

# Pravasi Divas promise fulfilled: NRIs can now vote and contest

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THE government on Thursday notified rules that allow non-resident Indians (NRIs) who fulfill certain criteria to vote in elections in India. The Registration of Electors (Amendment) Rules, 2011 also allow NRIs to, by extension, stand for elections in India.

The notification fulfills one of

the longest standing demands of the 11 million-plus NRI community, and is in line with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's announcement at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas last year that holders of Indian passport living abroad could get the right to vote by the time of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

Currently, no person can be on the voters' list if he or she remains

outside the country for more than six months at a stretch.

The rules, read with the Representation of the People Act, also give NRIs the right to contest elections. Under the provisions of the Act, a person eligible to vote in a constituency is also eligible to contest from that constituency. "Since the new rules are silent on this count, it means that NRIs