

Promoting Foreign Universities in India



For Prelims : University Grants Commission , India's higher education sector , National Education Policy 2020 , Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) , Study in India program

For Mains: Opportunities & Challenges with the Advent of Foreign Universities in India, Key Reforms Taken in the Indian Higher Education System, Key Issues Associated with India's Higher Education System.

Source: TH

Why in News?

The entry of foreign universities into India marks a significant shift in the country's **higher education landscape** . Encouraged by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the UGC (FHEI) Regulations, 2023**, this presents **both opportunities and challenges** for India's education ecosystem.

- While it offers opportunities for **global integration and academic excellence**, it also raises concerns about **equity, access, affordability, inclusivity, and alignment with national priorities**.

Note

- **India is also expanding its global presence** , with **IIT Madras opening a campus in Zanzibar** and **IIT Delhi establishing one in Abu Dhabi**.

University Grants Commission (UGC)

- UGC is a **statutory body** in India established in 1953 to **coordinate, determine, and maintain standards of higher education**.
- It was created by the Indian government through the **UGC Act of 1956** . The UGC's main functions include **providing recognition to universities, disbursing funds, and advising the government on matters related to higher education**.
- The **UGC headquarters** is located in **New Delhi** .

What is Driving the Entry of Foreign Universities into India's Higher Education Sector?

- **India's Demographic & Economic Potential:** With over **50% of the population under the age of 30** and a **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education just under 30%**, India offers a vast **untapped higher education market**.
 - **Rising incomes, a growing middle class, English proficiency**, and **increasing aspirations for international education** make India an attractive destination for foreign universities.
- **Global Push for Diversification:** Universities in the **UK, Australia, and Canada**, where international students comprise **approximately one third** of total enrolments are facing **stagnating domestic enrolments and declining public funding**.
 - Recent **visa restrictions and enrolment caps** in these countries have pushed institutions to **explore new, high-potential markets like India to sustain growth**.
- **Revenue Diversification & Global Footprint:** Setting up campuses in India (e.g., **GIFT City, Navi Mumbai**) allows foreign universities to **diversify revenue, reduce dependency on outbound mobility**, and **offer affordable international degrees while expanding global visibility**.
- **Collaboration with Indian Institutions**: India already hosts **globally ranked institutions** (e.g., **IIT Bombay, IISc Bangalore, Delhi University**).
 - Foreign universities can **partner with these colleges** to open **joint campuses**, using **existing infrastructure** instead of building from scratch. This model ensures **faster entry**, **lower investment**, and strengthens **academic collaboration**.
 - **Eg : Deakin University** (Australia) has partnered with **IIM Bangalore** prior to launching its campus in **GIFT City**.

What are the Benefits for India from Foreign Universities Entering its Higher Education Sector?

- **Global Education Access:** Foreign universities offer **internationally benchmarked curricula**, **globally recognised degrees**, and **experienced faculty** within India.
 - This allows students to access **high-quality education** without the burden of **high overseas costs**, **visa hurdles**, and **living expenses**, thereby promoting **affordability** and **educational inclusion**.
- **Brain Drain and Forex Retention:** India saw a **rise in outbound students from 5.8 lakh in 2019 to 9 lakh in 2023**, with over **75% intending to settle abroad**.
 - Domestic foreign campuses can provide similar academic value at home, thereby **retaining talent** and saving significant **foreign exchange outflow**.
- **Research and Academic Reforms:** Collaboration with foreign universities can promote **joint research centres**, **faculty exchanges**, and **governance reforms**, enhancing **academic standards**, boosting **research output**, and strengthening **innovation and excellence** in Indian HEIs.
- **Industry Skills and Employability:** Foreign universities offer **industry-aligned programs** with emphasis on **practical learning**, **internships**, and **entrepreneurship**, helping bridge the **skill gap** and enhancing the **employability** of Indian graduates in both **domestic and global markets**.
- **Mutual Facilitation & Strategic Diplomacy**: India can negotiate **reciprocal facilitation**, offering **land, regulatory support, and infrastructure assistance**, in return for helping Indian institutions **establish campuses abroad**, particularly in **Gulf nations and Europe**.
 - This would enhance **educational diplomacy**, promote **internationalisation of Indian higher education**, and strengthen **soft power**.
- **Positioning India as a Global Education Hub:** With **52% of the population under 30**, a **tech-**

savvy , English-speaking youth , and strategic location, India is well-positioned to become an **international education hub** .

