BAJIRAO IAS ACADEMY

THE HINDU ANALYSIS

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GLOBAL PLASTIC TREATY

Bringing global education home

Bringing global education home

Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar
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Based on the University Grants Commission's recommendations, the Ministry of Education has handed over twelve letters of intent to top foreign universities to establish their campuses in India during the last year. One U.K. university has already opened its doors in Gurugram, launching its programmes for the 2025-26 academic session, with the remaining universities setting up campuses in Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai and the National Capital Region. The fact that world-class universities are establishing their physical campuses in India shows our conscious policy realignment. It opens new opportunities for our students and expands educational horizons in ways we could hardly imagine a decade ago.

The beginning point for this development is a regulation introduced by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 2023. The idea is to allow top-ranking foreign universities to establish campuses in India with operational autonomy and regulatory clarity. The UGC took this calibrated decision to align with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. At its core, NEP 2020 calls for re-imagining higher education to be globally competitive while remaining locally rooted. Facilitating the establishment of global university campuses in India constitutes a direct implementation of that objective.

Why now?

India stands at an inflexion point. With a large aspirational youth population, India has a rapidly expanding and stable economy. Our start-up economy ranks among the fastest-growing globally and is a crucible of global innovation. There is a demand for quality higher education, especially in new-age fields such as AI, design, data science, sustainability, and finance.

Foreign universities are not arriving on empty ground. They are coming into a country already undergoing serious educational reform. Multidisciplinarity is being actively built into the curriculum. We are adopting hybrid educational delivery mechanisms using digital public infrastructure. Research funding is being streamlined through the Anusandhan National Research Foundation. Quality assurance mechanisms are becoming more outcome-oriented due to the reforms in accreditation. Foreign universities see the potential. Many western institutions face diverse challenges, including rising operational costs, demographic changes, and expanding globally. Establishing campuses in countries with a high youth population and growing intellectual capital makes strategic sense. India offers both.

Local advantage, global gains

For students in India, its long-term impact could be truly consequential. Access to international-quality education without the high costs of going abroad changes the game entirely. Families no longer have to stretch their finances or send their children halfway across the world. The benefits go beyond academic degrees. Students will have exposure to diverse peer networks, industry partnerships, and entrepreneurial ecosystems embedded within the country.

And here lies a critical point. Students who might not have considered international education due to economic or social constraints can make that possibility real now. From the parents' perspective, the appeal is straightforward. They want their children to have the best possible education, and they want to feel secure in that choice. Sending a child abroad involves logistical, emotional, and financial complications. With global campuses coming to Indian cities, that equation changes.

This situation, in turn, raises the bar for Indian institutions as well. Healthy competition never hurts a system. When foreign university campuses in India offer cutting-edge programmes, our universities must innovate, reflect, and re-energise their models. There is a strong case for research collaboration, too. For instance, we have seen IITs, IISERs, AIIMS, central universities, and State universities collaborate with global partners on areas such as renewable energy, public health, and engineering. Australian and U.K. universities share strong educational collaborations with Indian universities. European and U.S. universities are intensifying linkages. These collaborations support research, innovation, and skills development.

Education powerhouse

India is a rising power in technology, diplomacy, and manufacturing. Yet, we rarely speak of our potential in global education with the same conviction. India must position itself as an emerging force in international education not by imitating the western university model, but by drawing the world to engage with us on our terms, within our cultural, intellectual, and societal landscape. India's centuries-old tradition of scholarship, from Nalanda to Shantiniketan, should not be seen as relics of the past, but as living sources of credibility in shaping a distinctive, modern learning environment. India already draws thousands of international students each year, yet the scale is negligible compared to our potential. Some claim that prioritising global education is a distraction from India's domestic needs. The truth is the opposite. Inviting the world's students, researchers, and institutions to work with us here also lifts our universities' quality, resources, and ambitions. To ignore this is to allow other nations to monopolise the narrative of what "world-class education" means, while we remain consumers instead of shapers of that narrative.

