

PETA India Investigation Into Buffalo Races Held in Bengaluru

25 November 2023



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DATE AND LOCATION OF INVESTIGATION

The event, advertised as “Bangalore Kambala” (hereafter “the event”), took place at Palace Grounds, Bengaluru, on 25 November 2023 and continued into the early hours of 26 November. This investigation report documents key findings and violations that were observed on 25 November between 12 noon and 6 pm.

ABUSE OF BUFFALOES FOR COMMERCIAL GAIN

Key Findings

Investigation revealed that the race event was a commercial event, which means that it would not constitute a legal exemption regarding kambala of the prohibition on bull racing.

- Rs 100 was charged for parking by Alive Pulse Parking Services Private Limited for each four-wheeler that parked in Palace Grounds for the event.
- The event was supported by corporate sponsors such as Goldfinch Hotels & Resorts (a unit of MRG Group), Abaran Timeless Jewellery, Prestige Group, Karnataka Bank, and Canara Bank. The sponsors were advertised throughout the venue, including on the track where the buffaloes were forced to run.
- There were stalls advertising and selling a wide array of products, including luxury goods, such as cars from Renault, Volkswagen, and Suzuki; expensive jewellery; and furniture by leading furniture brand Stanley, as well as food from Domino’s Pizza among others. Political posters were displayed throughout the venue and also on billboards in the city.
- There were two vast seating galleries erected for VIPs near the race end point and a large seating gallery exclusively for spectators with VIP passes near the race starting point.
- Such banners around the Palace Grounds and on Bellary Road have been reported to be illegal and were taken down, pursuant to a police complaint by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP).¹ The organisers of the event were reportedly fined Rs 50,000 for setting up these posters in contravention of BBMP advertising regulations.

¹Patil V. BBMP imposes Rs 50,000 fine on Bengaluru Kambala organisers over banner violation. *Asianet Newsable*. 25 November 2023. Accessed 17 January 2024. <https://newsable.asianetnews.com/karnataka-news/bbmp-imposes-rs-50-000-fine-on-bengaluru-kambala-organisers-over-banner-violation-vkp-s4oevm>

Observations



Photograph 1: Two two-wheelers, a car, and sponsor Goldfinch Hotels & Resorts being advertised at the event



Photograph 2: Volkswagen and Toyota cars being advertised at the event



Photograph 3: Renault and Suzuki stalls at the event



Photograph 4: Jewellery being sold at the event

25-Nov-2023 at 12:29:01 PM
Bengaluru 560006
KA
India
Jayamahal



Photograph 5: Pepsi ad (left) and Stanley's stall at the event



Photograph 6: Ads of sponsors being displayed on floodlight posts overlooking the racetrack



Photograph 7: Stalls and vendors at the event



Photograph 8: Sponsors displayed below screens projecting races



Photograph 9: Sponsors displayed in front of the general entrance



Photograph 10: Lucky draw tickets provided with the entry pass for luxury goods, sponsored by Goldfinch Hotels & Resorts



Photograph 11: Fees charged by Alive Pulse Parking Services for each four-wheeler parked at the event venue



Photograph 12: Political posters displayed across the event venue



Photograph 13: A political banner displayed on a billboard in Yelahanka advertising the event

Interpretation of Findings

The event was found to be a commercial event, which means that it would not constitute a legal exemption regarding kambala of the prohibition on bull racing.

The event, as reported in leading newspapers, was organised by the Bengaluru Kambala Samithi and the Zilla Kambala Samithi at an estimated cost of Rs 6 crore.² To attract participants, it was announced that the winners would be awarded prizes of gold and cash. A leading English-language daily newspaper reported that the first prize winners won Rs 1 lakh and 16 grams of gold, while those who came second won Rs 50,000 and 8 grams of gold.³ This event reportedly attracted 5 lakh visitors⁴ and had more than 150 food stalls, 2000 VIP seating arrangements, and a gallery for 10,000 viewers.⁵ This is corroborated by eyewitness observations of part of the event during the timeframe stated above (please see subsection DATE AND LOCATION OF INVESTIGATION).

