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Ms. Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary Textiles, and Dr. Toolika Gupta discussing craft education at IICD.

The Indian Institute of Craft and Design (IICD) recently reached a significant milestone in its journey toward academic and sectoral excellence. On January 15, the campus was deeply honoured by the official visit of “Ms. Neelam Shami Rao (IAS)”, the distinguished “Secretary of Textiles for the Government of India”. Her presence at the institute underscored the growing national importance of integrating traditional Indian craftsmanship with modern academic rigor to meet the evolving demands of a global design market.

During her comprehensive visit, Ms. Rao engaged in an extensive and insightful interaction with both the student body and the faculty members. These discussions were primarily centered on the “strategic evolution of craft education” in India, exploring how pedagogical approaches must adapt to preserve heritage while simultaneously fostering contemporary innovation. By examining the critical intersection of design, technology, and traditional skills, the dialogue highlighted the necessity of creating a sustainable ecosystem for the next generation of creative leaders.

Furthermore, the visit served to reinforce IICD’s pivotal role within the national textile landscape. As a premier institution, IICD continues to act as a vital bridge between the Ministry’s overarching vision for the textile sector and the grassroots reality of craft practitioners.

Ms. Rao’s observations and feedback provide a strategic roadmap for the institute to further align its specialized curriculum with national goals. This alignment ensures that Indian crafts remain competitive, culturally relevant, and economically viable in a rapidly changing world. This high-profile engagement marks a renewed commitment to elevating the status of craft education on the national stage, ensuring that the “creative leaders of tomorrow” are well-equipped to carry forward India’s rich artisanal legacy.

“Colours of Mind”: IICD Inter-School Design Competition



A collaborative session of artistic exploration featuring 35 students at IICD.

IICD recently opened its doors to the creative leaders of tomorrow for the “Colours of Mind” Design Competition, an event dedicated to artistic expression. Thirty-five students from Grades 11 and 12, representing prestigious institutions like Maharaja Sawai Bhawani Singh School, Sanskar School, Subodh Public School (Rambagh), and St. Teresa School (Jhotwara), participated in this unique challenge. This vibrant gathering allowed young minds to engage deeply with design principles while showcasing their inherent talent on a professional platform.

The central theme of the competition invited these budding designers to translate complex personal emotions and memories onto the curved surfaces of clay plates. This technical and emotional exercise pushed the boundaries of traditional craft, turning simple medium into a canvas for storytelling. Adding to the significance of the event, the NGO Indian Women Impact joined the proceedings, further enriching the atmosphere of creativity and community. By hosting such initiatives, IICD continues to nurture the next generation of designers while strengthening its role within the national textile and craft landscape.

Quiz, Creativity & Competition: First India PlusQuiz Engages IICD



Dignitaries inaugurating the First India Plus OTT Quiz at IICD, Jaipur.

The First India Plus Entertainment OTT Quiz was organized on 3rd February 2026 at the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD), Jaipur. Organized in collaboration with First India Plus, the quiz aimed to test participants' knowledge of entertainment, digital media, and OTT platforms, reflecting the growing influence of contemporary visual culture in today's creative industries. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and staff, creating a vibrant and intellectually engaging atmosphere across the campus. Participants actively engaged in multiple rounds that challenged their awareness, analytical thinking, and familiarity with current trends in the entertainment industry. The quiz format encouraged teamwork, quick responses, and healthy competition, making the experience both exciting and enriching.



Faculty and students attentively engaging during the First India Plus OTT Quiz at IICD.

The occasion was graced by Dr. Toolika Gupta, Director, IICD, and Narendra Gupta, Secretary, IICD, whose presence added significance to the event. The session was hosted by quiz master Mahendra Surana, who skillfully conducted the quiz and maintained a lively and interactive environment throughout.