- Hosting foreign campuses promotes **cross-border education** , attracts students from **South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East** , enhances **India's global academic presence** , and fosters **healthy competition** for top HEIs like **AIIMS, IIMs, and IITs** , paving the way for **India's own Ivy League** .

What are the Key Challenges Related to Foreign Universities Campuses in India?

- **Affordability and Equity:** Foreign branch campuses may charge **high tuition fees** , making them accessible mainly to the **wealthy elite** .
 - This risks **widening socio-economic inequality** in higher education, potentially **excluding talented students** from **economically weaker sections** , and undermines the **NEP 2020 goal** of **inclusive access to quality education** .
- **Limited Short-Term Systemic Impact:** Though foreign universities are a major reform step, only a few campuses with limited students will open in the near term.
 - So, their effect on improving **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** and overall education system will be **small and gradual** .
- **Commercialisation & Sustainability Challenges:** Foreign institutions may **prioritise profit over academic integrity** , leading to **marketisation of education** and potential **quality dilution** without strong regulation.
 - Experiences from **China, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf** show that **low enrolments** , **high costs** , and **local misalignment** often led to **campus closures** .
- **Regulatory and Infrastructure Barriers:** Despite enabling frameworks like the **UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023**, foreign universities may still face challenges related to **land acquisition** , **taxation** , **labour laws** , and **infrastructure readiness** in general areas.
 - However, in **designated zones** like **GIFT City** , which offer **regulatory exemptions** and a more conducive business environment, these barriers are **significantly reduced** .
- **Cultural and Academic Disconnect:** Foreign universities may face challenges in adapting to India's **social** , **linguistic** , and **cultural context** .
 - Without effective **local integration** , through **relevant curricula** , **Indian faculty** , and **collaboration with local institutions** , they risk becoming **elitist, isolated campuses** , disconnected from **India's educational ecosystem and societal needs** .

What are the Key Issues Associated with India's Higher Education System?

[Click Here to Read: Key Issues in India's Higher Education System](#)

What Measures can be Adopted to Revitalise India's Higher Education System?

[Click Here to Read: Revitalise India's Higher Education System](#)

What Should be the Strategy for Sustainable Collaboration with Foreign Universities in India?

- **Ensuring Inclusive Access:** To align with **NEP 2020** , regulations must mandate **scholarships** and **affirmative inclusion measures** for students from **socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds** .
 - **Financial aid** , from either the **government** or institutions, is essential to promote **wider access** and uphold **social justice** in foreign campuses.
- **Flexible but Accountable Governance:** A **tiered and differentiated regulatory model** should offer **operational ease** to top-ranked global institutions while ensuring **strict oversight** on **academic quality** , **financial transparency** , and **ethical conduct** .
 - Foreign universities must remain accountable to **Indian laws** , **student rights** , and **anti-exploitation norms** .
- **Collaborative Research & Capacity Building:** Foreign universities should engage in **shared campuses** , **MoUs** , **joint research centres** , and **faculty development programs** with Indian institutions. The **UGC must promote such partnerships** to enhance **innovation** , **capacity building** , and **mutual learning** .
 - The government should encourage **foreign-Indian college collaborations** where Indian institutions provide **infrastructure support** and benefit from **global visibility** , while ensuring better **Indianisation** of foreign curricula.
 - In the long term, India must build its own **Ivy League-like institutions** with a **global presence** , as seen in **IIT campuses in the Gulf and Africa** .
- **Local Relevance and Cultural Integration:** Foreign universities should align with **Indian educational values** , **linguistic diversity** , and **student needs** by **adapting curricula** , avoiding replication of home models, and offering **context-specific programs** that support **skill development** and the **knowledge economy** .

Conclusion

The entry of foreign universities holds transformative potential for India's higher education sector. However, their success will depend on **adaptation to local contexts** , **affordable quality delivery** , and **collaboration with domestic institutions** . With the right **regulatory safeguards** and **visionary policies** , this initiative can strengthen India's position as a **global knowledge hub** .

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the opportunities and challenges associated with foreign universities establishing campuses in India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans- (d)

Mains

Q1. How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. (2020)

Q2. Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. (2021)

RGI Directives on Birth Certificates



Source: TH

The **Registrar General of India (under the Ministry of Home Affairs)** has directed all **States** to ensure **birth certificates** are issued **within 7 days of registration** , preferably **before discharging newborns from hospitals** , especially in **government facilities** , which account for over **50% of institutional births** in India.