²Tak Y. All you need to know about Bengaluru Kambala: date, venue, cost. *Times Now*. 6 November 2023. Accessed 17 January 2024. <https://www.timesnownews.com/bengaluru/all-you-need-to-know-about-bengaluru-kambala-date-venue-cost-article-105004961>

³Winners announced for Bengaluru's maiden Kambala. *The Indian Express*. 28 November 2023. Accessed 17 January 2024. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bangalore/winners-announced-for-bengalurus-maiden-kambala-9044156/>

⁴D Madhu. Bengaluru's first-ever kambala ends on a grand note. *The Times of India*. 28 November 2023. Accessed 17 January 2024. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/events/bangalore/bengalurus-first-ever-kambala-ends-on-a-grand-note/articleshow/105535662.cms?from=mdr>

⁵Tak Y. All you need to know about Bengaluru Kambala: date, venue, cost. *Times Now*. 6 November 2023. Accessed 17 January 2024. <https://www.timesnownews.com/bengaluru/all-you-need-to-know-about-bengaluru-kambala-date-venue-cost-article-105004961>

The vast number of advertisements and stands for private companies demonstrate a clear intention to make commercial gain from the event. This large-scale and lavish event, held in a city where kambala has never traditionally taken place, was conducted purely for commercial and entertainment reasons and is therefore evidently an exploitation of the limited permission to conduct buffalo races known as kambala in certain parts of the state. Accordingly, the event constitutes training, exhibition, and use of buffaloes as “performing animals” per Sections 21 and 22 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (hereafter “the PCA Act”).

ABUSE OF BUFFALOES FORCED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EVENT

Key Findings

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India documented the following abuse of buffaloes with photographs and video footage at the event:

- Buffaloes were tethered in makeshift shelters without access to food or clean drinking water for long periods of time before the race.
- Reluctant, frightened buffaloes were shouted at and struck repeatedly with bare hands, slapped in the face, and jabbed and hit with sticks at the starting point by groups of three to six men.
- Many buffaloes were hit with wooden sticks throughout the race – from the starting point to the finish line. No steps were taken by the organisers or the police to stop this and penalise the offenders.
- There was physical evidence indicating that buffaloes had been beaten during the races. Several buffaloes had wounds and marks as a result of continuously being hit with wooden sticks.
- Buffaloes were forced to line up at the starting point by their nose ropes being violently pulled, yanked, and otherwise roughly handled. Animals who were in pain tried to soothe their nostrils by licking them.
- In order to make the buffaloes stand still, the handlers pushed, struck, slapped, jabbed, and yelled at the animals.
- Some buffaloes were struck with wooden sticks even after they crossed the finish line.
- Some reluctant, exhausted buffaloes who desperately tried to flee from the race starting point and some who dropped to the ground there were struck with wooden sticks and their nose ropes were roughly pulled to force them back onto their feet to race.
- Many buffaloes who finished the races frothed at the mouth – which indicates dehydration – salivated heavily, and were seen breathing laboriously and gasping for air.
- The winning pair of buffaloes in each race was forced to race repeatedly against other pairs until defeated.
- When their nose ropes were yanked, they were slapped with bare hands, or they were hit with wooden sticks, the whites of many buffaloes’ eyes were visible, which indicates fear and distress.
- Close-fitting 2- to 2.5-centimetre-thick nose ropes were inserted through the nasal septum of many buffaloes, causing them extreme pain when the ropes were yanked.
- Through loudspeakers, it was announced at the event that the buffaloes had been brought to Bengaluru from cities like Udupi and Mangaluru – a long and arduous journey of more than 350 kilometres each way.

- Buffaloes were forced to run on a 155-metre track, which is reportedly the longest in the history of buffalo races, and they were exposed to loud noises, bright lights, and huge crowds. As evidenced by the buffaloes who were frothing at the mouth and gasping for air at the end of the race, buffaloes are not physiologically suited to running such lengths.

Observations

1. Buffaloes Being Struck at the Starting Point



Photograph 14: A man about to strike a buffalo at the race starting point



Photograph 15: A close-up of the man seen in photograph 14



Photograph 16: A man strikes a buffalo with his hand. The vast crowds create a stressful environment for the animals.



