



Will the protests affect the law?

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AWBI not challenging Jallikattu law

ANINDITA BANERJEE

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has said that it has no intention of challenging the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance 2017 and the subsequent Bill and that any petition already filed in its name will be withdrawn.

Two days after the Tamil Nadu Assembly approved an amendment in law to allow bull-taming sports in the state, reports said the Animal Welfare Board of India and other animal rights organisations on

Wednesday had challenged its constitutional validity before the Supreme Court.

But later, the AWBI stated, "The board has received news reports and electronic media reports stating that the AWBI moved the Supreme Court. If at all any petition has been filed challenging the ordinance on behalf of the AWBI, the same may be withdrawn immediately."

Board's member and advocate Anjali Sharma however said she had filed the petition only after full consent and approval from AWBI. The Justice Dipak Misra-headed

bench agreed to hear the pleas which were listed.

Meanwhile the Centre has also filed a plea for withdrawing the January 6, 2016 notification banning Jallikattu will be taken up.

In the midst of continuing protests over jallikattu across the State, the Tamil Nadu Assembly had unanimously passed an amendment bill for conducting jallikattu on the ground that it was very important to preserve the cultural and traditional practices of the state.

The amendment was brought to

resolve the violent protests across the state, especially on the Marina Beach, by students and others, demanding that the ban be lifted.

The Bill, which was passed on January 23, defines jallikattu as an event involving bulls conducted for traditional and cultural reasons on days from January to May in certain places as notified by the State Government.

"It amends Sections 2, 3, 11, 22, 27 and 28 of the Act and explains variants such as 'manjuvirattu', 'erudhu vidum vizha' and 'vadamadu', all to do with

jallikattu," explained Mr. A.R. Satkthivel, a senior advocate at the Madras High Court.

This Bill was hurriedly tabled by the Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam as Chennai was rocked by violence after police moved to evict nearly 10,000 Jallikattu protesters from the Marina Beach.

Over a hundred people were reportedly injured and at least two police stations and several vehicles were burnt.

The Marina beach, which had started resembling a battlefield

with fire, smoke and shrieks everywhere, was in chaos even after the passage of the Bill.

Shortly before 6 pm, the protest was called off, though around 500 students continued to be on the beach.

While most of the protestors refused to speak about the sudden violence, some were of the opinion that it happened because of the secrecy regarding the ordinance.

"Had details of the ordinance been released and explained in time, most of the Marina crowd would have gone away celebrating"

said, Nitin S., an IIT Madras student, who was also an active part of the Marina protests.

On the very first day of the protests, the Government promised an ordinance to allow jallikattu. The lack of proper communication made the protestors aggressive.

The Government's reluctance to release the text of the ordinance, fearing a legal challenge from the animal rights activists, added to the confusion. Now with the Court verdict awaited, it remains to be seen if jallikattu will survive the legal challenge.



The Nadukuppam fish market was a shambles with gutted vehicles and rotting fish. PHOTOS BY AKHIL V. AND ANKITA B.



Residents face 'police wrath'

ANKITA BOSE

Residents of Nadukuppam claim that 450 fish vendors have lost their livelihood after their market was burnt down during the violence that took place on January 23 following police action to control the Jallikattu protests.

The residents alleged that some powder-like substance was used to burn the fish market and some of the expensive fish were looted.

On January 23, the police started evicting those who had gathered on the Marina Beach to protest against the ban on jallikattu.

The protestors in an attempt to escape the police entered Nadukuppam where the residents gave them refuge and attended to their wounds.

According to the kuppam dwellers, the police entered the place between 2 pm and 5 pm with batons, tear gas, bottles and petrol bombs; they damaged property and vehicles on the road before finally

setting the fish market in flames.

The residents alleged that men and women were dragged into the street and thrashed. The police groped women and tugged and pulled at their sarees, hurling abuses at everyone, they alleged.

"They (police) lathi-charged! without asking any questions! It seemed like they didn't care who was in front of them. They even beat the children. A policeman pulled my saree and tore my blouse," said Samundeshwari, a resident.

Another dweller, Balaji had a black eye and said, "They punched me on the face and left me bleeding. They started throwing bottles and used tear gas."