Dr. Toolika Gupta, Director of IICD & Priyamvada Golcha on The Future of Craft, Moderated by Swati Jain, Associate Professor at IICD



Moderator Swati Jain with panelists Dr. Toolika Gupta and Priyamvada Golcha discussing the dynamic Future of Craft..

The second edition of the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation's (PDKF) Artisan Collective, hosted by Princess Gauravi Kumari, returned to Jaipur from January 23–25. This three-day event spotlighted over 70 women artisans and entrepreneurs representing more than 40 craft forms from 20+ states, creating a vibrant platform for heritage, contemporary thought, and economic empowerment.

More than a marketplace, the Collective featured impactful panel discussions exploring the intersection of craft and commerce. Key industry voices, including Neeta Lulla and Akanksha Arora, shared insights alongside a featured session

on "The Future of Craft." This dialogue saw Dr. Toolika Gupta in conversation with Priyamvada Golcha, examining how education, design innovation, and technology are reshaping the craft ecosystem.

The discussion positioned India's heritage as a dynamic, values-driven language rather than mere nostalgia. By fostering collaboration between traditional artisans and modern designers, the PDKF Artisan Collective celebrated women-led practices while envisioning a progressive and sustainable future for Indian craftsmanship in today's evolving cultural and economic landscape.

Celebrating India's Spirit: The 77th Republic Day at IICD

Our 77th Republic Day celebrations were a heartfelt display of national pride and diverse talent. Dr. Toolika Gupta, Director of IICD, addressed the gathering, emphasizing the vital role of creativity, design, and dedication in nation-building. Her words inspired the community to honor India's journey through artistic excellence.

The event featured a vibrant Savan-inspired dance and stirring poetry recitals by students and staff, reflecting the nation's rich cultural fabric. A unique highlight was the special open-mic performance by our own campus security team, which showcased the inclusive and unified spirit of our institution. Bringing the entire campus together, the program honored India's heritage through a colorful mosaic of art and music. It was a memorable day that perfectly captured the creative soul and collective respect of the IICD family.



IICD family standing tall with Director Dr. Toolika Gupta. Jai Hind!

Strategic Growth: Academic Council Meeting at IICD



A strategic partnership to empower craft-based entrepreneurship and bridge design with business innovation

On January 28, 2026, the Indian Institute of Crafts & Design (IICD) hosted the Academic Council meeting of Vishwakarma Skills University (VSU). As an affiliate of VSU, IICD ensures its students receive recognized Bachelor's and Master's degrees through this vital partnership.

The meeting focused on several key agenda points aimed at advancing the institute's academic excellence. A primary highlight was the finalization of the upcoming Convocation, scheduled for February 24, 2026. Additionally, the council discussed the implementation of the National Credit Framework (NCrF), a strategic move to ensure the curriculum remains at the forefront of Indian design education. These outcomes reinforce IICD's commitment to providing a contemporary, credit-based, and globally relevant learning experience for its students.

From Craft to Creativity: MIT-WPU Students' Learning Journey at IICD



A student learns Thathera metal craft techniques from a skilled artisan.



MIT-WPU students engage in a collaborative craft workshop at IICD.

Students from MIT World Peace University participated in an immersive learning programme at Indian Institute of Crafts and Design from 4th to 12th February. During the visit, students explored traditional craft practices, design thinking, and ethics in the craft sector, gaining a deeper understanding of creativity, culture, and community. The programme included hands-on workshops in Zardosi embroidery, Thathera metal craft, leather craft, Dabu and Ajrak printing, clay moulding, Thikri craft, and Molela craft. Through these sessions, students experienced the value of heritage skills, sustainability, and innovation.

Symbiosis Pune Students Explore Craft Practices at IICD



Mr. Neeraj Gupta leads an interactive session for Symbiosis Pune students.

On February 3, 2026, a group of 40 students from Symbiosis Skills & Professional University, Pune, visited the IICD campus. The educational tour included an introductory presentation by Ms. Garima Tiwari, followed by a campus walkthrough led by Mr. Basu Vansit. The visit concluded with an insightful interactive session on traditional crafts and practices conducted by Mr. Neeraj Gupta.

