

Victory for animal rights : Supreme Court bans bull fights and races

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New Delhi: In a major step towards protecting animals from cruelty, the Supreme Court on Wednesday banned the popular post-harvest event jallikattu, or bull fights, in Tamil Nadu and bullock-cart racing in Maharashtra, Punjab and other states, saying they violated provisions of the 50-year-old Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Significantly, the bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and P C Ghose favoured constitutional status for rights of animals like citizens. It said, "Parliament, it is expected, will elevate the rights of animals to that of constitutional rights, as has been done by many countries around the world, so as to protect their dignity and honour."

Dismissing as illegal the Tamil Nadu law allowing jallikattu, the apex court made it clear that bulls cannot be used as performing animals as it involves causing them pain.

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Rights of bulls against cruelty inviolable: SC

Dhananjay Mahapatra | TNN

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down as illegal the Tamil Nadu Regulation of Jallikattu Act, 2009, and said, "Bulls can't be used as performing animals, either for jallikattu or bullock-cart races in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and elsewhere in the country."

The bench extensively narrated behavioural patterns of the animal: "Bulls adopt flight or fight response when they are frightened or threatened, and this instinctual response to a perceived threat is what is being exploited in jallikattu or bullock-cart races," it said.

"During jallikattu, many animals are observed to engage in a flight response as they try to run away from the arena when they experience fear or pain, but cannot do this since the area is completely enclosed."

"Jallikattu demonstrates a link between actions of humans and the fear, distress and pain experienced by bulls. Studies indicate that rough and abusive handling of bulls compromise welfare and for increas-



CURTAINS ON CRUELTY

ing fear in bulls, often, they are pushed, hit, prodded, abused, causing mental as well as physical harm," said Justice K S Radhakrishnan, who authored the judgment for the bench.

The Animal Welfare Board of India's (AWBI), advocate said even if jallikattu was held as per the Tamil Nadu legislation, it would still violate provisions of the PCA Act as it would involve causing pain and suffering to bulls, which was prohibited under Section 11(1)(a) of the central law. The AWBI said Jallikattu and bullock-cart races had no historical,

cultural and religious significance and told the court that even if they had, they should not be permitted as they violated the PCA Act.

While declaring that the rights of bulls against cruelty are inviolable, the bench gave a general direction to states, the Centre and the AWBI "to take appropriate steps to see that the persons-in-charge or care of animals take reasonable measures to ensure their well-being".

However, the court did not deal with a related issue—whether bullock-carts, were included in this general direction.