Photograph 17: A man slapping a buffalo in the face



Photograph 18: A man striking a buffalo with his hand and people holding sticks surrounding another bull



Photograph 19: A man about to strike a buffalo with his hand

2. Buffaloes Being Struck and Jabbed With Sticks at the Starting Point



Photograph 20: Two men about to strike a pair of buffaloes with sticks at the starting point



Photograph 21: The two men seen in photograph 20 striking a pair of buffaloes with two sticks at the starting point



Photograph 22: Two men about to strike a pair of buffaloes with sticks at the starting point



Photograph 23: A man with a stick prepares to strike buffaloes



Photograph 24: A jockey striking a pair of buffaloes at a race starting point



Photograph 25: Three men prepare to strike a pair of buffaloes at a race starting point

3. Buffaloes Being Struck With Sticks During Races



Photograph 26: A man striking a pair of buffaloes



Photograph 27: A man striking a pair of buffaloes



Photograph 28: A man striking a buffalo with a stick



Photograph 29: A man striking a buffalo during a race



Photograph 30: A man striking a buffalo with a stick



Photograph 31: A man striking a pair of buffaloes



Photograph 32: A man striking a pair of buffaloes during a race



Photograph 33: A man striking a pair of buffaloes with a stick during a race

4. Buffaloes Being Struck With Sticks Towards the Finish Line



Photograph 34: A jockey striking a pair of buffaloes in full view of organisers near the race finish line



Photograph 35: A jockey striking a pair of buffaloes in full view of organisers near the race finish line



Photograph 36: A man striking a buffalo with a stick near the race finish line



Photograph 37: A man striking a buffalo in full view of organisers near the race finish line



Photograph 38: A man striking a pair of buffaloes at the race finish line in full view of organisers and police personnel

5. Wounds and Other Physical Evidence of Abuse



Photograph 39: Marks from beatings inflicted during a race



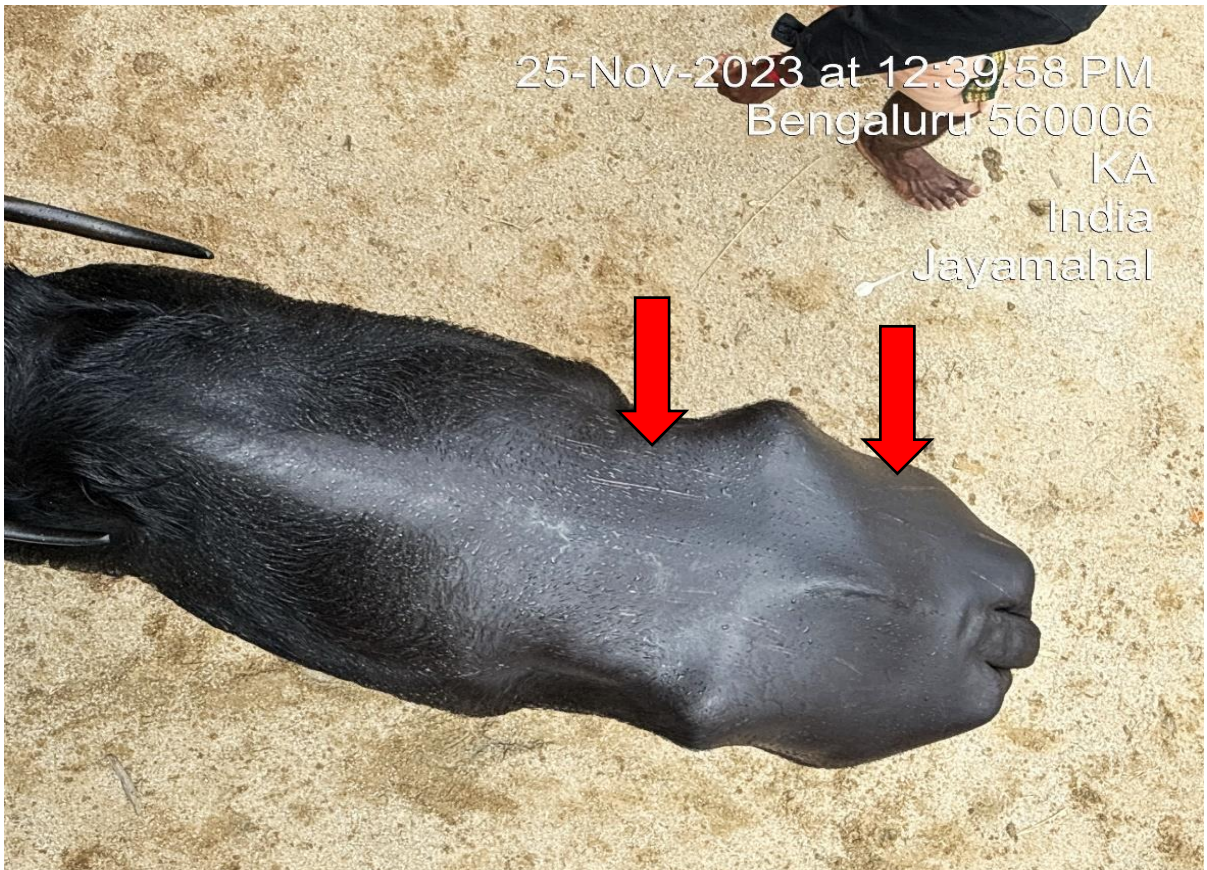
Photograph 40: Marks from beatings inflicted by jockeys



