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Title : Need to conduct early Panchayat elections in Pondicherry.

PROF. M. RAMADASS (PONDICHERY): Sir, the Union Territory of Pondicherry, an erstwhile French Colony, is famous for her local body institutions. Even after merger, there were regular elections to the local bodies till 1968. But since then and till now, that is, for 37 years, elections to these bodies were not conducted. As a result, grass-root democracy and association of people with the planning process have been deliberately absent. This is happening even after the passage of 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution which call for periodic and statutory election to these bodies. At one stage, when the Union Territory Administration was ready for election, some one to stall it, raised several legal objections in the Madras High Court. Now the clearance has been given for holding elections. Even then there was no sign of election. Therefore, I raised this issue in the Parliament last year. The Hon. Minister for Panchayat Raj assured that elections would be held as early as possible. Now more than one year has elapsed but there is no sign of elections. As Pondicherry happens to be a Union Territory, Government of India has the sole responsibility of holding panchayat elections there. Prolonged delay in holding elections appears to be a constitutional violation. Therefore, it should issue immediate orders to the Union Territory Administration for holding elections before the Assembly elections due in May 2005. This is the view of the large majority of the people of Pondicherry and the Government of India should respect the feelings of the people. Development and democracy would get a boost at the lower level after 37 years and the people would feel the benefit of economic development and decentralization.