

Topic 1

Is Jallikattu a cultural right?

Relevancy:

- GS Prelims, GS Mains paper II
- Indian constitution, Cultural rights, Ethics in Jallikattu

Recently:

- The Supreme Court on recently directed for the appointment of a Constitution Bench to examine if the people of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra can conserve jallikattu and bullock cart races as their cultural right and demand their protection under Article 29 (1) of the Constitution.
- The two-judge Special Bench was hearing a batch of petitions, filed by the **People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)**, seeking the quashing of the new Jallikattu law passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly that brought bulls back into the fold of 'performing animals'.

What does PETA contend?

The PETA petitions contend that the 2017 Jallikattu Act and Rules violate the five internationally recognized freedoms for the livestock

- the freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst;
- freedom from fear and distress;
- freedom from physical and thermal discomfort;
- freedom from pain, injury and disease; and
- freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

What does Article 29 (1) say?

- Article 29 (1), a fundamental right enshrined in Part III of the Constitution guarantees the protection of the educational and cultural rights of citizens.
- The exact wording is: *Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.*
- Commonly, this Article is invoked for the rights of the minorities. If Jallikattu is considered as a cultural right under this Article, then other legislations barring the sport may be struck down.

Tamil Nadu is definitely a part of India:

- The Tamil Nadu government, represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, argued that 80% of the population of Tamil Nadu supported jallikattu and the sport had strongholds in rural parts.
- Attorney General K.K. Venugopal said the support for Jallikattu was irrespective of religion or caste.
- Justice Nariman referred to part of Article 29 (1), which says “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India.” “And Tamil Nadu is definitely a part of India,” he remarked orally.

The 2014 ban

- The law under challenge — **Tamil Nadu’s Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017** and **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017** — opened the gates for the conduct of the bull-taming sport despite a 2014 ban by the Supreme Court.
- That year, in the A. Nagaraja judgment, the Supreme Court held jallikattu as cruelty to bulls.
- The Supreme Court also indicated that the Constitution Bench would also look into whether the 2017 Jallikattu and bullock cart races laws of Tamil

Nadu and Maharashtra actually subserve the objective of “prevention” of cruelty to animals under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960.

Topic 2

Chabahar Port Inaugurated

Relevancy:

- GS Mains Paper II, For Prelims, locate all important locations mentioned in the topic on the map.
- International Affairs, India-Iran-Afghanistan, Chabahar port

Recently:

- The Chabahar port phase I was inaugurated by Iran's President Hassan Rouhani.
- It marks an important milestone in India-Iran relations as well as Afghanistan-India resolve to look for a viable transit corridor to landlocked Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

Geo-strategic importance of Chabahar:

- The port is located in the **Gulf of Oman along the Makran coast**, in the Iranian province of Seistan-Baluchistan, just 75 km from the China-built and operated **Gwadar port** in Balochistan province of Pakistan, Chabahar at a distance of 480 nautical miles from **Kandla** port, and about 900 km from Adani Group's **Mundra** port in Gujarat, came into the reckoning as a gateway port in the 1970s during Shah Reza Pahlavi's reign.
- It acquired importance when, during the Iran-Iraq war, ships were reluctant to enter the Strait of Hormuz.
- While Bandar Abbas was being used to send cargo through the emerging North-South Corridor to Europe, Chabahar was envisaged to deal with the eastern axis that would carry goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- Although it involves the use of a land-cum-sea route to trade with Afghanistan against the much shorter land corridor through Pakistan, Chabahar provides linkage via an Iranian-built road to the western Afghan border connected to the **Zaranj-Delaram road** India has built in Afghanistan.
- Connecting Chabahar with the **North-South Corridor** Initiative would also enable Indian goods to sail to the Iranian port, then go by rail to Mashhad on the northern border into Azerbaijan and southern

Russia, dock at **Astrakhan**, thereafter move up the Volga river into the Russian heartland.

- It is billed as India's gateway to Afghanistan and beyond, including Central Asia, Russia, and further to Europe.
- Chabahar would also provide India direct access to its **Farkhor** air base in Tajikistan.