Students who might not have considered international education due to economic or social constraints can make that possibility real now

The views expressed are personal

Context

- In recent years, India has witnessed a significant transformation in its higher education landscape, marked by the entry of world-class foreign universities.
- Based on the recommendations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Ministry of Education has issued twelve letters of intent to leading global institutions, with one U.K. university already commencing operations in Gurugram for the 2025–26 academic session.
- This shift signals not only a conscious policy realignment but also a strategic vision to expand educational opportunities for Indian students and reshape the nation's place in global academia.

Policy Foundation and Vision

- The cornerstone of this development lies in the UGC regulations introduced in 2023, which enabled foreign universities to set up campuses in India with operational autonomy and regulatory clarity.

- This initiative aligns directly with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes reimagining higher education to be both globally competitive and locally grounded.

The Reason Behind India's Timing in Opening Its Doors to Foreign Universities

- A unique convergence of factors large and aspirational youth population, a rapidly expanding economy, and an innovation-driven startup ecosystem.

- The demand for high-quality education in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, sustainability, and data science is rising sharply.

- At the same time, India's domestic reforms, such as hybrid learning models, streamlined research funding via the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, and outcome-oriented accreditation reforms, create fertile ground for global institutions to thrive.

- Foreign universities, many of which face operational challenges and demographic shifts in the West, find in India a promising environment.

Local Advantage, Global Gains of the Arrival of Foreign Campuses

- For Indian students and their families, the benefits are transformative. Access to world-class education at home eliminates the financial and logistical burdens of studying abroad.
- Students can now experience global curricula, diverse peer networks, and international research opportunities without leaving their own cultural and familial environment.
- This accessibility democratises global education, making it attainable for students who might otherwise have been excluded due to economic or social constraints.

Raising the Bar for Indian Institutions

- The arrival of foreign campuses inevitably raises the bar for domestic universities.
- Competition compels innovation, urging Indian institutions to upgrade curricula, foster research, and strengthen global linkages.
- Already, collaborations between IITs, IISERs, AIIMS, and international universities are driving advancements in renewable energy, public health, and engineering.
- The new campuses will only accelerate such exchanges, enriching both research output and academic culture. Moreover, this influx of foreign players contributes to India's broader knowledge economy.

India as an Education Powerhouse

- Despite India's established reputation in technology, diplomacy, and manufacturing, its potential in education remains under emphasised.
- Yet, the country's rich intellectual heritage, from ancient centres like Nalanda to modern experiments like Shantiniketan, provides a foundation for positioning India as a distinctive force in international education.
- The goal is not to mimic Western models but to create an educational environment that blends global excellence with local wisdom.
- Welcoming international institutions and students is not a diversion from addressing domestic challenges; rather, it amplifies resources, quality, and ambition within the Indian system.
- By shaping the narrative of what world-class education means, India can move from being a consumer to a co-creator of global educational standards.

Global Plastic Pollution crisis

How serious is the global plastic pollution crisis?

What role should governments and individuals play in curbing plastic use?

Prakash Nelliyat

The story so far:

Rapidly increasing plastic pollution is a serious global environmental issue as it significantly impacts ecosystems, their functions, sustainable development, and ultimately the socio-economic and health dimensions of humanity. With this realisation, this year's World Environment Day (June 5) focused on "Ending Plastic Pollution" and encouraging worldwide awareness and action against it.

How serious is the issue?

The OECD's 'Global Plastic Outlook' reveals that global plastic consumption has increased significantly due to the growth of emerging economies and markets. Plastics production doubled from 2000 to 2019, reaching 460 million tonnes, while waste generation grew to 353 million tonnes. Nearly two-thirds of plastic waste has a lifespan of less than five years, with 40% coming from packaging, 12% from consumer goods, and 11% from clothing and textiles. Among this waste, only 9% is recycled. Another 19% is incinerated, 50% ends up in landfills, and 22% evades waste management systems, often entering uncontrolled dumpsites, being burned in pits, or ending up in terrestrial or aquatic environments, especially in poorer countries.