- **Birth registration:** Birth registration in India has increased from **86% (2014)** to **over 96% (2024)** .
- **Legal Framework for Birth Registration:** It is governed by the **Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969** , with **no fee** if done within **21 days** .
 - Legal provisions now ensure registration of **adopted , orphaned , abandoned , surrendered , and surrogate children** , as well as those of **single parents** or **unmarried mothers**.
 - The **2023 amendment** made digital registration **mandatory** and recognized **electronic documents** as official.
- **Governance Implications:** From **1 st October 2023** , **digital birth certificates** became the **sole proof of date of birth** for **school admissions , government jobs , marriage registrations** , and issuance of **driving licenses** and **passports** .
 - The **Central Civil Registration System (CRS) portal** was developed to **centralize registration data** that will feed into the **National Population Register (NPR)** , **ration cards** , **property registrations** , and **electoral rolls** , aiming to strengthen **governance**.
- **Global Commitments:** It aligns with **United Nations ' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**'s **Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade (2014-2024)** goal to “ **Get everyone in the picture** ” and supports **SDG Target 16.9** : “ **By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration** .”

Read More: [Registration of Births and Deaths in India](#)

Male Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary

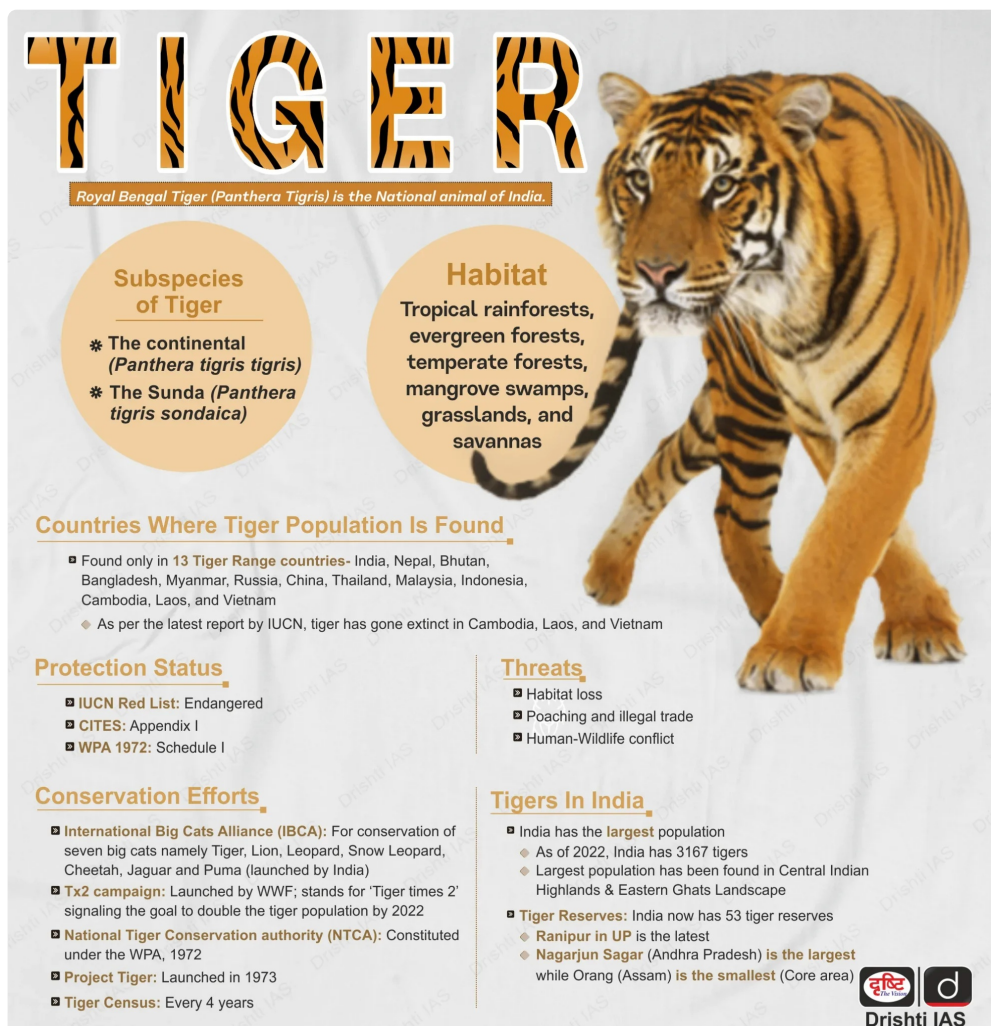


Source: TOI

A **tigress and her four cubs** were found dead in **Karnataka's Male Mahadeshwara Hills (MM Hills) Wildlife Sanctuary** , suspected to have been **poisoned** amid escalating **human-wildlife**

