Isha Foundation, govt ink pact to plant 25 cr saplings in river basins

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Isha Foundation and the state government on Saturday expressed commitment to work together to save all rivers flowing through Karnataka by signing an MoU to plant 25 crore saplings across a one-kilometre radius of the rivers.

The MoU was signed at the Palace Grounds at an event organised by the Foundation as part of the nationwide Rally for Rivers campaign.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev said, “It may take about 25 years to witness results of the campaign and governments may not implement such projects, considering much delay in getting results. Concurrency didn’t happen in the last many decades to save rivers as water is a concurrent subject in the Constitution. The Foundation conceived the project to present people’s support to governments for implementing such projects.”

Referring to the water crisis in the city, he said, “A study by IISc reveals that Bengaluru will be largely unlivable in the next five years due to scarcity of water. Bengaluru has already lost 79% of its water resources, while the number of lakes has dipped to 81 from 1,000,” he said.

“At least 2% of organic content is required to consider something as soil. Many areas in Haryana, Punjab, North Karnataka, Marathwada and Andhra Pradesh have just 0.05% organic content in them. These areas will turn into desert in another three years, while in the next five years about 25% of India’s land will be uncultivable. In the next 40 years, about 60% India’s land will be uncultivable.”

As per rough estimates, about 80% of the youths aged below 20 years hadn’t seen rivers as the volume of destruction was huge. This is the right time to stand up before it is too late, he said.

Sadhguru said, “About 3 million people lost their lives till recently due to famine, while about 5.25 million people died in just two months. About seven lakh farmers committed suicide in the last 10 years as they were unable to feed their own children and themselves.”

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said, compared to the pre-independence period, there was 40% less water available at present.

“Enough water may not be available for all, if the trend continues,” he said. The government was planting about 8 crore saplings every year, but many of them did not survive. He said, “The government will plant saplings on its lands as per the MoU, while owners of private lands will be convinced to plant saplings.”

Draft policy

The Foundation will submit its draft policy to save rivers to the government on October 2. It welcomes inputs, suggestions and comments to be included in the draft policy. Prizes to winners of the essay competition in the high school category were given away.