CAMPAIGN FOR OUR LIFELINES

Rally for Rivers, a month-long initiative, starts today and will end in Delhi on Oct 2, after crossing 16 states and 21 cities

Etti Bali

This is not a protest. This is not an agitation. This is a people's campaign to raise awareness that our rivers are depleting. Everyone who consumes water must Rally for Rivers,” says Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder, Isha Foundation.

Sadhguru has organised a campaign to raise awareness about the depleting rivers of India. If you have seen people around Delhi and other cities holding blue placards spreading the message ‘Rally for Rivers’, and wondered what it was about, then here’s the lowdown.

“Rally for Rivers is not a finger-pointing exercise; it is an all-inclusive campaign,” says a Rally for Rivers supporter. “There is a team of more than 20 experts — from hydrology, hydro-geology, water, soil and agriculture — who are working on a set of recommendations for river rejuvenation that will be submitted to the Government of India, and also to various state governments.”

Explaining the importance of the campaign, Sadhguru says, “In just one generation, our perennial rivers are turning seasonal. Many smaller rivers have already vanished. If we do not act now to reverse this, the legacy we hand over to the next generation will be one of conflict and deprivation.”

The solution lies in planting trees over a 1km wide stretch on each river bank; the river will be flanked by this kilometre-wide cover of vegetation, which will help replenish the river water. “Trees basically hold soil, and therefore, water. This water is released drop by drop throughout the year. These drops become rivulets, which become streams, and then they become rivers,” the supporter explains. The campaign has four phases.

“This is the awareness generation phase, and there are a lot of on-ground activities,” says the supporter. “We’re reaching out to schools and colleges, conducting creative writing, art and video-making competitions. The second phase is the rally and will have 23 large-scale public events, which will include cultural performances. In the third phase, we’ll be working closely with the government towards a policy pronouncement. The fourth phase would be about policy implementation and monitoring. This is not just another road show; we’ll be working closely with the governments.”

The rally is being flagged off today in Coimbatore by Union minister of environment, forests & climate change Dr Harsh Vardhan. It will end in New Delhi on October 2 in the presence of political, policy, business, film and sports leaders. “The rally will be passing through 16 states and 21 cities,” adds the supporter.

Celebrities have joined the campaign and extended their support on social media. To show your support, you can give a missed call to the toll-free number 8009800009.

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PHOTO: [TWITTER/ PYSINDHU]
HOW THIS AFFECTS YOU

- Estimates say 65% of our water needs are met by rivers.
- 2 out of 3 major Indian cities already deal with daily water shortage. Many urban residents pay ten times the normal amount for a can of water.
- We consume water not just to drink or for domestic purposes. 80% of water is used to grow our food.
- Each person’s average water requirement is 1.1 million liters a year.
- Flood, drought and rivers turning seasonal are increasingly leading to crop failure across the country.
- Climate change is expected to cause worse floods and droughts within the next 25-50 years. During the monsoon, rivers will flood. The rest of the year, drought will follow. These trends are already beginning.

Source: isha.sadhguru.org/rally-for-rivers