Photograph 41: Wounds and marks from beatings inflicted during a race



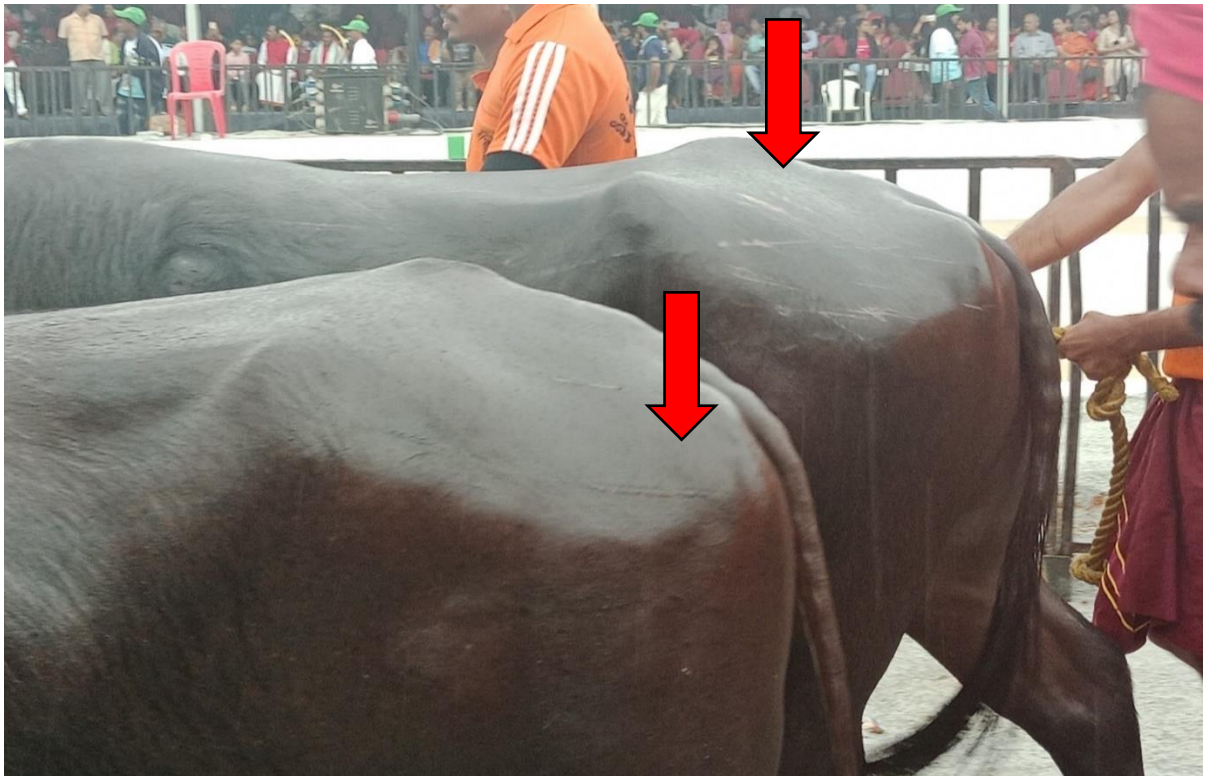
Photograph 42: Marks from beatings inflicted during a race



