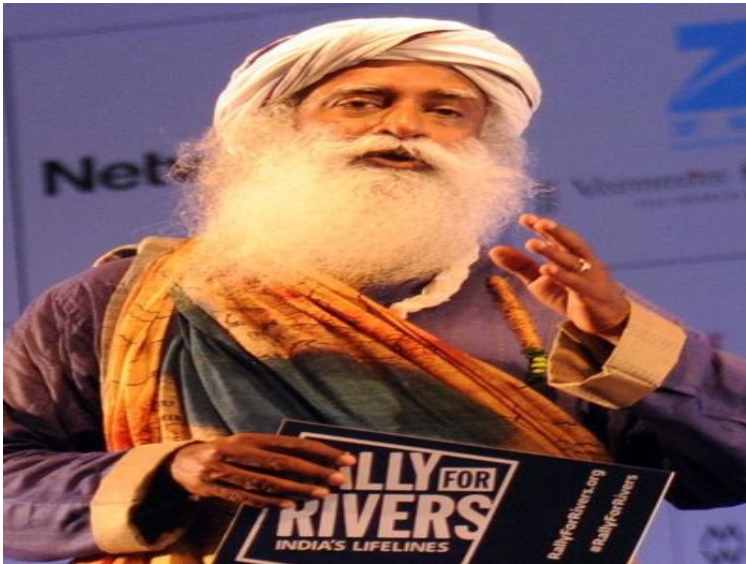


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New sant for Sabarmati, hope for rivers

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AHMEDABAD: In the last 50 years, Sabarmati river lost 94% of the tree cover along its course and in that same period the river lost 70% of its water. "Is this not enough to realize how important trees or a riparian buffer is for a river's survival?" said Sadhguru who was on the penultimate leg of the 'Rally for Rivers' countrywide campaign in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

In an elaborate function on the riverfront, Sadhguru signed an MoU with the Gujarat government represented by CM Vijay Rupani as a knowledge provider and consultant to improving tree cover along major Gujarat rivers.

"We have a team of experts who will study the soil, topography along the river's banks and suggest what can be done and what trees can be grown on the minimum 1km buffer along the river," said Sadhguru. CM Rupani assured Sadhguru of the state's support. "Only 4% of our rivers are glacier-fed, rest are all forest-fed. Which means that we require a good forest cover along rivers to absorb monsoon waters, which then will gently allow this water to percolate into the river over years," said Sadhguru.

A lot of thrust is on river interlinking also. But I feel that linking all rivers in the country will be a disaster. In fact there are many small and other rivers that flood during every monsoon and a large volume of water goes unutilised. Linking such rivers with a network will be highly beneficial.

Sadhguru also pointed out that as a country we are not utilising the potential of our own agriculture universities.

"Sometime back we had invited a group of Vietnamese horticulture experts to help us with the tree project. They told us that farmers in Vietnam who shifted from paddy to fruit cultivation saw a 20 fold rise in their income. The Vietnamese experts later told me that they all were trained in Indian Agricultural Universities 22 years ago. I wondered had this knowledge come to our lands and our farmers it could have done wonders," says Sadhguru .

On Oct 2 , the spiritual leader will present a 650-page policy document to the Union government and even share it with states, media and scientific institutions.