

MY LUCKNOW

FROM ASHES TO SHELTER

Sarees become roof, hope rises from the ruins

After spending nights under open sky, displaced residents begin piecing together homes

Aakash Ghosh

LUCKNOW: Two nights under the open sky were enough to turn loss into urgency. On Friday morning, the blackened stretch, where over 280 shanties once stood, began to stir, with relief, whatever little cash they had as hundreds of families started rebuilding their homes from ashes.

The air still carried the burning smell of smoke. Men, women and children tied bamboo poles, stretched plastic sheets, salvaging whatever little they had. Sarees became roofs, tarpaulin turned into walls, to reclaim a sense of shelter.

Relief material trickled in, plastic sheets and tarpaulin offered by volunteers — but it wasn't enough. Many families, with nothing left to their name, pooled whatever little cash they had to buy materials and start over.

Among them was Mohd Sohail, 14, who should have been spending his holidays at ease. A Class 7 student at a madrasa in Balagani, he is now ferrying relief material and helping rebuild his family's hut. His mother, Parveen, a widow and domestic worker, watched quietly as her children worked. "I have no one else. My children are all I have, and today they are rebuilding our home," she said.

A few metres away, Mahesh, 48, stared at the skeletal frame of what would soon be his family's shelter. A daily wage labourer who cycled to Dubagga for work, lost just his home, but his only means of earning. "My bicycle is gone. Work can wait. First, we need a roof," he said, as his wife, Sunita, looked on. They had some sticks for their family of eight.



Sarees and tarpaulin sheets became roofs to reclaim a sense of shelter.

HT PHOTO

Who enabled illegal settlement? court asks govt

LUCKNOW: The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad high court on Friday ordered the officials concerned to provide food, other basic amenities and medical treatment to the victims of the massive fire that broke out in Vikas Nagar slums in Lucknow on Wednesday (April 15) evening.

The court has directed to make the public works department and the state relief commissioner as opposite parties in the public interest litigation (PIL) filed in the fire case. It has also ordered the district magistrate, the chief medical officer, the chief fire officer of Lucknow and the Lucknow Municipal Corporation to file their reply affidavit with details by May 30.

The court questioned government officials about how

1,455 people encroached upon four big hags of PWD land for over past 20 years. It also questioned which companies provided them with electricity and cooking gas connections and why government officials remained silent. The court said it would consider investigating the matter. It also directed officials to ensure that no government land is encroached upon.

A division bench of Justice Rajan Roy and Justice Manjive Shukla issued the order in response to a PIL filed by Anurag Tripathi. The petition sought directives for adequate rehabilitation of the fire victims, including medical treatment, ration and temporary housing.

The petitioner said the residents had lost everything, and

therefore, they should be provided with immediate government assistance. Additional advocate general Vinod Kumar Shahi appeared on behalf of the state government. Chief standing counsel for the state government Shalendra Kumar Singh informed the court that food packets were being distributed to the victims and ambulances were immediately dispatched for medical assistance. The court was informed that the four big hags of land encroached upon to create the slum belonged to the PWD where 1,455 people were living. The court ordered to summon detailed replies from the parties to the case and fixed May 30 as the next date of hearing in the case.

MANOJ KUMAR SINGH

Teenagers Akshat, 17, and his sister Nandani, 16, dug into the hardened ground, fixing bamboo poles for their family's tent. Akshat said, "My hands are tired, but there are no walls yet, no certainty of tomorrow, only fragile frames of plastic and bamboo rising from the ruins. But for these families, even the weakest shelter is stronger than another night under the open sky," said a visitor who came for a relief work.

City's 'adab' in action, turns relief into dignity

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LUCKNOW: In the aftermath of Wednesday's devastating Vikas Nagar slum fire, Lucknow is proving that its famous 'adab' is not merely about polite etiquette — it is a deeply ingrained instinct for compassion. From distant neighbourhoods to adjacent districts, citizens are stepping forward to provide not just essential relief, but a profound sense of care that mirrors the city's enduring identity of *tehzeeb*.

By Friday, the scale of support was amplified. NGOs, individuals, political groups and even acquaintances of the victims arrived with supplies, each contribution carrying a personal touch. Food came in such abundance that many families had to politely refuse further offerings. "There are nearly 1,000 people



A solar panel, donated by a Good Samaritan, used for operating a fan in a tent.

here, and no one is hungry. In fact, we have eaten more than usual and even stored food," said Parveen, one of the survivors. "This shows humanity is still alive," she added.

But what stood out was how the aid evolved beyond food. Sanitary napkins, soaps, clothes and tarpaulin sheets began pouring in, ensuring that dignity

was preserved alongside survival. In one striking instance, a family installed a fan powered by a donated solar panel, offering relief from the sweltering heat despite the absence of electricity.

Ruksana, a domestic worker, said the solar panel came from her employer. "She understood our situation. She told me to take leave and gave this so we could manage in this heat," she said. Her husband, Md Qasim, who runs a small roadside salon, added that his regular customers also contributed money and clothes. "People we barely expected help from have come forward," he said.

