



Foundation for Critical Choices for India

De Haar 173
2261 ZB Leidschendam
The Netherlands

Phone & Fax: 070 - 32 76 004
E-mail: Info@fcci.nl
Website: www.fcci.nl

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Dear fellow Trustees and compatriots,

You might have come across in the media the news with the caption [Indian] **“Cabinet approves voting right for Indians abroad”**. The decision was taken on Thursday, 16 February 2006.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that our collective efforts have bore fruit. It is worth mentioning that the Foundation was the first organization to demand these rights for the NRIs. A presentation to this effect was made to the Indian Parliament and the policymakers as early as in 1982.

Though the prime objective of the Foundation is to address the critical problems facing our motherland, one of the other objectives is to focus attention on the issues of vital importance to our NRI community. In this regard the Foundation has successfully put a number of those issues on the national agenda. To name a few: Grant of Dual nationality to NRI/PIO community, creation of an independent Ministry for NRI affairs, Tax Exemptions for the NRIs and the Right to Vote in Indian Parliamentary and State elections.

With your support, the FCCI will keep marching on this path, but we want to avail of this opportunity to congratulate all of you as well as express our gratitude to the Government of India in acknowledging finally this basic right of Indians living abroad.

With kind regards,

Jasbir Singh

(President)

H.U. Qureshi

(Secretary General)

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Cabinet gives nod for voting rights for NRIs

Our Bureau

New Delhi , Feb 15

IN a major move the Union Cabinet today approved the grant of voting rights to non-resident Indians (NRIs).

A decision was taken to amend the Representation of the People Act 1950 to amplify the definition of "ordinarily resident" to include non-resident Indians away from India on employment, for education or for any other reason.

Following the Cabinet's nod, NRIs can enrol in the electoral rolls and vote during Parliamentary and Assembly elections.

The amendment will be brought through a Bill — the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2006, to be introduced in the current session of Parliament.

"The amendment Bill will entitle eligible citizens of India to cast their votes in Parliamentary and Assembly Elections when they are in their constituency and thus fully participate in the democratic process of nation building and upholding their pride and prestige as citizens of India. This will give the NRIs a sense of belonging," said an official press release.

Today's decision comes after the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, had made clear the Government's intention to give voting rights to NRIs in the Gulf during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in January this year. The Cabinet's decision has been keenly awaited by NRIs, especially the 2 million Indians living in the Gulf. The Kerala Government had also urged the Central Government to take the necessary steps.

During the latest Cabinet reshuffle on January 29, veteran Congressman Mr Vayalar Ravi was appointed the Cabinet Minister for NRI Affairs.

Source:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/bline/2006/02/16/stories/2006021602710900.htm>