

# India Café To Offer Food For Plastics, Then Use To Build Roads



By Aaron Kesel | [Activist Post](#)

Next month, the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh in the city of Ambikapur will open the country's first "garbage café," where attendants will be able to recycle their plastic waste and get a free meal, *Reuters* [reported](#).

In various parts of the world, similar cafés have opened in countries including [some parts of the US](#), [Lithuania](#), [Cambodia](#), and [Belgium](#). Now it's India's turn to get involved in the food for trash business.

A small restaurant in the eastern city of Ambikapur will begin providing food to homeless and poor people and encourage

citizens to keep their streets clean, said Ambikapur mayor Ajay Tirkey.

“Everybody is welcome to donate plastic. The café will be mainly run by women... Preparations are in full swing!” Tirkey told *Reuters*.

Single-use plastics are beginning to be banned across much of the world starting first with plastic straws, but Indians still generate approximately [26,000 tons](#) of plastic waste every day, according to a government study. The waste is often dumped in streets, drains, and landfills.

In exchange for just one kilogram (2lb 3.273965oz) of plastic, the café will serve curry with rice, lentils, and papadams, said Tirkey, estimating that it would take a couple of hours to collect.

For half that weight, plastic scrappers can receive a breakfast of samosas, lentil doughnuts or stuffed flatbreads.

Another cafe in India, [Wood Box Café](#), uses recycled beer cut bottles and vodka cut bottles and glasses from recycled material.

Across India, the country has begun building plastic roads, and this new café aims to help Ambikapur build more plastic roads and expressways with all the plastic recycled and traded for food.

The city of Ambikapur [built](#) one of the first roads made entirely of plastic in 2015 and earns 1.2 million rupees (\$17,400) a month selling plastic and recycled paper to private companies, according to Tirkey. This approach to road construction was developed in India around 15 years ago in response to the growing problem of plastic litter, *The Guardian* [reported](#).

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10154758571286479>

The Indian government has previously [announced](#) in 2015 that plastic roads would be the default method of construction for most city streets, part of a [multibillion-dollar overhaul of the country's roads and highways](#). Urban areas with more than 500,000 people are now [required to construct roads using waste plastic](#).

Believe it or not, the Indian government is far from the only nation using polymerized asphalts, the practice first became popular in [the 1970s](#) in Europe. Now, North America [claims 35% of the global](#) market of plastic mixed with asphalt to strengthen roads making them more flexible and durable to tires.

In June, Akshar Forum school in Pamohi in Assam state in northeast India [introduced](#) a program for poor students exchanging plastic for schooling. The kids would be required to bring in at least 20 pieces of plastic waste every week in exchange for free schooling.

All of this is despite a ban on single-use plastic across many Indian states that were also enacted in June on the 23rd, only to have those efforts eased just a week after introducing a plan to cut back on single-use plastics. This came after intense lobbying by multinational companies including Amazon, H&M, Pepsi, Coca-Cola and plastic industry bodies for softer rules and extensions, *Reuters* [reported](#).

In March, India banned imports of waste plastics from other nations. This comes a year after China, the world's biggest importer of scrap plastic implemented a similar ban on Western imports, *The Independent UK* [reported](#).

Earlier this year, under the auspices of the United Nations, 180 countries with the exception of the U.S. [agreed](#) to treat plastic as hazardous waste. The deal, which is an upgrade to the [1989 Basel Convention](#) on the control of hazardous waste adding plastics, would sharply reduce the amount of the

material being washed into the world's oceans.

Last year, a UN [report](#) issued on – World Environment Day – showed dozens of nations acting to cut plastic use across the world.

In general, the U.S. has resisted India's own push for ending the use of single-use plastics, objecting to a proposal for a global ban in March of this year.

“The United States recognizes that marine plastic pollution is an important and growing issue and that urgent action is needed to reduce the release of plastic into the environment,” a State Department spokesperson [said](#) in the statement to *Bloomberg Environment*.

The State Department further added the U.S. and other countries “are taking ambitious action to reduce plastic pollution,” but “we do not believe in a prescriptive approach where we target a specific product type because it is the subject of regulation in some countries and with no consideration of the associated environmental consequences.”