According to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, in 2024 alone, 500 million tonnes of plastic were produced or used, generating around 400 million tonnes of waste. If the current trends continue, global plastic waste could almost triple by 2060, reaching 1.2 billion tonnes.

The Ocean Conservancy data reveal that each year, 11 million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean, in addition to the estimated 200 million tonnes that already flow through our marine environment. According to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) expert, if the current rate of plastic production and waste generation continues, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by the mid-century.

Why is plastic pollution such a grave problem?

The non-biodegradable character of plastics is a serious challenge. It simply breaks into smaller and smaller pieces over time, creating micro- and nano-plastics that infiltrate and contaminate every part of the planet, from the summit of Mount Everest to the depths of the oceans. Plastics account for 3.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. UNEP has stated that plastic production, use, and disposal could account for 19% of the total global carbon budget by 2040.

What remedies are being proposed?

At the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (2022), all 193 UN member states agreed to end plastic pollution through a legally binding international agreement. This is critical to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including climate action, sustainable consumption and production, protection of oceans, and the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. UNEP's ambitious goal of reducing plastic waste by 80% within two decades requires serious action and international cooperation, innovation, better product design, and environment-friendly alternatives, as well as efforts to improve waste management and increase recycling.

As plastics and their chemical additives are primarily made from petrochemical feedstock, limiting their production and eliminating unnecessary items, especially single-use plastics, is urgent. Governments should permit production only within existing legal frameworks.

Most plastics used today are virgin (primary) plastics, while global production of recycled (secondary) plastics is only 6%. Improving recycling technologies and building profitable markets for recycled plastics are crucial.

Imposing landfill and incineration taxes can incentivise recycling. Extended Producer Responsibility schemes, landfill taxes, deposit refunds, and pay-as-you-throw systems need to be introduced.

Finally, people must adopt greener alternatives that have been used in the past. The media, too, has a significant role to play in shaping awareness.

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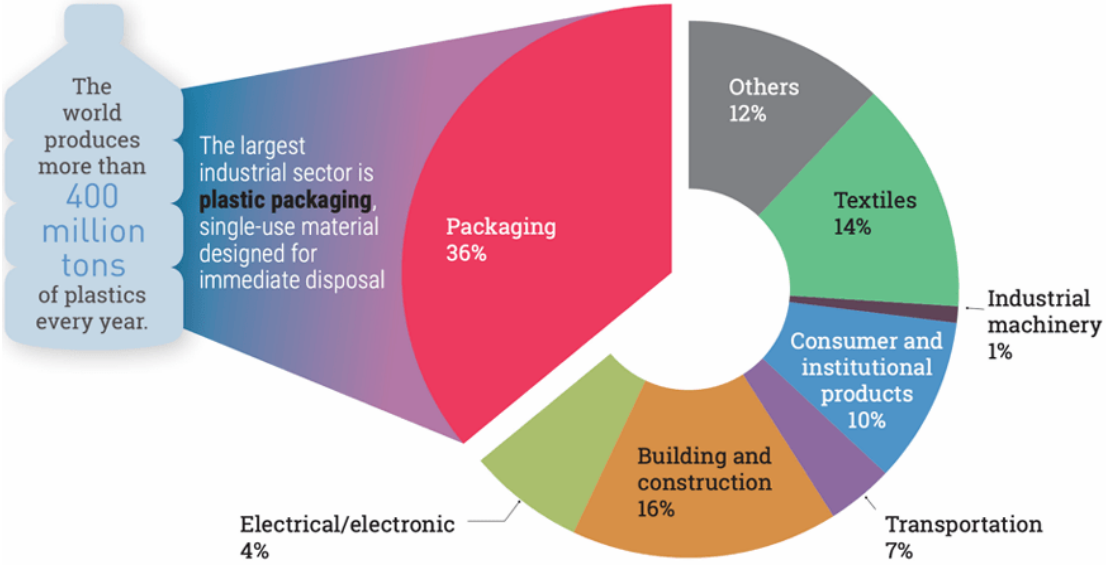
CONTEXT

- Global plastic pollution is reaching alarming levels, with waste projected to triple by 2060 to 1.2 billion tonnes, posing a grave ecological threat.