Volunteers, too, brought a thoughtful dimension to the relief work. "We saw most people were bringing food, so we decided to focus on sanitation and dignity," said Parisha Singh, 21, who runs a NGO.

Teacher's resolve stands tall after 'school' swallowed by flames

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LUCKNOW: Barely clothed, a 4-year-old boy stands amid the ruins and fluently names parts of the human body in English. When prompted, he confidently recites the days of the week, from Monday to Sunday. His name is Rinku, and like many children here, his first lessons came from a makeshift school, but from a makeshift classroom run by Manju Devi, 50, in Vikas Nagar's slum cluster that was ravaged by fire on Wednesday evening.

For nearly two decades, Manju's open-air school was the starting point of education for hundreds of children in the area. Teaching up to classes 4 and 5, she helped them learn basic reading, writing and arithmetic, skills that later enabled many to transition into government schools or even run small businesses.



Manju Devi, along with children, awaits help to rebuild her classroom.

Today, that classroom lies in ashes. The blaze that tore through the slum destroyed blackboards, charts, books, and fans.

"Everything is gone, but I'm not worried for myself. I'm worried about these children," Manju told HT.

A resident of Vikas Nagar, Manju started the school in 2006 after her marriage did not work out. While she earns a living by taking home tuitions, she has been teaching slum children for free.

"I bought blackboards, alphabet charts and study material from Aminabad. All of it has burnt," she said.

[AT LUCKNOW UNIVERSITY]

UG admission process begins; 50% rise in form fee

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LUCKNOW: The online admission process for undergraduate programmes at the Lucknow University (LU) began on Friday. However, this time there is a 50% hike in the admission form fee compared to last year.

The admission form fee for candidates of general, OBC and EWS categories for UG conventional courses will be Rs 1,200, which was Rs 800 last year, while for candidates from the SC, ST and persons with benchmark disabilities (PwD) it will be Rs 600 compared to Rs 400 last year.

Similarly, in UG professional courses, namely BBA, BCA, BBA&M&T, and B.Pharm, candidates from general, OBC and EWS categories will be required to pay Rs 1,500 for a form (up from Rs 1,000 last year), while candidates from SC, ST and PwD categories will pay Rs 750 (up from Rs 500 last year).

The university announced that all students seeking admission in any course at Lucknow University or its affiliated colleges must complete a mandatory registration (LURN) for which the fee remains Rs 100.

ADMISSION COSTS JUMP FOR VARIOUS UG SELF FINANCE COURSES

The semester fee at the time of admission for various self-finance undergraduate courses also recorded a substantial hike. Until last session i.e. 2025-26, the BA (H) self finance courses at the time of admission would cost between Rs 5,527 to Rs 8,527 but this year the fee at the time of admission will now be Rs 16,330.

Similarly, in B.Com (SF) and B.Com Hons, the semester fee at the time of admission has increased to Rs 22,732 and Rs 40,232 respectively. The LLB 5 year Integrated course recorded a hike of Rs 81,48% from Rs 26,080 until last year to Rs 47,330 from the new session onwards while BSc Maths (SF) recorded a hike of 87% from Rs 10,080 to Rs 18,930. Another course with a substantial hike is B.Voc Renewable Energy with 96.22% from Rs 6,880 to Rs 13,500 from next session onwards. BCA also recorded a 39.34% increase in the semester fee at the time of admission with Rs 49,580 from existing Rs 35,580.

there for verification.

After completing the profile, they must pay Rs 100 through the payment gateway. Once LURN registration is complete, candidates seeking admission on the Lucknow University campus or colleges under the centralised admission process must fill out the programme-wise online application form and pay the required fee.

LU spokesperson Mukul Srivastava said, "The university has

revised its admission form fee after a gap of 16 years. It was last increased in 2010. Over the past decade-and-a-half, there has been a substantial rise in academic resources, digital infrastructure and operational costs. We remain committed to providing the best education at the lowest fees compared to other institutions."

Meanwhile, student leaders from various organisations condemned the university's decision to raise the admission form fee for undergraduate courses.

Vishal Singh of the National Students' Union of India said, "Education should be subsidised for students and not hit them financially. The government should provide universities with enough funds so that the burden does not fall indirectly on the students. We condemn the university's decision and if the form cost is not reduced, we will call for a protest," Singh added.

Aryan Sharma, vice president Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (LU unit) said, "We will talk to university authorities about the significant hike in the admission form fee and try our best to safeguard students' interests."

विश्वास वही, भव्यता नई

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एक नया अध्याय रथयात्रा में!

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2.	Mrs. Geeta Gupta W/o Late Bankelal Gupta, R/o 218 C/1, Jayanipuri, Sulem Sarai, Allahabad-211011	2. All that part and parcel of the property consisting of House No. 180/1/1/2 Bichley Ka Purwa built over part of Azaai No. 360, Mauza-Gayassuddinpur, Sadar, Allahabad, owned by Smt. Geeta Gupta W/o Late Bankelal L Gupta, measuring 228 Sq. Mtr., Boundaries-East: 10 ft. Rasta thereafter land of Gopal, West: Land of Amrit Lal Bhailal, North: Plot of Vendore, South: House of Badaiyun Lal and Phoolan (Possession-Symbolic)	

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