A lot of the young people were arrested while many were admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital.

The fish vendors complained how they could not reach out for help from the Fishermen Association at Royapuram due to

restricted access to the beach road. A police barricade continued to block Kamarajar Salai and all other roads leading to the beach.

"Individually, I have incurred a loss of about Rs. 50,000. Our families are devastated and we have nowhere to go," said Thangam, a fish vendor.

Additionally, the villagers also confirmed that the police promised compensation if the residents signed a testimony blaming the protestors for the damage. But the villagers refused.

"If the protestors ask for shelter again, we'll still provide it. Because we are humans and these college students are of our children's age," said Bhaskar, another fish vendor.

A number of videos have been uploaded in Facebook and other social media sites claiming evidence of police brutality in Nadukuppam. The videos showed police breaking doors, entering homes and beating men and women.

According to news reports, the videos are to be investigated by the cyber cell of the Central Crime Branch. Inspector K. Yuvaraj, who was patrolling the Marina, said that he did not have the authority to respond to the residents' charges.

Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of the alleged police excesses on Jallikattu protestors. It has also issued notices to the Chief Secretary of State, the DGP, the Chennai Police Commissioner and the Tamil Nadu Government, asking them to submit their reports within a two week span.

Responding to allegations of violence, a senior police official told The Hindu: "We have plenty of evidence to prove that a section of agitators started the violence. Just because some policemen indulged in such illegal activities, it doesn't mean that they started the violence. We will investigate the matter and take action."

Bail for 29 students; violence under probe

AHILK SUR
ANINDITA BANERJEE

A day after the city police arrested students in connection with the jallikattu violence, the Principal Sessions Court here has granted them bail with the condition that they stay in Chengalpattu till further orders.

As many as 29 persons who said they were victims of police assault during the Jallikattu protests were ordered by the Chief Magisterial Court to undergo treatment for injuries before being remanded into custody.

The accused have been booked on charges of assembling unlawfully, damaging public property, rioting, intimidating authorities and also attempting murder.

"During the police crackdown on the protestors my son was spotted in the middle of the chaos. His bike was destroyed by the police and he had to save his life by fleeing into the fishing village of Nadukuppam from where he was later arrested," said Perumal, father of P. Tamil Mani alias Ajay, one of the 29 who were arrested.

Ajay, 22, is a student of New College, Chennai.

Prathaban, an advocate representing the arrested said, "Most of the 29 who were nabbed are students and it was their democratic right they were exercising by protesting. The police instigated the violence as you saw in the TV reports and therefore they falsely created the cases."

"These students, particularly, are from Nadukuppam and MGR Nagar. They are mostly from poor and oppressed communities. They are not educated and they don't know the difference between an ordinance and a judgement", said Prathaban

According to the police the ac-

cusced pelted stones at them first and did not disperse when they were ordered to and hence they had to lathicharge the crowd.

"We are going to file a petition before the Human Rights Commission," he added.

Pointing at the dried blood on the pants of one of the arrested, advocate R. Thirumorthy said, "We noticed the external injuries on the victims and we requested the judge to admit them in hospital."

The 29 arrested were taken to the Royapettah General Hospital after the judge ordered that they should be treated first.

The 'victims' had to wait for an hour before the treatment finally started.

An argument broke out between the police and the advocates when the police allegedly tried to convince the medical officers to issue a fit-certificate for those arrested without examining them.

"Even after the court issued the judgement the police tried to bypass it illegally. Upon our objection the medical officer agreed to the inspection," said Prathaban.

Wheelchairs were not provided for those who had obvious trouble walking from the injuries suffered. They had to limp from the police van to the Casualty ward of the hospital.

"After the inspection we found out that nine of them were grievously injured. Two or three of them are having problems using their hands and legs," added Prathaban.

Vasuki U., National Vice-President of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) and a Central Committee Member of the CPI(M), said, "There is an obvious large scale human rights violation."

"We have already taken up with the state human rights commission

who said they will inquire into the matter. The intervention of the advocates secured a medical inspection for the accused."

Chennai was rocked by violence after police were asked to evict nearly 10,000 Jallikattu protestors from the Marina Beach.

Over a hundred people were reportedly injured and at least two police stations and several vehicles were burnt.