ITEC International Delegation Visits IICD Campus



International ITEC participants displaying their hand-printed textiles at IICD

As part of the ITEC Program by IIHMR University and the Ministry of External Affairs, international health professionals from nine countries visited IICD on February 25, 2026. The visit provided global leaders with unique insights into India's rich cultural heritage and traditional craft. Through hands-on creative sessions, the delegation explored the intersection of art and leadership, fostering cross-cultural exchange and institutional collaboration.

Academic Visit by DPU School of Design to IICD

A group of 90 students from DPU School of Design, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune visited the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD) on 19th January 2026.



DPU School of Design students at IICD during their craft exploration visit.

The visit began with an informative introduction to the institute delivered by Dr. Rena Mehta, who shared insights into IICD's vision, academic programs, and its contribution to preserving traditional crafts. Prof. Neeraj Gupta addressed the students and motivated them to explore meaningful connections between design and craft practices. The students also attended live demonstrations where Ms. Garima Tiwari presented the detailed process of block printing, and Mr. Mangesh Afre demonstrated pottery techniques.

The visit offered valuable exposure and enhanced the students' understanding of traditional Indian crafts and their relevance in contemporary design fields today and globally.

Candore International School Students From Bangalore Explore Traditional Crafts at IICD



Mr. Mangesh Afre and Mr. Vinod Prajapati leading the pottery session.



Ms. Garima Tiwari and Mr. Gyarsilal demonstrating block printing.

On January 24, 2026, the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD) welcomed a group of 64 enthusiastic students from Candore International School, Bangalore. The visit commenced at 10:00 A.M. with an insightful introductory presentation delivered by Ms. Garima Tiwari, who provided the visitors with a comprehensive overview of the institution's creative legacy and academic vision.

Following the orientation, the students participated in immersive, hands-on technical sessions led by expert faculty. Ms. Garima Tiwari joined Mr. Gyarsilal to facilitate a detailed workshop on the traditional art of Block Printing. Simultaneously, another group explored the tactile world of ceramics in a Pottery workshop conducted by Mr. Mangesh Afre and Mr. Vinod Prajapati. This educational visit offered the students a unique opportunity to engage directly with India's rich artisanal heritage and professional craft practices.

From Kathmandu to Jaipur: Weaving a Shared Language of Craft



Artisan Mr. Mukesh Meenakar giving demonstration to students

From Surface to Structure:

In Rajesh Kumar's geometric construction workshop, participants turned flat drawings into three dimensional forms using nothing but simple tools and sharp intent.

The exercise built spatial instinct, accuracy, and structural clarity the quiet principles where design thinking and making become one.

Exploring Form through Clay

The course moved into a clay workshop with Mangesh Afre, where participants shaped form through touch. Starting with basic geometries, they pushed toward abstract interpretations drawn from nature, letting ideas unfold through the material itself rather than being forced onto it.

Crafting Connections: ITEC at IICD:-

The Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD), Jaipur, recently hosted an International Course in Crafts & Design under the ITEC program, bringing together global voices within the living context of Indian craft traditions. The course opened a space where heritage, material memory, and contemporary design thinking could meet and speak to one another.

Dr. Toolika Gupta's opening session reframed Indian handicrafts as knowledge systems, not mere decoration. Rooted in sustainability and cultural depth, participants were pushed to question the ordinary objects around them and uncover the craft sensibilities that quietly connect regions.

Material as Process

Under the guidance of Basu Vansit and Master Artisan Mukesh Soni, metal became a language to be learned rather than a material to be used. Participants traced its history while feeling its resistance and give firsthand, through hands-on practice.

A standout moment was the Meenakari demonstration, where delicate enameling and wirework revealed how a flat sheet transforms into something dimensional and alive tradition meeting precision at every turn.



A student practicing wire-bending.