Photograph 43: Marks from beatings



Photograph 44: Marks from beatings inflicted during a race



Photograph 45: Marks from beatings inflicted during a race

6. Nose Ropes Yanked Roughly



Photograph 46: A buffalo tries to soothe his nostrils with his tongue as his nose rope is yanked



Photograph 47: A buffalo tries to soothe his nostrils with his tongue as his nose rope is yanked



Photograph 48: A buffalo in pain as a man yanks his nose rope



Photograph 49: A buffalo tries to soothe his nostrils with his tongue as his nose rope is yanked



Photograph 50: A pair of buffaloes being dragged by painful nose ropes

7. Reluctant Buffaloes Being Forced to Race



Photograph 51: A reluctant pair of buffaloes trying to turn back at the starting point



Photograph 52: Buffaloes trying to escape before being forced to race and a handler pulling the pair towards the starting point by a buffalo's nose rope



Photograph 53: A man about to strike a reluctant pair of buffaloes to force the animals to stand at the starting point

8. Buffaloes Frothing at the Mouth



Photograph 54: A buffalo frothing at the mouth



Photograph 55: A close-up of the buffalo pictured in photograph 54



Photograph 56: An example of the many animals who frothed at the mouth at the end of a race at the event



Photograph 57: A buffalo frothing at the mouth

9. Buffaloes Tethered by Very Short Ropes for Hours



Photograph 58: A buffalo frothing at the mouth who was tied by a very short rope that severely restricted his movement prior to the race



Photograph 59: A pair of buffaloes who were tied together for hours before and after the race with no regular access to drinking water



Photograph 60: A pair of buffaloes who were tied together for hours when they were not forced to race

Interpretation of Findings

PETA India found that buffaloes were abused at the event in several ways, and because buffaloes are highly unsuited to racing, using them for this purpose is detrimental to their wellbeing and also constitutes abuse.

Buffaloes are ill-suited to racing because they have few sweat glands, which makes them highly sensitive to heat stress. Their bodies cannot adequately cope with the internal heat that's generated when they're forced to race, evidenced by frothing at the mouth. This is why in nature, buffaloes can be found cooling themselves in water. Frothing at the mouth, heavy salivation, and increased respiratory rates show that racing is unnatural and distressing for buffaloes and extremely taxing on their bodies.

Because these races are unnatural for buffaloes – they are prey animals who avoid frightening situations – they're reluctant to take part and were observed clearly trying to run away from the racetrack at the starting point.

Buffaloes are *forced to comply through pain and fear*. Handlers yelled at the animals and used physical force to get them to participate in the races. The violent pulling of nose ropes added to the animals' fear, pain, and distress.

LEGAL VIOLATIONS

Violations of the Constitution of India

Article 21 of the Constitution of India provides the right to life. However, the savagery of these kinds of abusive competitions, and the threat to the lives of humans violates Article 21. Besides, the threat to the lives of bulls deprives humans of their rights under Article 21 to a balanced natural environment. Furthermore, compassion for all living beings is an intrinsic part of a citizen's fundamental duties – one that is bound by constitutional obligation under Article 51A(g).

Violations of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (as Amended by The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Second Amendment) Act, 2017)

As per Section 3 of the PCA Act, 1960, and as amended by The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Second Amendment) Act, 2017 (hereafter “Amended PCA Act”), the “conduct of ‘Kambala’ or ‘Bulls race or Bullock cart race’ shall be permitted, subject to condition that no unnecessary pain or suffering is caused to the animals”. This indicates that certain forms of bullock cart races are exempted from the prohibition but with the caveat that unnecessary pain or suffering is not caused. However, it is impossible to ensure this because unnecessary pain and suffering are inherent in these events, rendering Section 3 virtually meaningless.

Section 2(dd) of the Amended PCA Act defines kambala as a “traditional sports event involving Buffalo’s (male) race normally held as a part of tradition and culture in the state on such days and places, as may be notified by the State Government”. Bengaluru has no tradition or culture of holding buffalo race events – this was the first to be held in the city. Bengaluru, therefore, is not exempt from the prohibition of these events by Section 2(dd) of the Amended PCA Act. It can be inferred that the event was illegal per se and that the organisers and participants should be held liable for offences under Section 11(1)(a), (b), (d), (h), and (n) of the PCA Act.