A senior police officer said "Things went out of control when a group started running towards the sea, threatening suicide. Several hundred followed them."

"While a section of protestors were removed successfully, over 2,000 formed a human chain along the shore line to stop us," the officer said.

He also mentioned that the protestors were later joined by fishermen and women.

At the end of the protest, there were several injured in the battle on both sides.

The Ice House police station was set on fire while a few people including women were trapped inside. This spurred the police to take tough steps against the protestors.

On Friday Tamil Nadu Chief Minister O.Panneerselvam, during the assembly session, said "anti-nationals" had intruded in the peaceful protests.

"Some protestors carried pictures of Osama bin Laden during Jallikattu protests," he claimed.

Panneerselvam said: "142 cops and 138 protestors were injured during the violence in Chennai."

So far 66 cases have been filed and 215 arrested in Chennai.

Panneerselvam also said that as opposition parties and media have raised complaints that police indulged in violence, "an enquiry will be set up and proper action will be taken."

Thin attendance on Marina for Republic Day parade

AKHIL VISHWANATH

The crowd at the 68th Republic Day celebrations on Kamarajar Salai was sparse with people deciding to stay away from the parade following a week-long Jallikattu agitation on the Marina Beach.

"The crowd was not even 5 per cent of what it was in the previous years. Last time, lakhs of people had come to celebrate the Republic Day, but this time, as you can see, there is no one here," said Raja, a flag and tri-colour merchandise seller. Raja who had managed to make record sales each succeeding year was sitting with hundreds of unsold lapel-pin flags this time.

On the eve of Republic Day, Marina Beach had become a desert after the Police evicted thousands of protestors.

The police had made several announcements at the beach asking the protestors to vacate the area for Republic Day preparations. "The crowd was evacuated just in time.

After what happened, many youngsters I know didn't want to return. Many youngsters were denied entry," said Deenadayal, an engineer from Mylapore.

For two days, the police maintained strict vigil and enforced blockades at entry points to the Beach. Although security arrangements were tight for the celebrations, the task for the Police was made simple because the traffic was thinner than what they had expected, according to a policeman.

"Even though I was a protestor yesterday, I am here to show my patriotism today," said Ashwin Iru-dayarajan, who was one of the few protestors who chose to participate in the celebrations. "I could've watched the event on TV but I am here," he added.

Ashwin Iru-dayarajan said that he was detained at a police station for wearing a black T-shirt while protesting on the Marina Beach. On the Republic Day, he was asked to keep his dark coloured handker-

chief with the police and collect it after the event.

Ashwin sports a man-bun – long hair tied into a bun at the back of his head. "The policeman at the checkpoint literally touched it and accused me of being a rogue. He assumed that a young man having a man-bun is a rogue and that he would wave his dark coloured handkerchief in the air in protest," said Ashwin. "Why will people attend Republic Day celebrations when the police do this?"

On asked if people's non-attendance at the celebrations was a form of protest, another spectator Vignesh Ramanan said, "Republic Day is unrelated to Jallikattu. Most people are still patriotic. People forget protests easily but celebrate Republic Day every year. Many are here. Shows patriotism, right?"

The celebrations had received a loud cheer the previous year despite Jayalalitha's absence at the parade. A tableau assembled at the premises of Tamil Nadu State

Council for Higher Education on Kamarajar Salai, was seen carrying huge posters and a life-size model of Jayalalitha.

This time Tamil Nadu Chief Minister O.Panneerselvam hoisted the Indian flag in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue amidst petals showered by an Indian Air Force Chetak helicopter to mark the start of Republic Day celebrations.

Panneerselvam took the salute in the absence of a full-time Governor for Tamil Nadu. Governor C.Vidyasagar Rao, who holds additional charge of Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra.

The Chief Minister presented the Anna Medal for Gallantry to W.Durgadevi from Vellore for rescuing her friend from drowning.

The Agriculture Department presented its special award to Sankara Narayanan, a paddy farmer, for achieving the highest yield. Gandhi Adigal Police Medal, Kottai Ameer Communal Harmony were the other awards given away.



Empty chairs in the spectators' section on the Marina Beach PHOTO COURTESY THE HINDU

