

Brief on the Yamuna Satyagraha- the struggle to save Yamuna Flood Plains starting since Jan. 2007

Achievements:

Moratorium on further constructions on Yamuna flood plains. Projects like complex for BCCI Academy, Pawan Hans Heliped, , Shopping mallports Complex/ grounds south of NH-24, cricket and Football stadium south of DND, LPG Bottling plant at Madanpur Khadar, Residential Complex at Madanpur Khadar were dropped by the Lt. Governor of the city. The Yamuna Flood Plains (Zone-O in Master Plan of Delhi) have been reserved for water recharge and bio-diversity purposes.

Pattern of our activities:

We organized various activities on field with purpose to raise public awareness and put across our demands and mark our protest to the authorities. The acts were in true satyagrahi mode which means non- violent, peaceful resistance to anti people, anti environment government laws. We call these active satyagrahi acts as these are pro active and needs courage at part of satyagrahi, involving the risk of being taken into police custody, arrests, beaten up etc. Besides, our other activities for awareness raising and sensitization has been yatras, talks, presentations, day long hunger strike, media interactions etc.

Acknowledgements:

We thank **Jal Biradari** led by Rajender Singh, **Youth for Justice, Natural Heritage First (NHF), farmers of Yamuna Khadar, URJA (East), Citizens Campaign for Water Democracy** for their role as active satyagrahis. (See the list of activities below for details). The farmers of the area have been responsible for maintaining a Satyagraha sthal for such a long period. Manoj Mishra from **Peace Institute** highlighted the various illegalities in the activities by the Govt. on the flood plains. His networking with the media has been very fruitful.

We specially thank a youth **Sunil Parbhakar**(Jal Biradari, Punjab), who came all the way from Punjab to fight for Yamuna and his energy and sacrifice was enviable.

On other hand **Dr. Vikram Soni and Diwan Singh** from Natural Heritage First (NHF) along with other members of scientific community did an independent scientific study on the value of Yamuna Flood Plains. This study, published in Current Science, a reputed scientific journal, was presented before the Lt. Governor, heading Yamuna River Development Authority(YRDA). Deliberations went on for a year. Technical Advisory Group(TAG) was formed, with Dr. Soni and Diwan being its members. All this finally resulted in moratorium on further constructions on flood Plains.

We warmly thank **Shri Kuldeep Nayar**, who used his good offices to get audience with Who's Who in the government such as with the LG, former HRD Minister Shri Arjun Singh, the meeting of the Group of Ministers etc. At this ripe age of 82 years, Nayarji was always readily available for the cause whenever needed.

Besides, we also acknowledge the contributions of the media fraternity who reported with great empathy and sympathy for the Yamuna cause. Other NGOs, groups, individuals who have made their contributions are:

Ekta Parishad, Nyaya Bhumi, Parakhar, Manushi, Bharat Nav Nirman Dal, Nirmal Yamuna, India Water Portal, Eco Kidz Club, Gati Rakesh Tikait IFA Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJ&R), <i>Students and faculty of:</i> Sri Ram School, (Vasant Vihar& Gurgaon) CRPF Public School (Dwarka), Miranda House, Delhi University And others	360 villages Panchayat of Delhi, Green Forum, Kalpvriksha, Eco club Ramjas College, Chetna, Vandana Shiva, Dr. A.K.Gosain(IIT,Delhi), Delhi School of Social Works, Shahid Bhagat Singh Brigade Madhu Bhatnagar Matu Jan Sangathan	Parivartan, Tapas, Sweccha, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Hazards Centre, CSE, Dr.P.S.Datta(IARI, PUSA) Paani Morcha Yudhveer Singh Medha Patkar
---	--	--

List of Activities and Participants over the more than two year period of struggle to save Yamuna flood plains from construction activities.