Male Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary

- **About:** It is located in **Chamarajanagar district** , **southeast Karnataka** , near the **Tamil Nadu border** , and was **declared a wildlife sanctuary in 2013** .
 - Its **topography** includes mainly **dry deciduous forests** , along with patches of **moist deciduous** , **semi-evergreen** , **evergreen** , and **shola forests** at varying altitudes.
- **Ecological Importance:** It is **contiguous with Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve** and **Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Karnataka** , and **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve** in **Tamil Nadu** , forming a **critical tiger corridor** between the two states.
 - It is home to **tigers, leopards, elephants**, apart from a rich density of prey species.
- **Tiger Reserve Status:** The **proposal to upgrade MM Hills to a Tiger Reserve** has been **pending for nearly 15 years** . If approved, **Chamarajanagar** will become the **first district in India** to host **3 tiger reserves** — **Bandipur** , **BRT** , and **MM Hills** .
 - **Karnataka** has the **second-largest** tiger population in India (**563 tigers**) after **Madhya Pradesh** (785 tigers) .
- **Human Settlements:** The region is home to two dominant communities: the **Soligas** , indigenous former **hunter-gatherers** , and the **Lingayats** , **temple priests from Mysore** engaged in **temple management**.



Review of Project Elephant



Source: IE

The **Union Environment Ministry** reviewed key initiatives under **Project Elephant (1992)** , highlighting the **completion of Phase-I of the synchronized elephant population** estimation in **Northeastern states**.

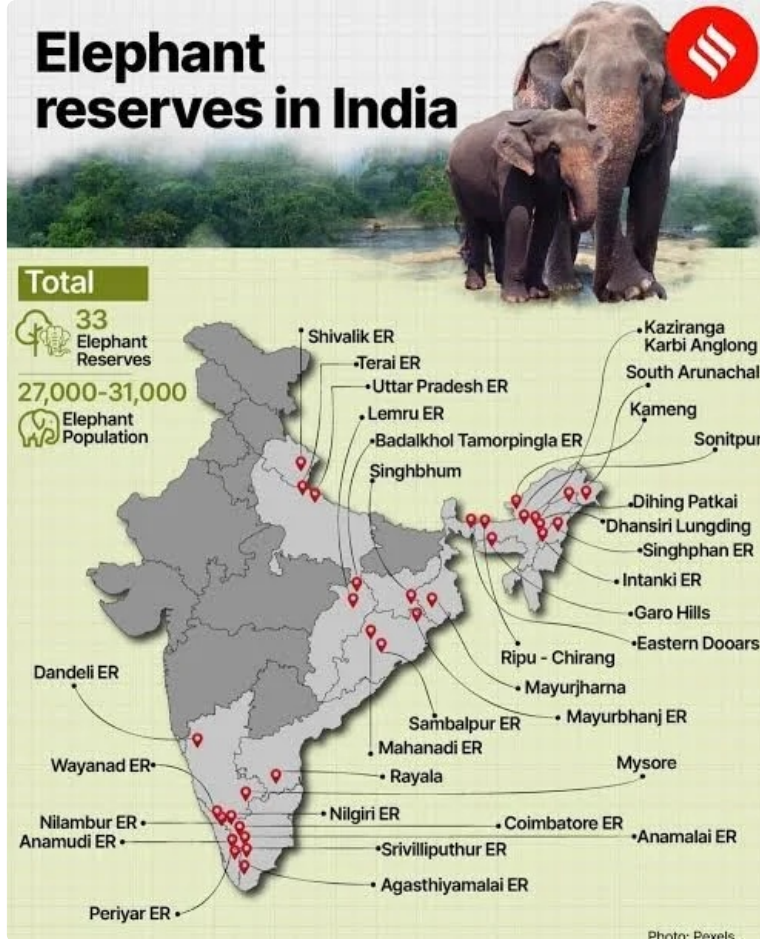
- In another development, the National Board for Wildlife committee recommended the inclusion of the **Sloth bear** and **Gharial** in the **Species Recovery Programme** .

