



Press Release

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Citizens' Initiative Identifies 100 Laws to Repeal

Inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call during his election campaign for "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance", a citizens group in New Delhi has drawn up a list of one hundred laws to delete from the statute books. The group released The 100 Laws Repeals Project Report on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary on Thursday, 2 October.

The project was spearheaded by three leading think-tanks: Centre for Civil Society, and Macro/Finance group at NIPFP and Vidhi Legal Centre, who put together a citizen volunteer group comprising of fifteen lawyers and specialists. The team spent over a thousand man-hours researching and pouring through the legal code over a four month period to draw up a list of 100 laws that are obsolete or repetitive and should be immediately repealed. The group received early backing from the Law Commission, the Law Ministry, and the Prime Minister's Office. In fact, the team's research on 40 laws has been included as primary reasoning by the 148th Report of the Law Commission (2014) in its recommendations on repealing obsolete laws.

Elaborating on the collaborative effort which went into producing the report, Dr Parth Shah, President of Centre for Civil Society said, "This is a true citizen's initiative which the Prime Minister has been talking about implementing in various areas, in order to encourage citizen participation in Government. We are hopeful that this will usher in a new era of cooperation between various decision-making bodies and think tanks, as well as encourage more citizen participation in needed reforms".

The idea of legal reforms was conceived in the election campaign of then PM candidate Narendra Modi. Wanting to give a head start to implementing this project, volunteers were brought together even before the new PM was sworn in, and started their work. The incoming government was kept informed of the progress of the initiative and provided strong ongoing support to the project. Dr. Ajay Shah, who led NIPFP's team on the project, appreciated the government's commitment to statutory legal reform and said, "Law is the DNA of government, and our task of revitalising government is essentially about a better set of laws. Weeding out the detritus is key to this endeavour."

In addition to 25 colonial and independence related laws, the report identifies and presents research on 17 laws that constrain economic freedom and impose restrictions on personal liberty, and 19 laws hinder effective governance. The report includes justification and evidence to support repeal of 8 laws that impose taxes, cesses and levies that bring little benefit despite adding significant administrative and collection costs. The group also recommends that 20 laws passed around the time of Emergency, allowing the government to take over private enterprises be repealed. Lastly, the report identifies 10 central statutes that add to India's labour market rigidities.

The compendium contains one page 'cases' for each recommendation including the name of the legislation, reasons for repeal, and issues that may need to be taken into account during repeal. Data, testimony, expert recommendations, and previous legal opinion have been referenced and cited. Where possible, Government of India budget and census data and last recorded case filings under each law have been used to reinforce the recommendations. The project compendium is available online at www.ccs.in/100laws.

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