Date	Activities and Participants
11 Jan, 2007	Yamuna Bachao Andolan formed by Natural Heritage First supported by Chetna and students of Delhi University. A small protest demonstration held at Games village site.
14 Jan, 2007	Havan organized by URJA in collaboration with Natural Heritage First at Games Village site. Covered live by Sahara Samay.
March, 2007	Natural Heritage First (NHF) and URJA collaborate with Aaj Tak to conduct its special live programme series on Yamuna.
March,2007 and onwards	Natural Heritage First (NHF) gets in talks with Rajender Singh requesting his services for cause of Yamuna in Delhi.
	After more than a month of discussions, Rajender Singh decides to work for Yamuna and reaches Delhi. The News spreads. CM Shiela Dixit invites him for talks.
	Rajender Singh turn down Shiela's offer of consultancy Talks held with CM Shiela Dixit along with Rajender Singh and representatives of Natural Heritage First. Rajender Singh turns down the offer of the CM to become consultant to Delhi Government.
	An article titled ' Three waters ' by Dr. Vikram Soni

	highlighting the value of flood plains published in Current Science
	A 10 day yatra named ‘Yamuna Satyagraha yatra’ taken up by Jal Biradari team and participation by Natural Heritage First(NHF) and other groups from the banks of Yamuna. The yatra started from Hathni kund barrage at the foot of Shivalik range in Haryana and ended in Delhi.
1Aug, 2007	DIRECT ACTION Led by Rajender Singh, a team of activists plants saplings at the Games village site in defiance against the govt. plan. Kuldeep nayar, Radha Behan, Dr. Vikram soni and C.V.Rajgopal were some noted participants who stayed put in face of police action. DDA and police action follows. An activist detained and manhandled by police. Yamuna Satyagraha formally launched. We decide to sit under the lone sheesham tree announcing a 24 hours vigil. Prof. S.Prakash (99years old) stayed at the site overnight. Satyagrahis volunteered turn wise to ensure 24 hour vigil. Police dismantle and confiscate the tent set up by NN Mishra of URJA. The sheesham tree became our satyagraha sthal and its shade provided us the necessary relief from the summer heat till we shifted close to highway. All the NGOs and groups and individuals decide to get under the banner of Yamuna Satyagraha and work together. Natural Heritage First(NHF) dissolved Yamuna Bachao Andolan and merged it with Yamuna Satyagraha.
2 Aug to 15 th August 2007	Youth for Justice, farmers of Yamuna khaddar and Sunil Parbhakar joins Yamuna Satyagraha. The farmers admirably took responsibility to maintain the Satyagraha sthal. Youth for Justice provided the much needed youth energy for the movement. Press conferences, folk songs, inviting people/NGOs/politicians from Delhi and outside to sit on satyagraha. Foreign media too troops in. On 15 th august, we staged a march to the stream of Yamuna to hoist tri-colour. Yamuna was in good flow but devoid of its flood plains. Unable to meander like a river and recharge the flood plain aquifers.
19 August,	SATYAGRAHA IN WELL Satyagrahis barricaded inside the games village site, pressured to move out. In protest, Sunil Parbhakar(25 years) get down in an abandoned dry well and resumes his satyagraha inside the well, with a chameleon and a snake as his co satyagrahis.
August	Medha patkar, Ch. Ramkaran solanki(head of 360 villages of Delhi), Govindacharya, C.V.Rajagopal and others gather at the satyagraha sthal.
18 th September	STALLING PROCEEDINGS OF DELHI ASSEMBLY. Sunil Parbhakar and Kapil Mishra and other young boys and girls from Youth for Justice along with Diwan Singh from

	Natural Heritage First enter Delhi assembly and stall the proceedings, demanding discussion on Yamuna. Boys taken into police custody. <i>Then there were long discussions on Yamuna in Assembly</i>
27 th September	Yamuna satyagraha co-organises a function along with Shahid Bhagat Singh Brigade at Sur Ghat near Wazirabad. The function was organized on birth day of Shahid Bhagat Singh.
2 nd October	300 people march from Yamuna Satyagraha sthal to Raj Ghat.
10 th October	March to Supreme Court- students of Aravalli Inst. Of Manangement, Jal Biradari, Youth for Justice, NHF and others totalling more than 200 marches to supreme Court to demand justice for the river. Outnumbered and surrounded by police.
24 th October	24 hours Yamuna satyagraha starts at NH-8, opposite hotel raddison at Mahipal Pur. Harvinder Rana , a local youth volunteer and his friends take the initiative.
	Youth for Justice organizes a huge aarti samaroh for Yamuna at Wazirabad with more than 500 people joining it.
12 th November	A delegation led by Shri Kuldeep Nayar including Dr. Vikram Soni and Diwan singh from NHF and Manoj Mishra from Peace Institute meets the Group of Ministers.
18 th November	Candle march organized by Youth for Justice at Central Park in Cannought Place, warning the government against turning Yamuna Flood plains into another Nandigram.
22 nd November	TEMPORARY MORATORIUM – Dr. Vikram Soni and his team’s efforts tastes success. At a meeting of YRDA attended by 40 technical experts from various fields, the LG declares temporary moratorium on further constructions on Yamuna Flood Plains subject to further studies. CGWB commissioned to do further studies and directed to work with Dr Soni’s team.
1 Dec to 9 th Dec	Yamuna Bhujal Bachao Yatra organized in all the villages and colonies along both banks in Delhi. Led by Rajender Singh, NGOs and farmers join hands to spread awareness about the significance of Yamuna for ground water recharge.
Dec	Message to save flood plains displayed at the back of more than 125 Auto Rickshaws with the help of NyayaBhoomi. We can still find these.
Dec	NHF and Youth for Justice and farmers of Yamuna Khadar protests the dissection of yamuna Flood plains by building slip roads in a wrong manner at Vikas Marg.
21 Feb, 2008	Panel discussion at Indian Women Press Corps(IWPC), co organized by NHF, attended by Kuldeep Singh(former Justice, SC), Kuldeep Nayar, Rajender Singh, Dr. Vikram Soni, Vandana Shiva, M.C.Mehta and Bhure Lal. The topic was preservation of natural resources in Delhi.

