

3. Jallikattu

Prelims Syllabus: Architecture & Art Forms

Mains Syllabus: GS-I Indian culture will cover the Salient Aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from Ancient to Modern Times.

Why in News?

- With a steep rise in the daily cases of COVID-19, the district administration in Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Ranipet and Tirupattur, have banned the conduct of Jallikattu events, ahead of Pongal festival, as part of Safety Measures.

What is Jallikattu?

- The bull-taming sport is popular in Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Theni, Pudukkottai and Dindigul districts known as the Jallikattu belt.
- Jallikattu is celebrated in the second week of January, during the Tamil harvest festival, Pongal.
- A tradition over 2,000 years old, Jallikattu is a competitive sport as well as an event to honour bull Owners who rear them for Mating.
- It is a violent sport in which contestants try to tame a bull for a prize; if they fail, the bull Owner Wins the Prize.

Why is Jallikattu Important in Tamil culture?

- Jallikattu is considered a traditional way for the peasant community to preserve their pure-breed native bulls.
- At a time when cattle breeding is often an artificial process, conservationists and peasants argue that Jallikattu is a way to protect these male animals which are otherwise used only for Meat if not for Ploughing.

Why has Jallikattu been the Subject of Legal Battles?

- Jallikattu first came under legal scrutiny in 2007 when the Animal Welfare Board of India and the animal rights group PETA moved petitions in the Supreme Court against Jallikattu as well as bullock cart races.
- The Tamil Nadu government, however, worked its way out of the ban by passing a law in 2009, which was signed by the Governor.
- In 2011, the UPA regime at the Centre added bulls to the list of animals whose training and exhibition is prohibited.

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- In May 2014, days before the BJP was elected to power, the Supreme Court banned the bull-taming sport, ruling on a petition that cited the 2011 notification.

So, is it legal or Banned Now?

- In January 2017, massive protests erupted across Tamil Nadu against the ban, with Chennai city witnessing a 15-day-long Jallikattu uprising.
- The same year, the Tamil Nadu government released an ordinance amending the central Act and allowing Jallikattu in the state; this was later ratified by the President.
- The amendment was subsequently approved by the President of India, effectively overturning the Supreme Court ban and allowing the sport to be played without any legal hurdle.
- PETA challenged the state move, arguing it was unconstitutional (Article 29(1)).
- In 2018, the Supreme Court referred the Jallikattu case to a Constitution Bench, where it is Pending Now.

