCR. Since 2022, Misfit has brought like-minded people together, to form clubs around shared interests and hobbies.

“We didn’t want adulting to feel like you had to leave behind your hobbies or the things you genuinely love,” explains Shashwat Narhatiyar. “We started casually organising jamming sessions, board games, and football matches—and were amazed at how eager people were to join in,” adds Chaitanya Dhawan.

Saurabh Sharma says, “The joy we once felt when indulging in our interests,

now reflects on others’ faces. They feel connected, and it gives them a break from hectic lives. That’s when we know we are onto something.”

From sports and book readings to music jams and journaling clubs, Misfit offers a safe space where people can be their authentic selves. With 25,000+ community members and over 3,000 events across Delhi NCR, the platform has become a warm embrace in a digitally cold world.

Narad, 25, says, “When I heard about the platform, my first thought was—there’s a place where I can just be myself. I didn’t have to do unnecessary things to fit in.” Unlike most platforms that push quick or superficial connections, Misfit emphasises slow, offline interaction in cafés, parks, coworking spaces, or living rooms. “You know how sometimes you have so much to express, but you don’t have anyone to listen,” Deepanshu, 27,

reflects, “This club gave me meaningful conversations without judgment. I suddenly felt like I belonged,” he added. Each weekend meetup is thoughtfully planned—not for numbers, but for genuine connection. One regular attendee laughed as he commented: “I never knew I could bond over board games; it sounded bizarre, but I’m so glad I found Misfit.”

The platform also lets users start their own clubs. For example, Screenshots, a film club, screens classics and hosts post-movie discussions. Its founder, Kritika, says, “I love movies—there’s always so much to say about characters, plot, and little details. Misfit helped me find fellow film maniacs. It’s been incredible.”

These four IITians—once exhausted by the 9-to-5 grind and nostalgic for care-free days—haven’t just survived adulthood; they’ve shown others how to truly live it. And through Misfit, they’re giving that gift to countless others. ■



The black behind the green

The coal-powered truth of electric vehicles

MANU YADAV

Master of Advertising & Marketing Management

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are rapidly becoming the choice of households, offering the promise of cleaner air and a greener future. A popular substitute in fast urbanising Indian cities such as Lucknow, Bengaluru, and Delhi, EVs create no exhaust pollution, unlike petrol or diesel vehicles.

However, beneath the elegant appearances, a more complex reality questions their reputation as climate champions. Materials used in EV batteries such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel are extracted using environmentally damaging methods.

Lithium, found mostly in South America, consumes enormous volumes of groundwater in already dry areas. Cobalt, extracted from the Democratic Republic of Congo, has also been connected to dangerous working conditions and

We should at least tax the carbon we're emitting, so cleaner solutions like EVs become the obvious choice.

Elon Musk

child labour. "People think just because it's electric, it's clean," says 32-year-old software engineer Ankit Srivastava, who purchased an EV last year.

"But I later learnt that if we charge it using coal power, it still contributes to pollution," Srivastava added.

An EV needs electricity to charge its battery and where this electricity comes from really matters. In India, 70% of the electricity is manufactured from burning coal and other fossil fuels. Thus, charging an EV could merely move pollution from

the car to the power plant's smokestack unless the grid is clean. The irony is that a car meant to minimise environmental impact starts its journey with major ecological damage. Still, EVs usually have smaller lifetime carbon emissions than internal combustion engine cars. The International Energy Agency estimates that, throughout its lifespan, an EV that runs on a mixed energy grid produces 20–30% less CO₂ than a petrol car, and even less if charged using solar or wind power.

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla, has underlined in public that although they are not perfect, they still represent progress. "We should at least tax the carbon we're emitting," Musk said in an interview. "So cleaner solutions like EVs become the obvious choice," he added.

Remember, the road to sustainability does not stop with an electric vehicle purchase. Cleaner power grids, ethical mining, and robust recycling systems will determine true development. ■



SANJAY M JOHRI

Professor Emeritus & Head, Centre for Media Studies

A friend visiting from abroad recently asked me while flipping through Indian news channels, “Do you have news anchors or noise anchors? Why do they shout so much? Where is the actual news?”

I was at a loss for words. This is the daily reality across most Indian channels—whether it’s ‘Operation Sindoor’, the ‘Israel-Iran conflict’, or the sensational coverage of ‘Raja Raghuvanshi’s alleged murder in Meghalaya’.

It seems as if screaming is now a job requirement for Indian anchors. The louder they scream, the more important they believe the news becomes. It’s less about informing and more about outshouting the next person. Debates aren’t won with

logic, but with lung power. Specialist anchors today appear to be rated by their ability to create drama, often at the cost of facts and decency. Instead of educating viewers or critically analysing government policies, most have turned news into a form of aggressive, sensationalist entertainment.

Compare this to the calm, balanced reporting of Doordarshan in the 90s. Anchors like Pratima Puri, Salma Sultan, Rini Simon Khanna, and Vinod Dua delivered the news with dignity and professionalism. There was no need for drama—just facts, context, and respectful presentation.

Today’s channels magnify minor issues, sensationalise stories with background music and flashing text, and thrive on provoking viewers. Indian TV news has become less about information and more about fear, manipulation, and

spectacle. It feeds our national appetite for drama, something our cinema and television have long indulged in.

Since the liberalisation era post-1991, when private channels emerged, they capitalised on viewers’ fatigue with Doordarshan’s simplicity and shifted towards more theatrical, soap-opera-style news. And sadly, audiences have encouraged this shift by rewarding sensationalism with high TRPs.

Meanwhile, Western journalists typically maintain composure, focus on visual storytelling, and let their footage speak. Indian anchors, however, often drown images in excessive, exaggerated commentary.

Perhaps it’s time, we, as viewers, stop feeding this cycle. News should inform, not assault our senses. If nothing else, at least Doordarshan’s news still respects our eardrums. ■