

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6496
ANSWERED ON:05.05.2010
CHANGES IN PUBLIC RECORDS ACTS
Tirkey Shri Manohar

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether a Review Panel constituted by the National Archives of India has suggested changes in the Public Records Act, 1993 towards empowering the common man and research scholars to gain access to papers/records that should be in the public domain;
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) Whether the panel has suggested that all Ministries apprise and release papers to the National Archives in a 20-25 year time frame;
- (d) If so the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (e) Whether the Government has any mechanism in place to declassify documents and records, on expiry of the lock-in period without imperilling national interest or security; and
- (f) If so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR PLANNING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI V.NARAYANASAMY)

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) The Review Panel has in its draft Report, suggested certain changes in the provisions of Public Records Act, 1993 and Public Records Rules, 1997, towards empowering the common man and research Scholars to gain access to papers/records that should be in the public domain. The following two major changes have been suggested-

1. The term 'Research Scholar' in the Public Records Act, 1993 and Public Records Rules, 1997 is proposed to be amended as 'user' to give wider access to Public Records.
2. The 'users' shall be provided Readers Tickets to facilitate entry into the National Archives of India.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) The Review Panel has suggested that the time period of appraisal and transfer of Public Records to National Archives of India (NAI) from Ministries/Departments be reduced from existing 25 years to 20 years. The main reason for the recommendation was that records of Post- Independence Period were not being transferred to the National Archives, and the physical condition of the records deteriorated in the Record Creating Agencies, over time due to poor maintenance. Reducing the period from 25 years to 20 years would also harmonize the Public Records Act, 1993 with the provisions of the RTI Act, 2005 which stipulate that information from records under the exempted categories be made available after 20 years. [Section8(3)]

(e) Yes Sir, the Government has the mechanism in place to declassify documents and records, on expiry of the lock-in period, without imperilling national interest or security;

(f) The Manual of Departmental Security Instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs has detailed instructions/guidelines for handling of classified records of Government of India and their downgrading/declassification. Besides, there are also provisions in the Public Records Act, 1993 and Public Records Rules, 1997 for downgrading of classified records.

National Archives of India is also following up on a regular basis with the Record Creating Agencies/ Departments to declassify/downgrade their classified records for transferring them to NAI, as per these provisions.