The Kathmandu University delegation with master artisans

A Shared Learning Experience:-

More than a set of sessions, the ITEC course became a meeting ground for cultures, materials, and ideas. Through making, watching, and reflecting, participants encountered craft not as a relic but as a living discipline shaped equally by tradition and reinvention.

The learning spilled past the classroom, as conversations on tools, technique, and process became a common tongue among people from vastly different worlds



Meenakari magic: Students' finished jewelry outcomes.

Every session built not just skill but a deeper attentiveness to material and to the stories it silently carries.

What surfaced was a picture of craft as a living system: knowledge passed through practice, sharpened through experience, and held together by collaboration. Working alongside artisans revealed the weight of tacit knowledge unspoken, yet woven into every gesture of making.

Captured through photographs, sketches, and physical models, the course's outcomes trace both process and progress moments of experimentation, precision, and discovery.

By gathering these different perspectives, the ITEC program at IICD renewed its belief in dialogue between the global and the local positioning craft not as heritage frozen in place, but as a discipline still unfolding.

Immersing in Craft Traditions: UG & PG Foundation Craft Trip to Bhuj, Kutch



Students of UG and PG Foundation interacting with bell making artisan at their workspace

IICD's UG and PG Foundation batch undertook a study trip to Bhuj, a region celebrated for its exceptional craftsmanship in Kutch. During the visit, students explored a wide range of crafts including Bandhani (tie-dye), intricate embroidery, Rogan Art, bell making, traditional shawl weaving, bead jewellery, and leatherwork. The experience enabled students to closely interact with artisans, gaining valuable insights into their creative processes, materials, techniques, and the cultural narratives embedded in their work. The group also visited key institutions such as the Kutch Museum (Earthquake Museum) and Living and Learning Design Centre (LLDC), along with renowned organizations like Khamir and Kala Raksha. Students further explored craft villages including Ajrakhpur, known for Ajrakh printing; Nirona, famous for bell making, Rogan art, and leatherwork; and Hodka, recognized for its beadwork traditions. The journey also included a visit to the breathtaking Rann of Kutch and local markets, enriching students' understanding of the region's cultural and economic landscape. Conducted from 4th to 11th February 2026, this study trip proved to be an enriching and transformative experience, bridging classroom learning with real-world exposure to India's vibrant craft heritage.



Students visiting Bell Making cluster at Bhuj, Kutch



Students visiting Rogan craft cluster at Bhuj, Kutch.

IICD Showcases Creativity at PinkFest 2026



IICD faculty and Director Dr. Toolika Gupta at the institute's stall during PinkFest 2026.



Lab Assistant Mr. Om Prakash Jangid conducting the beadwork workshop.

The Indian Institute of Crafts and Design (IICD) recently made a vibrant impact at PinkFest 2026, held at the Rajasthan International Centre (RIC). The event served as a dynamic hub for artists and historians, featuring imaginative installations and meaningful panel discussions with industry stalwarts. IICD contributed to the festival's interactive programming by organizing two successful workshops on beads and origami. Through these sessions and insightful dialogues moderated by Serendipity Arts, the IICD team showcased its commitment to artistic excellence and design education on a prominent national platform.

Blockprint Futures: Emily B. Yang Conducts Workshop at IICD



Students learn block printing methods from Emily B. Yang.

Emily B. Yang conducted an engaging workshop and talk at Indian Institute of Crafts and Design. Through her workshop on American-style block printing using rubber blocks and her talk, "Blockprint Futures: Integrating Traditional Craft with Collaborative Design," she introduced students to new ways of combining traditional craft practices with contemporary design approaches.

Students had the opportunity to experiment with new materials, techniques, and collaborative methods during the workshop. The sessions also highlighted the importance of preserving traditional crafts while adapting them for contemporary creative practices.

A Cultural Tribute to Hon'ble French President Emmanuel Macron



Dr. Toolika Gupta presenting a handcrafted artwork to Emmanuel Macron during the Indo-French cultural exchange in Delhi.