Scale of the Crisis

- Global plastic production doubled between 2000–2019, touching 460 MT; this growth is driven by packaging and fast consumption.
- Only 9% of plastic is recycled, leading to massive leakage into landfills, rivers, and open dumps.
- 11 MT of plastic enters oceans annually, harming marine species and contaminating the food chain.
- Plastics degrade into micro/nano particles that infiltrate air, water, soil, and even human blood and lungs.
- Without urgent reforms, OECD projects plastic waste will nearly triple by 2060, overwhelming waste systems globally.



Grave Problems of Plastic Pollution

- Plastics take centuries to decompose, resulting in permanent accumulation in ecosystems.
- Plastic production and burning contribute 3.4% of global GHG emissions, intensifying climate change.
- Turtles, seabirds, and fish ingest plastic, causing starvation, poisoning, and reproductive harm.
- Carcinogens and endocrine disruptors in plastics leach into food and water, impacting fertility and immunity.
- Marine plastic pollution causes losses worth $13 billion yearly in fisheries, tourism, and shipping sectors.

Global Efforts

- **UNEA-5 Treaty (2022):** 193 nations agreed to negotiate a binding treaty to end plastic pollution by 2024.
- **SDG Alignment:** Plastic reduction supports SDG-12 (sustainable consumption), SDG-13 (climate action), SDG-14 (life below water).
- **Circular Economy Push:** Global campaigns promote reuse, redesign, and recycling to reduce virgin plastic production.

Indian Efforts

- **Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016/2022:** Bans selected single-use plastic items and enforces producer responsibility.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0:** Focuses on 100% door-to-door waste collection, segregation, and processing.
- **Plastic Roads:** Over 1.2 lakh km of Indian roads use waste plastic, reducing bitumen use and improving durability.

India's First bamboo based ethanol plant

PM inaugurates India's first bamboo-based ethanol plant

Golaghat facility billed as world's first green bamboo bioethanol plant; ₹7,230-crore polypropylene project also initiated at Numaligarh Refinery; the facility aims to reduce dependence on fossil fuels

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underscored the need for India to be self-sufficient in energy. He was speaking after inaugurating the country's first bamboo-based ethanol plant in eastern Assam's Golaghat district.

He laid the foundation stone for a ₹7,230-crore polypropylene plant at the Numaligarh Refinery. The project will be established near the ₹5,000-crore bioethanol plant, a "zero-waste" facility described as the world's first to produce ethanol from green bamboo.

Terming the bioethanol plant a step toward ensuring energy security, Mr. Modi said the facility aimed to promote clean energy and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

"Assam is a land that supports India's energy efficiency. The petroleum products from Assam are accelerating the development of India. The BJP government is trying to take this capacity of Assam to a new level," he said at a public event.

"India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world now. Our energy needs have been increasing with our Viksit Bharat dream. We spend crores of rupees on imports as we are dependent on other countries for energy. We want to change this by trying to achieve self-sufficiency in energy," the Prime Minister said.

Clean energy: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of Assam Bio-Ethanol Private Ltd. (ABEL), Numaligarh Refinery Plant, in Golaghat on Sunday. PTI

Deep-water exploration

"While we are focusing on hydrocarbon exploration, we are also laying stress on green energy like solar," he said, highlighting the country's national deep-water exploration mission to look for hydrocarbons under the sea. Referring to the bioethanol plant, Mr. Modi said it would benefit local farmers and tribal communities.