Buffaloes were observed to be scared and in pain, frothing at the mouth on account of dehydration, and bearing injury marks that were inflicted during the races. The “safety, security and wellbeing” of buffaloes was not ensured during the event – cruelty to the animals and risk to their lives was evident – in violation of Section 11(3)(f) and (g) of the Amended PCA Act.

Violations of Notification Dated 14 November 2017 Which Purports to Regulate Kambala Events

As per Clause 12 of the state government issued notification dated 14 November 2017 (hereafter “Notification”), subjecting the animals to a gruelling journey of over 600 or 700 kilometres from Mangaluru or Bengaluru and back, involving long periods of being tethered, crowded, and confined to small spaces, comes within the purview of “infliction of unnecessary pain or exhaustion caused to the participating animals involved in the Kambala sports before or after the game”.

Forcing buffaloes to run a track 155 metres in length is in direct contravention of Clause 7, which mandates that the “racing track of sludge (sludge) should not be more than 100 meters long and 7.5 meters wide”.

As evidenced in the observations above, hitting and jabbing with sticks and hands and yanking the animal by the nose is normalised and prevalent. This is in grave violation of

Clause 2 of the Notification which states, “no person shall use a whip or a stick to drive an animal to run fast or to slowdown its speed.”.

Several buffaloes with visible injury marks from beatings were forced to participate, which is in blatant violation of Clause 3.

The buffaloes in the sheds (please see photographs 59 and 60) did not have regular access to clean drinking water or feed, which is in violation of Clause 9 of the Notification.

Violations of the Supreme Court Judgment in *Animal Welfare Board of India and Ors vs Union of India & Anr (Writ Petition (Civil) No. 23 of 2016)* (hereafter “2023 Kambala Judgment”)

The 2023 Kambala Judgment legalises the conduct of kambala only in certain parts of the State of Karnataka and even then, it is subject to certain terms and conditions. Section 2(dd) of the Amended Act defines kambala as a “traditional sports event involving Buffalo’s (male) race **normally held as a part of tradition and culture in the state on such days and places, as may be notified by the State Government**”. It is only traditional events that fall within this definition that are exempted from prohibition of such animal races, as set out in the PCA Act.

As per Section 2(dd), for *any* kambala event to be permitted, it must be held as part of the tradition and culture of the state of Karnataka. The event was by its own account the first of its kind in the city. Buffalo races have never formed part of the historical or cultural heritage of Bengaluru, which is touted as a metropolitan hub of technology, education, industry, start-ups, and commerce.

The event neither met the above legal criteria nor fell within the exception for kambala events as specified in the Amended Act. In fact, the event was sponsored by numerous private companies and was clearly aimed at commercial gain. The event was nothing but entertainment at the expense of the buffaloes exhibited and forced to perform.

CONCLUSION

The findings of PETA India’s investigation into the event highlight the cruelty inherent in buffalo races. This event was not a cultural or traditional event but a commercial and cruel spectacle. The event caused immense physical and psychological harm to the buffaloes used. The decision to hold the event led to the merciless treatment of living, feeling beings, and the conditions under which the event was held were in direct contravention of the Amended Act, the 2023 Kambala Judgment, and the Notification.

Buffaloes are physically ill-suited to racing because, among other reasons, they lack the sweat glands needed to deal with the heat exertion the races inevitably cause in these animals. To control buffaloes and force them to run, handlers use cruel methods, such as violently pulling and yanking on nose ropes, striking and slapping bulls with their hands, shouting at them, and continuously hitting the animals with wooden sticks throughout the races and inflicting wounds. It is clear that if given a choice, buffaloes adopt a natural “flight” response in order to avoid the threatening situations at buffalo race events.

The evidence collected at the event held in Bengaluru – in addition to those of PETA India’s investigations into buffalo race events held on 11 and 25 November 2017; 3, 8, 9, 16, and 23 December 2017; 11 February 2018; 1 and 8 December 2018; 13 January 2019; 16 February

2019; December 2019; and 29 February 2020; 17, 18, and 24 December 2022; and 22 January 2023 – reinforce the findings of inspections by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) in 2014 and 2015. PETA India’s findings show that cruelty is inherent in buffalo race events and that the Amended Act and the Notification claiming to regulate the events have had no significant effect. The situation recorded by the AWBI in 2014, which led the Supreme Court to impose a ban on the events through its order dated 7 May 2014, remains unchanged.