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*Dr. Madhumita Srivastava Balaji*

*Senior Research Associate, VIF*

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## *The Removal of Lal Batti - A Stamp-Out on The VIP Culture*

*The famous Greek thinker Aristotle once said, "Well begun is half done". In what would be dreamt as a major step towards establishing a "New and Vibrant India," the Union Cabinet on April 17, 2017 decided to amend the Motor Vehicle Rules in order to put an end to the use of red beacon lights (Lal Batti) which was termed as being demonstrative and a privilege for those in power. This has indeed been a historic decision. Prime Minister Modi has done successfully what many of his predecessors failed to address. With the ban on lal batti, comes an end to an era of feudal practices. Red beacons and multi-toned sirens were reflective of a colonial mindset and an antithesis of a Republic. This move may initially appear to be humble but it speaks volumes in striking a balance between all sections of society.*

### *The Supreme Court Ruling on Red Beacon (A Peep into the Past)*

*On a PIL filed in 2013 regarding the misuse of red beacons, the Supreme Court while hearing the petition on VIP culture observed that, "One of the issues highlighted in the note was that if the instinct of power is concentrated in few individuals, then naked greed for power will destroy the basics of democratic principles. But, what we have done in the last four decades would shock the most established political systems..... The best example of this is the use of symbols of authority including the red lights on the vehicles of public representatives from the lowest to the highest and civil servants of various cadres. The red lights symbolize power and a stark differentiation between those who are allowed to use it and the ones who are not".*



*Now the beacons will be allowed only on emergency and relief services including the law enforcers. This feat has been lauded as an extremely progressive accomplishment of the present government. The common man views it as a pointer to curb the alleged high-handedness of a few who worked for the masses. In an extraordinary development, the Prime Minister with his limited convoy recently commuted though the peak office hours to receive the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her official visit to India. He set the tone and tenor for others to follow. The removal of *lal batti* is indeed a solid step towards a great beginning. It is in sync with the Apex Courts' advice to discard this continuing mal-practice for long.*

*Needless to say, *lal batti* had indeed become a way of life. The democratic and republican ideals were certainly not in harmony with this ongoing colonial hangover. Prime Minister Modi recognized its populist appeal by declaring the ban from May 1, the International Workers' Day. In his regular address to the Nation through the platform of 'Man ki Baat', he mentioned that the use of *lal batti* did not coincide with the spirit and temperament of "New India". The Union Cabinet's decision of doing away with this down and out practice is a huge start in the battle that professes a penchant for good governance. Now a common man can hope that the access or the perks that came with the VIP tag would disappear and "Every Person of the country would be Important" (EPI). The traditional Indian system seems to be changing and that too for the good of people and society. The government's discontinuance of a practice which was viewed a relic of British raj and had become a veritable way of life is appreciable. It is a major accomplishment with a view to strengthening democratic ideals. Prime Minister Modi responding to one of the tweets said that these symbols are out-dated as far as the parallels of new India are concerned. The banning of *lal batti* marks an end of the colonial era and further signifies the restoration of democratic principles which India so fondly cherishes.*



## About VIF

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### *Vivekananda International Foundation*

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110021

Phone No: +91-011-24121764, +91-011-24106698

Fax No: +91-011-43115450

E-mail: [info@vifindia.org](mailto:info@vifindia.org)

[www.vifindia.org](http://www.vifindia.org)



@vifindia