"The government will help them grow and procure the products to ensure a win-win situation," he said. He criticised the erstwhile Congress governments for penalising people for cutting bamboo, which was earlier categorised as a tree. He said the BJP government removed the ban on bamboo cutting and stressed that the decision was helping the locals in this part of the country.

Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) officials said five lakh tonnes of green bamboo would be sourced yearly from four northeastern States, including Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, to produce 48,900 tonnes of ethanol, 11,000 tonnes of acetic acid, 19,000 tonnes of furfural, and 31,000 tonnes of food-grade liquid carbon dioxide. A joint venture of NRL and Finland's Fortum and Chempolis OY, the plant is expected to give a ₹200-crore boost to Assam's rural economy.

Context:

- Prime Minister of India inaugurated India's first bamboo-based ethanol plant at Numaligarh Refinery, Golaghat, Assam, and laid the foundation stone of a polypropylene plant.

What it is

❑A **bioethanol plant** that converts bamboo biomass into **2G ethanol**, a renewable alternative to fossil fuels.

❑Part of India's **National Bio-Energy Mission** and **Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)** to achieve **20% ethanol blending by 2025**.

❑ Assam Bio-Ethanol Private Limited (ABEL) in collaboration with Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

Objective

❑To reduce crude oil imports by producing **ethanol locally** from bamboo.

❑To boost **bamboo cultivation** in the Northeast, creating an assured market for farmers.

❑To promote **circular economy and energy security** through waste-to-fuel technology.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES
PROMOTING ETHANOL PRODUCTION

NATIONAL POLICY ON BIOFUELS (2018)	Boosts ethanol blending using diverse feedstocks.
REPURPOSE USED COOKING OIL (RUCO) INITIATIVE	Promotes biodiesel from used cooking oil.
ETHANOL BLENDED PETROL (EBP) PROGRAMME	Aims for E20 fuel by 2025-26, cutting fossil fuel reliance.
INTEREST SUBVENTION SCHEME	Aids sugar mills/distilleries in ethanol expansion.
PM JI-VAN YOJANA (2019)	Supports 2G ethanol from agri-waste.

TARGET: The government set an ambitious target of achieving **20% blending by 2025 (from existing 15 %)**

What are biofuels made of?

First Generation	Food-related sources
Second Generation	Non-food sources
Third Generation	Algae
Fourth Generation	Other sources

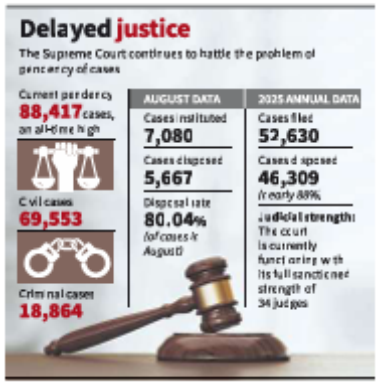
Judicial Pendency

Pendency continues to plague SC as case backlog hits all-time high

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The pendency of cases in the Supreme Court has reached an all-time high of 88,417, even when the court is currently functioning with its full sanctioned judicial strength of 34 judges.

The court has 69,553 civil cases and 18,864 criminal matters pending currently, the National Judicial Data Grid shows. The filing of fresh cases in August surpassed the disposal rate. A total of 7,080 cases were instituted in the court in August. The court has managed a disposal rate of 5,667 cases in the month, that is, 80.04% of the cases filed. The escalation in pendency is despite Chief Justice B.R. Gavai's decision to have more Benches working through the long summer recess of the court in a bid to decrease the case log.



The CJI had renamed the summer holidays from May 23 to July "partial working days". The CJI and five senior-most judges of the court had presided over the first batch of Benches hearing cases during the summer recess. A total of 21 Benches sat in batches throughout the "partial working days", hearing and disposing of cases, till the court reopened in July.