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, [announced](#) late last year at the India hosted United Nations' World Environment Day that the country would begin eliminating all single-use plastics with a goal to be rid of all items by 2020.

So far, a total of 18 out of 29 states and 7 territories in India have banned, the use of plastic bags according to a [report](#) by *India Times*. This leaves a remaining 11 states to implement a ban on the bags that are killing ocean wildlife and land mammals alike, while still leaving dozens of plastic items to be banned.

“Eighteen states have imposed a complete ban on plastic carry-bags, while five other states have imposed partial prohibition at religious and historical places, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has told the National Green Tribunal,”

*India Times* [wrote](#).

The G20 has also made its own recommendations in a recent meeting last month, where world leaders discussed reducing the glut of plastic waste in the oceans, *Reuters* [reported](#).

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, who hosted the G20 summit, said he wants his country to lead the world in reducing plastic trash in the ocean by developing biodegradables and using alternative materials to replace plastic products.

All across the world, nations have begun banning single-use plastic items such as straws, packaging, and bags.

Plastic produces toxic additives such as [styrene](#) and [benzene](#) as the products decompose. It's an undeniable fact that single-use plastics are [killing](#) birds and [harming](#) marine life and something must be done to protect the ocean and its creatures.

These decisions by India are also no doubt directly influenced by the EU list of to be [banned plastics](#) by 2021 as well. The EU ban was based on single-use common plastic items like plastic cutlery, cotton buds, straws, and stirrers. While plastic bottles will incur a 90% collection target by 2029.

In the EU it was just the first step of an overarching strategy to reduce environmental impact, which in the future includes many more measures to tackle plastic waste, like having warning signs on plastic products, mandating plastic producers to partake in plastic recycling and clean up and such.

In April of last year, the UK's Prime Minister Theresa May announced she planned to ban the commercial use of disposable plastic products such as cotton buds, drink stirrers and plastic straws in response to plastic marine pollution.

May further claimed that single-use items like plastic straws



are “one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the world” in a meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government, [ABC reported](#).

Disney has also [announced](#), as has [Starbucks](#), a departure from handing out straws to their customers.

Disney and Starbucks aren't the only companies that are now pushing for a straw-free world. A list of companies including [Marriott Hotels](#), [Royal Caribbean cruise liner](#), [Hilton Hotels](#), [Sea World](#), [IKEA](#), [American Airlines](#) and many more are pushing to phase out straw use.

Plastic isn't biodegradable, it kills vital ocean life, and finding a way to get rid of plastic hasn't been easy.

Hemp as an alternative can be used as packaging for many of plastics products including straws and bags. Its 100% biodegradable, and hemp even has the ability to clean soil of pollutants (it pulls them up through its roots). Hemp also grows basically anywhere, or could probably be modified to.

However, using plastic in roads doesn't come without consequence and should be noted for the reader that the practice is not completely environmentally conscious. In fact, microplastics act like magnets for [pollutants](#) like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs.) Old roads or poorly built structures are likely to seep [plastic fragments into the soil](#) and eventually waterways when they deteriorate after being exposed to environmental factors such as light and heat. However, plastic roads made out of polymerized asphalts are less likely to melt unless the temperature goes beyond 66C (150F), [compared](#) to 50.2C (122.5F) for ordinary roads.

This doesn't mean that over time some particles from the plastics won't find its way into the soil through and that should be extremely worrying for environmentalist activists. “Once in the soil, these particles may persist, accumulate, and eventually reach levels that can affect the [functioning](#)

[and biodiversity](#) of the soil,” writes Matthias C Rillig, a professor of plant and soil ecology at Freie Universität Berlin.

Although, the concept of food for recyclable trash in poor nations is certainly one that *Activist Post* can stand behind since the programs are designed to feed the homeless. It’s how this recyclable plastic is used that may become a bigger problem than just ocean pollution in the future, endangering our plants in our soil and even smaller bodies of water like lakes and streams.

*Aaron Kesel writes for Activist Post. Support us at [Patreon](#). Follow us on [Minds](#), [Steemit](#), [SoMee](#), [BitChute](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*

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