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Title : Need to amend the representation of Peoples Act providing voting rights to NRIs.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN Sir, I rise to draw the attention of this House to an important matter which requires immediate legislation.

Now, we all know that Assembly elections are fast approaching in some States, particularly Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala. Lakhs of people from Kerala are working in the Middle East. They are termed as Non-Resident Indians. They do not acquire any citizenship right in the Gulf countries and the law would not permit it also. They would not get citizenship right in the countries where they are working. Now, whenever these NRIs come to India, they are not able to exercise their right to vote. They are our citizens but they lose their rights to vote because they are outside the country for more than six months. It is quite unjust to deny them the right to vote and contest also. These NRIs are Indian citizens. But they are not given the right to vote during elections. There is a request from the State Government of Kerala and other States for giving voting rights to these NRIs. I understand that the Central Government had approved it in principle and they have also almost drafted an amendment to the Representation of Peoples Act. If the report is correct, then let them bring the Bill in this Session itself. Their idea is to promulgate an ordinance^[bru67].

That is not a good thing. The Central Government will be bypassing the Parliament if they do it. As soon as this House is adjourned *sine die*, I am sure they will do it by promulgating an ordinance. This is very unjust. If the draft Bill is ready, let them bring it before the House before this Session ends and get it passed. We do not have any objection. We will pass it. But bypassing the Parliament and promulgating an ordinance when the House is adjourned *sine die* is not proper.

I would request the Central Government to bring in the legislation in this Session itself. The Government has been repeatedly promulgating ordinances. I am sure the Government will issue an ordinance immediately after the House is adjourned *sine die*. That is the Government's idea. The Government will bring it next time. Now, the Government will promulgate an ordinance as soon as the House is adjourned *sine die*. I am sure about it. That is the process of the Government. The Government issues ordinances even in the case of Bills which have been referred to the Standing Committee and it has also submitted the Reports. Even in the case of Bills which have been discussed in the Rajya Sabha and referred to the Standing Committees, the Government is issuing ordinances. When it was in that process, the Government issued the ordinance.

So, in the instant case also, the Government's idea is to issue an ordinance immediately after the Session. That is not correct. If you want to do it, do it properly. Bring it before the House and have a discussion. We will pass it without any difficulty. I would again request the Central Government not to issue an ordinance, but to bring the legislation now itself. We will pass it. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : No cross talks please.