

29 May 2018

The Honourable Harsh Vardhan
Union Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan
Aliganj, Jorbagh Road
New Delhi 110 003

Dear Minister,

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and our more than 1 million members and supporters to urge you to impose a ban on manufacturing, trading, possessing, and using spiked and thorn bits in India. These vile torture devices are frequently used to control equines (horses, mules, and donkeys), who are forced to work in marketplaces and brick kilns and to dance and perform at ceremonies throughout the country, which is inhumane and illegal.

India needs a firm reminder that spiked bits are illegal. Section 8 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules, 1965, states, "No person shall, for the purpose of driving or riding an animal or causing it to draw any vehicle or for otherwise controlling it, use any spiked stick or bit, harness or yoke with spikes, knobs or projections or any other sharp tackle or equipment which causes or is likely to cause bruises, swellings, abrasions or severe pain to the animal." Yet people are still forcing these barbaric instruments into horses' mouths in order to make them haul overloaded carts through busy traffic, dance to the beat of drums, and carry grooms at weddings for human amusement.

Article 51A(g) in the Constitution of India, 1949, mandates that every Indian citizen "protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and have compassion for living creatures". Chapter 1, Section 3, of the Parliament-enacted Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, under "Duties of persons having Charge of animals", states, "It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering." In its 7 May 2014 judgment, the Supreme Court of India banned jallikattu and bullock cart races, affirming that the Constitution of India – as well as The PCA Act, 1960 – provides animals with the fundamental right to be treated with compassion and dignity and to be free from unnecessary pain and suffering.

Spiked bits contribute to the overwhelming terror, pain, and suffering that humans force working and ceremonial horses to endure. These cruel devices rip their lips and tongues, causing lesions, lacerations, swelling, and bruising. Once a spiked bit injures a horse's mouth, it can be permanently damaged. (Pictures enclosed.) Their use causes unnecessary pain and suffering to equines and violates constitutional provisions and statutory laws.

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PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

Cruel and illegal spiked bits are sold openly in markets that sell saddle parts, at equine fairs, and even on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon India. (Two screenshots are enclosed.)

On 1 July 2014, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), a statutory body established under Chapter II, Section 4, of the PCA Act, 1960, and operating under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, issued an advisory to all chief secretaries of the states and union territories (UTs), requesting that they impose a ban on spiked bits and inform it about actions that they take. (See the enclosure.) However, no action seems to have been taken by the states or the UTs to prevent the abuse of equines.

By imposing the rightful ban on spiked bits, as advised by the AWBI, you'll greatly improve the lives of these abused equines and reduce their risk of being involved in accidents in markets, on busy roads, at crowded ceremonies, and in other places where they're forced to work.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you issue an order directing the relevant authorities to impose a ban on manufacturing, trading, possessing, and using spiked bits and to take necessary action against anyone driving, riding, or controlling any animal while using these devices.

PETA India is happy to meet with you or your representative to discuss this important issue in detail. I can be reached at 9910817382 or at ManilalV@petaindia.org.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Dr Manilal Valliyate, CEO
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