A significant moment of cultural diplomacy was marked during the Indo-French cultural exchange in Delhi, where a specially crafted artistic keepsake from Jaipur was presented to His Excellency Emmanuel Macron. Inspired by the iris flowers of French meadows and contemporary cultural symbolism, the artwork reflected a thoughtful blend of French identity and Rajasthan's heritage craftsmanship. The initiative highlighted the growing role of art and craft in strengthening international cultural relations between India and France. The handcrafted piece stood as a symbol of friendship, creativity, and shared cultural values.

The occasion was especially meaningful for the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design community, as Dr. Toolika Gupta, Director of IICD, played an important role in supporting and encouraging this artistic initiative. Her continued efforts to promote contemporary craft practices and global cultural engagement have helped bring Rajasthan's craft traditions to an international platform. The presentation served as a proud moment for Jaipur's craft community, showcasing how traditional artistry can contribute to diplomacy, dialogue, and cross-cultural exchange.



Delegates and dignitaries gather for a group photograph during the Indo-French cultural exchange event.

Benin's Sacred Art Meets Mewar: “Echoes in Wood” Exhibition Opens at City Palace, Udaipur



Dr. Toolika Gupta, Prof. Charlier, HH Shriji Huzur Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, and HH Maharani Nivritti Kumari Mewar at the inauguration.

UDAIPUR — The City Palace Museum has become a temporary home to a rare collection of West African heritage. The exhibition, titled “Echoes in Wood: A Ceremonial Heritage from Benin, Africa,” officially opened this February at the Chota Darikhana, bringing 45 historic ceremonial objects to the heart of Udaipur. The collection belongs to Prof. Philippe Charlier, a renowned French forensic anthropologist and medical doctor. Famously referred to as the “Indiana Jones of the Graveyards,” Prof. Charlier’s work bridges the gap between science and ancient ritual, and this exhibition marks a significant cultural exchange between Africa, France, and India. The ceremonial evening was inaugurated by His Highness Shriji Huzur Dr. Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar of Udaipur and Her Highness Maharani Nivritti Kumari Mewar.

The objects on display highlight how wood, as a medium, has been used across centuries in the Kingdom of Benin to preserve spiritual history and validate social hierarchy. Each piece tells a story of craftsmanship that mirrors the dedication to heritage preservation seen within the walls of the City Palace itself. This showcase serves as a powerful reminder of how art transcends geographical boundaries to connect diverse civilizations, marking a significant milestone in Udaipur’s cultural calendar and strengthening the ties between the artistic and scientific communities of India and France. Visitors are invited to visit the Chota Darikhana to witness this historic convergence of art, science, and tradition.



Rare ceremonial artifacts from Benin on display at Chota Darikhana.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present the first quarter edition of the IICD Newsletter for 2026, capturing a vibrant and inspiring beginning to the year. The months of January through March have reflected the institute's continued commitment to excellence in craft, design education, and cultural engagement.

This quarter has been marked by significant milestones, including the esteemed visit of the Secretary of Textiles, which reinforced the growing importance of integrating traditional craftsmanship with contemporary academic frameworks. A series of dynamic events from inter-school design competitions and engaging quizzes to Republic Day celebrations have enriched campus life, fostering creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking among students.

Our academic environment has further been strengthened through strategic discussions, council meetings, and immersive learning experiences. Study visits, workshops, and national and international collaborations have provided students with invaluable exposure to diverse craft traditions and global perspectives. Notably, interactions with artisans, participation in festivals, and contributions to cultural diplomacy have highlighted IICD's role as a bridge between heritage and innovation.

As you explore this issue, you will discover stories that celebrate artistic expression, knowledge exchange, and the spirit of community that defines IICD. Together, these experiences reaffirm our vision of nurturing future design leaders while preserving and evolving India's rich craft legacy.

Warm regards,
Editorial Team

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