

**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Vice President's Secretariat**

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02-October-2017 21:00 IST

**We see rivers as goddesses and they are the source of our lives: Vice President**

**Addresses the event of culmination of 'Rally for Rivers'**

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that we Indians see rivers as goddesses, we call them our mothers and they are the source of our lives. He was addressing the gathering at an event to culminate the Rally for Rivers, an initiative by Sadhguru driving himself to spread awareness to the people on Rivers.

The Vice President compliment Sadhguru for the Rally for Rivers, creating awareness and personally driving from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas, cutting across 16 states. He further said that celebrities, sports stars, artists, political leaders from across the political spectrum have come together to support this noble cause. We should all join in this revitalization of rivers campaign, he added.

The Vice President said that Sadhguru has a truly remarkable vision for our rivers and our farmers. The proposal of planting a minimum of 1 km on either sides of our rivers is a very good idea, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

“India is a nation that has always worshiped and revered our rivers. We see rivers as goddesses, we call them our mothers. They are the source of our lives.

But today, our rivers are depleting at a dangerous rate. Perennial rivers have become seasonal. And our Ganga is among the top 10 most endangered rivers of the world.

Per capita availability of water in India has declined by 75% since independence and by 2030 we will have only 50% of the water that we need for our survival.

I think this is very important and timely that Sadhguru has started this national initiative, Rally for Rivers – to bring the need to revive our rivers to the forefront.

Over the past month, Sadhguru has been personally driving all over the country to spread awareness among the people. It has built up so much momentum and has become a the struggle for freedom united all of us regardless of our religion, caste, gender people's movement.

After 70 years, we are seeing one more movement where all Indians are coming together. And the credit goes to Rally for Rivers, that has united all Indians beyond their identities. I must say that this also reminds me of Swami Vivekanand who spread the science of yoga and message of peace to the world. He was perhaps the first Yogi to

do so. After over a century – we are witnessing another Yogi who has spread the science of yoga far and wide. And now he is on a mission – an all inclusive mission – to revitalize India’s rivers.

We have such diversity in this country. We are different in so many ways - different languages, cultures, traditions, dress, food. But our rivers have no language. They do not distinguish between people on the basis of religion, caste or social or economic class. They belong to all of us. And this is what we have seen in this movement. The Rally for Rivers has gone through 16 states which are so richly diverse. And yet Indians across the country have embraced this movement. Different as we are, our hearts have beaten as one for our rivers.

Now we are privileged to be here at the culmination of this historic Rally.

The Rally for Rivers is proposing a policy recommendation to plant trees on either side of our rivers to restore them. The most important and encouraging aspect of this program is that it is an economic model which has a significant ecological consequence. Through this model, which proposes a gradual shift from ploughing-based agriculture to tree-based agriculture, will impact farmers’ livelihood very positively.

If implemented in a scientific and all-inclusive way, the farmers’ income can be doubled by 3 to 8 times. Therefore, Rally for Rivers is not just a river revitalization campaign, but also serves the national goal of revitalizing our farmers, agriculture and thereby nation’s economy.

Almost 70% of our country is rural population, who are most severely affected by the dying rivers and soil. All the youth in the cities, I encourage you to take some time and travel around the state. Look at the state of our villages and know first-hand what are the problems our farmers are facing. Experience nature and our rivers, the very source of our lives. We need to remember to protect them for future generations.

So this is not just a Rally for Rivers. It is a Rally for our lives and the lives of our children.

Sadhguru has a truly remarkable vision for our rivers and our farmers. The underlying proposal of planting a minimum of 1 km on either side of our rivers is a very good idea and we, as a nation, will make all possible efforts to ensure its implementation on government land along the rivers and also encourage private land owners to take it up for their economic advantage and that of our ecology.”

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