Key Highlights of Project Elephant Review

- **Mortality Mitigation Measures:** **Railway tracks were surveyed to identify high-risk zones** for mitigating elephant-train collisions, which have **resulted in 73 elephant deaths between 2019 and 2024**.
- **Genetic Profiling & Conservation:** Created a **genetic profile of captive elephants** .
- **Conflict Management:** **Regional action plans** to prevent **human-elephant conflict** in Southern and Northeastern India by protecting **elephant corridors** .

Elephants

- **About:** Elephants, **India's National Heritage Animal**, are **matriarchal** and live in **female-led groups**.
 - As **keystone species** and **ecosystem engineers**, they maintain forest health by **dispersing seeds and creating water access** for other species.
- **Species:**
 - **Asian Elephant** (*Elephas maximus*)
 - **African Elephants** :
 - **Savannah Elephant** (*Loxodonta africana*)
 - **Forest Elephant** (*Loxodonta cyclotis*)
- **Population in India:** Indian elephants (*Elephas maximus indicus*), a subspecies of Asian elephants, account for **around 60% of the global Asian elephant population** .
 - As per the **2017 census** , India hosts approximately **29,964 elephants** .
 - **Karnataka** recorded the highest elephant population, followed by **Assam** and **Kerala** .
 - In terms of **protected areas** , **Sathyamangalam forest division** has the highest number of elephants.



• Conservation Status:

- **IUCN Red List** : Endangered
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** : Schedule I
- **CITES** : Appendix I

• Key Initiatives:

- **India: Project REHAB , Elephant Reserves & Corridors , Gaj Yatra , DNA Profiling of Elephants**
- **Global: World Elephant Day , MIKE Programme**

ELEPHANT SPECIES

THERE ARE 3 DIFFERENT SPECIES OF ELEPHANTS:

LARGEST LAND MAMMALS

WHAT ARE ELEPHANTS?

Elephants are the largest living land mammals on earth – they belong to the family Elephantidae

They are easily recognised by their long trunks (elongated upper lip and nose), pillar-shaped legs, and huge head, with wide, flat ears.

Elephants are grayish to brown in colour, and their body hair is sparse and coarse.

They are four-legged, herbivorous and extremely adaptable.

There are 3 different species of elephants

They are found most often in savannas, grasslands, and forests but occupy a wide range of habitats, including deserts, swamps, and highlands in tropical and subtropical regions in both Africa and Asia.

Only one hundred years ago, there were 10 million African elephants inhabiting the African continent. By 2016, however, their numbers were reduced to only about 450,000.

AFRICAN SAVANNAH ELEPHANT

Loxodonta africana

- The African Savanna elephant weighs up to 7,000 kg and stands 3.5 to 4 metres at the shoulder.
- Adult bulls have wide rounded heads compared to narrow pointed heads of female elephants.
- They have long curved tusks.

AFRICAN FOREST ELEPHANT

Loxodonta cyclotis

- Forest elephants live in rainforests, and were recognized as a separate species in 2021. They are slightly smaller than Savanna elephants and rarely larger than 5,000 kg.
- They have slender, downward-pointing tusks and rounder ears.

ASIAN ELEPHANT

Elephas maximus

- The Asian elephant includes three subspecies: the Indian, or mainland (*E. maximus indicus*), the Sumatran (*E. maximus sumatranus*), and the Sri Lankan (*E. maximus maximus*).
- They weigh about 4,000 kg and have a shoulder height of up to 3 metres.

Impact of Climate Change on Global Food Production



Source: TH

A **study** warns that every **1°C rise in global temperatures** will lead to a **4% reduction in per capita calorie availability** by **2100**, severely impacting **staple crops** like **wheat**, **rice**, **maize**, and **soybean**.

- The study differs from previous research by **factoring in farmer adaptation**, including the **use of heat-resistant crop varieties** and **adjustments to sowing and watering schedules**.

Key Findings

- **Farmer adaptation** through measures like **heat-resistant crops** and **adjusted sowing/irrigation** could reduce losses by **23% (2050)** and **34% (2100)**, but **losses** remain **severe**, except for **rice**.
- Between **2050-2100**, **wheat yields** may drop by **30-40%** in **China, Russia, the US, and Canada**, with **northern India** worst affected.
- **Rice** may see **mixed effects** in **India and Southeast Asia**, but over **50% losses** in **Sub-Saharan Africa** and **Europe**, while **maize and soybean** face **significant global declines**.
- Losses affect not only **poor countries** but also **modern breadbaskets** like the **US, Europe, and China**, highlighting the urgent need for **innovation**, **cropland expansion**, and **climate-resilient practices**.

Read More: [Climate Resilient Agriculture](#)