

VIPs ARE HISTORY, EVERY PERSON IS IMPORTANT: MODI

Saubhadra Chatterji

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested on Sunday changing VIP to EPI or every person is important, underscoring the need to change people's mindset over snobbish symbols of power such as red beacons that his government banned recently.

The government decided this April to ban red beacons or the coveted "lal batti" atop cars of the President, Prime Minister and down to the bureaucrats from May 1, ending a privilege that was seen as the ultimate status symbol since the British rulers introduced it.

"The exit of the red beacon is part of a system. But we have to make efforts to cleanse it out of our minds. If we collectively strive to do it with eternal vigilance, it surely can be flushed out," said Modi in his Mann Ki Baat radio address.

Only emergency services such as ambulance and fire engines have been exempted from flashing beacons to cut through traffic.

CONTINUED ON P 6

Mann ki Baat

“In a way it had become a symbol of the VIP culture. Whereas the red beacon used to be fixed atop the vehicle, slowly and steadily it permeated into the psyche and got firmly entrenched in the mindset,” Modi said.

“The red beacon is gone for good but nobody can say with certainty that the same in the

mindset has also disappeared.”

He narrated a message from one of his followers to point out how people are happy that now they don't have to stop for anyone or get caught in traffic snarls because of VIP movements.

The PM said in the country there's a general atmosphere of disdain towards the VIP culture. “But that it runs so very deep, I just experienced, when the government recently decided that no person, whatsoever his status might be, will move with a red beacon atop his vehicle.”

He linked the mantra of treating every person important to his idea of New India. And he asked all to “warmly accept” that each of the 1.25 billion Indians is a person of importance and “possesses a sagacious aura, Mahaatmya.

“In place of VIP, more priority should be accorded to EPI. And when I'm saying EPI in place of VIP, the essence of my sentiment is clear, every person is important. The divine greatness of a hundred and twenty five crore Indians and we'll garner strength of immense magnitude. We have to do this together.”