In 2025, 52,630 cases were filed while 46,309, nearly 88%, were disposed of during a year which has already seen two Chief Justices of India with a third, Justice Surya Kant, expected to be sworn in in late November. The corresponding period in 2024 had seen a similar climb in pendency to a then peak of over 82,000 cases. The increase in pendency persists despite successive Chief Justices, from Justice D.Y. Chandrachud to Justice Gavai, taking care to maintain judicial vacancy in the top court to a minimum, if not zero.

Steady rise

The unceasing increase in backlog has become a perennial phenomenon since the pandemic years, and especially since 2023. The pendency had continued to rise steadily despite Justice Chandrachud, when he was CJI, acting swiftly to fill vacancies in the top court. His successors to the top judge post, Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Gavai, have spearheaded their own collegiums to promptly recommend names of judges to the government.

Past Chief Justices and even collegium resolutions have raised the issue of "huge workload".

A November 2023 collegium resolution had mentioned the bare truth that the court cannot afford even one vacancy, taking into account the "ever mounting pendency of cases". "The workload of judges has increased considerably. Bearing in mind the above, it has become necessary to ensure that the court has full working judge-strength leaving no vacancy at any point of time," the collegium had underscored.

The recent months have seen the government approve collegium recommendations for appointment to the Supreme Court without delay, often within 48 hours. Yet, the backlog continues to rise steadily.

The escalation is despite decision to have more Benches working during the SC's summer recess

Context

- The pendency of cases in the Supreme Court has hit an all-time high of 88,417, despite the court functioning at its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges.
- Fresh filings in August 2025 (7,080) exceeded the disposal rate (5,667), pushing pendency further.

Judicial backlog refers to the accumulation of cases that remain pending for disposal beyond a reasonable timeframe, creating delays in access to justice.

Trends at Supreme Court Level

- **Rising Caseload** 69,553 civil and 18,864 criminal cases pending (NJDG data, Sept 2025).
- **Disposal Rate** ~80% of monthly filings disposed (August 2025).
- **Annual Snapshot** In 2025, 52,630 cases filed vs. 46,309 disposed (~88% disposal rate).
- **Historic High** Pendency rising steadily since 2023 despite full judge strength and swift appointments.
- **Institutional Efforts** CJI renamed summer vacation as “partial working days,” constituting 21 Benches to hear cases during recess — yet pendency continues to rise.

JUSTICE DELAYED, DENIED

Almost a quarter of the sanctioned positions remain vacant in subordinate courts which are thronged by poor litigants

Supreme Court	High Courts	District & Sub Courts
Sanctioned Strength **31**	Sanctioned Strength **1,079**	Sanctioned Strength **21,017**
Current Strength **26**	Current Strength **615**	Current Strength **16,851**
Vacancies **5**	Vacancies **464**	Vacancies **4,166**
Backlog **60,000**	Backlog **38,91,076**	Backlog **2,30,79,723**

Top five Indian states with highest backlog of cases

State	Cases pending at district courts	Judges at district courts	Judges per/mn people
UTTAR PRADESH	53,63,613	2,068	10
MAHARASHTRA	31,54,681	2,353	21
GUJARAT	21,98,280	1,205	20
BIHAR	14,33,511	1,361	13
WEST BENGAL	13,42,122	744	8

In other countries

Judges per million population

Source: 2010 Comparative Litigation Rates by J Mark Ramseyer & Eric B Rasmusen of Harvard Law School

Delayed justice

The Supreme Court continues to battle the problem of pendency of cases

Current pendency **88,417** cases, an all-time high

Civil cases **69,553**

Criminal cases **18,864**

AUGUST DATA	2025 ANNUAL DATA
Cases instituted **7,080**	Cases filed **52,630**
Cases disposed **5,667**	Cases disposed **46,309** *(nearly 88%)*
Disposal rate **80.04%** *(of cases in August)*	**Judicial strength:** The court is currently functioning with its full sanctioned strength of 34 judges

Thank you

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