India's business interest:

- India has an interest in gaining a foothold in the free trade zone being developed around the port: in addition to a urea plant, other energy-intensive industries can also be set up in the zone.
- In fact, National Aluminium Company (NALCO) has signed an MoU to locate an aluminium plant in Chabahar.
- Proposals for Indian investments in upstream oil and gas exploration have been discussed by Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan during his visits to Tehran.
- The Afghanistan-bound maiden wheat shipment flagged off by the foreign ministers — Sushma Swaraj of India, Salahuddin Rabbani of Afghanistan, and Javed Zarif of Iran — through a joint video conference on 29 October signified a major push for India's Afghan outreach, bypassing Pakistan.
- The first of the six consignments of a total of 1.1 million tonnes of wheat committed by India for Afghanistan that left Kandla port would be transhipped overland through Chabahar.
- The port project follows the trilateral agreement on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor signed at Tehran by Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with Afghanistan's President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Iran's Hassan Rouhani in May 2016. A bilateral India-Iran agreement aimed at India refurbishing one of the berths at **Shahid Beheshti port** (one of the two port segments at Chabahar, the other being **Shahid Kalantri**) and reconstructing a 600m long container handling facility at the same port segment.

Despite the roadblocks:

- India also contemplated connecting Chabahar port to the **mineral-rich Hajigak region** in Afghanistan, 130 km west of Kabul in Bamiyan province, which would entail construction of a 900km rail line that would enable Afghanistan to access the sea, thus reducing its dependence on Pakistan.

- Frequent closure of borders by Pakistan created bottlenecks in trade transit.
- In view of Pakistan denying access through its territory, India and Afghanistan launched an air freight corridor in June this year.
- The current India-Afghanistan bilateral trade that has lately increased to \$700 million annually is aimed to reach \$10 billion in the future.

Conclusion:

- As the opening of Chabahar port and India's role in its management calls for celebration, it may as well be an opportune occasion for India to grasp for engagement with its neighbours with verve and vigour in its '**Neighbourhood First**' policy.
- It also needs to introspect on why India is **moving at bullock-cart speed** compared to China that's zipping ahead like a Formula One racing car.
- India doesn't have deep pockets; what is inexcusable is its bureaucratic sloth and smugness.
- The machinery moves at a slovenly pace; India doesn't deliver timely on promises made even at the highest levels.

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Topic 3

India's Mid-Term FTP review

Relevancy:

- GS Prelims, GS Mains paper III
- Economy, Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) mid term review

Recently:

- The Centre released the mid-term review of the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), with the focus expected to be on policy measures to boost the exports of goods and services and to increase employment generation and value-addition in the country.
- The mid-term review of FTP is aimed at mid-course correction.
- It was to be announced on July 1, together with the implementation of the GST regime.
- But the announcement was postponed to take into account feedback from the export sector regarding GST-related issues.

Highlights from the review:

- The value of new incentives is Rs. 8,000 crore
- The FTP would focus on micro, small and medium enterprises, labour-intensive segments and agriculture sector.
- Incentives for goods exports is Rs. 4,567 crore, and for services exports is Rs. 1,140 crore.
- This is in addition to the recently announced incentives to ready-made garments.
- Self-certification scheme for duty-free imports

- FTP is a dynamic document and regular changes are made to increase value addition in the country, generate more employment and boost exports
- Today's announcement includes a 2% increase each in incentive rates of the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme and Services Export from India Scheme.
- Trade accounts for 45% of the country's GDP. FTP incentives now cover 8,000 of the total 12,000 lines of items.
- Of these incentives, Rs 749 crore for leather and footwear, Rs 1354 crore for agriculture and related items, Rs 759 crore for marine exports, Rs 369 crore for telecom and electronic items, Rs 921 crore for handmade carpets, Rs 193 crore for medical and surgical equipments, Rs 1140 crore for textiles and readymade garments.
- A new trade data analytics division under the Directorate General of Foreign Trade will analyse real time data to help fine tune policy.