



**Sweet victory:** People celebrating the Supreme Court verdict on jallikattu at Tamukkam in Madurai on Thursday. R. ASHOK

# T.N.'s amended law on jallikattu valid: SC

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NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday termed jallikattu a “type of bovine sport” existing in Tamil Nadu for at least a century, and did not interfere with the State legislature’s finding that the bull-taming event is part of the cultural heritage and tradition of the people.

A Constitution Bench headed by Justice K.M. Joseph upheld the validity of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu

Amendment) Act of 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017. “The Amendment Act has received the Presidential assent. We do not think there is any flaw in the State action,” the judgment held.

The court also found similar laws passed by Karnataka and Maharashtra, allowing bullock cart races and buffalo racing ‘kambala’, valid.

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# T.N.'s amended law on jallikattu valid, says SC

The Constitution Bench held that the jallikattu law “substantially minimises” the pain and suffering of the animals participating in the event. The judgment, authored by Justice Aniruddha Bose, however directed that the district administrations and competent authorities in Tamil Nadu would be responsible to ensure that jallikattu events are conducted in strict compliance of the safeguards laid out in the 2017 Amendment Act and Rules.

“Jallikattu is a type of bovine sport and we are satisfied that it has been present in Tamil Nadu for at least a century,” Justice Bose observed. The court described jallikattu as an event during which “a bull is set free in an arena and human participants are made to grab its hump to score in the game”. Justice Bose said jallikattu was banned in 2014 by the top court in the A. Nagaraja case and called “cruel”. But that was before the State passed the Amendment Act in 2017, introducing several measures to prevent any abuse to the participating bulls or loss of human life. “The Amendment Act overcomes the defects pointed out in the A. Nagaraja judgment,” the court concluded.

The Bench held that the State was empowered to enact the 2017 law. The court dismissed the arguments made by petitioners, who included animal welfare activists and organisations, that jallikattu harmed bulls as they were not built to run and be grabbed at. They had argued that the sport was against the fundamental nature of bovine animals. The Constitution Bench found that the Division Bench of the court in the A. Nagaraja judgment had erred in concluding that jallikattu was not part of the cultural tradition of Tamil Nadu without sufficient material to back its finding.

For itself, the Bench refrained from delving into the issue. “Whether jallikattu has become an integral part of Tamil culture or not requires religious, cultural and social analysis in greater detail, which in our opinion is an exercise which cannot be undertaken by the judiciary,” Justice Bose said.

However, the court added a rider that any culture and tradition, if it offended the law, would suffer penal consequences.