March	We could not afford to stand mute witness to laborers' death at Games Village site . Youth for Justice and NHF raised the issue, agitated against unhygienic conditions at the construction site. With support from media, we managed to force the authorities to clean the site and make it hygienic and the deaths stopped.
21 March	Activists burn effigy of Shiela Dixit on occasion of Holi to protest construction of Games village at flood Plains.
	Dr. Soni meets Shri Kapil Sibal, heading the ministry of Science and Technology to seek his support for protection of natural resources of the city.
5 June	7 day Yamuna Yatra from Delhi to Agra launched. Organized by Youth for Justice with support from farmers, Peace Institute and NHF, the yatris did overnight stay in the villages or towns along the Yamuna and enjoyed hospitality of local people. It helped in lot of sensitization and awareness raising. Crucial for future campaigns.
	Security guards at Games Village not paid salary. Again an instance of injustice right next to us. The poor youth who had come from far away villages in country to serve as security guard at the Games village were subject to exploitation. We again agitated, went to Police etc. Finally, the guards got their salary.
	Meeting sports minister Mr.M.S.Gill . Shri Kuldeep Nayar used his good offices to arrange this meeting.
	NHF has completes a video film on the water recharge potential of Yamuna Flood Plains and the 'PRESERVE and USE' scheme proposed. The film is shown to the LG
28 th ,29 th ,30 th July	Rajender Singh decided to take the message of Yamuna satyagraha to the entire country and launched the 'nadi sangrakshan satyagraha'. Three day camp was organized at Bal Bhavan in Delhi. Water activists from all over the country attended it.
	Cash for vote scam- Youth for Justice and NHF participated in the protest demonstration at India gate. Kept in police custody till late mid night.
	Candle march in Central Park organized by Youth for Justice and Aryan Foundation against apathy of judiciary towards the Yamuna cause.
1 Sept	George Fernandez visits Yamuna Satyagraha sthal and admits mistake of NDA in permitting Akshardham Mandir on the flood plains
11 Sept	March to PM's address venue- satyagrahis taken into custody Youth for Justice, NHF, and farmers stage protest march to Vigyan Bhavan, the venue of Ground water Congress addressed by Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh. The marchers taken into police custody for through out the day.

23 rd September	MORATORIUM SEALED- At the concluding meeting of YRDA, CGWB presented conclusions of its study in response to the study by Dr. Soni's team. CGWB accepts the water recharge potential of flood plains. The Lt. Governor announces sealing the moratorium.
28 th September	Diwan Singh represents Yamuna Satyagraha on World Rivers' day at a function held at Budwani in M.P, organized by Narmada Bachao Andolan.
	Yamuna Satyagraha team reaches Alwar to participate in Jal Kumbh organized by Jal Biradari at Bhikam Pura in Alwar in Rajasthan
6 th October, 2008	At a function held at IIC, Lodhi Road, the LG once again announces his commitment to preserve the Yamuna Flood Plains for water recharge and bio-diversity and lauds the role played by Dr. Soni and his team.
Onwards	However, we continued to protest against the construction of Commonwealth Games village on the Flood Plains. The farmers along with some satyagrahis regularly sat on relay hunger strike for 1000 days.