BJP raises its hands, says it cannot grant citizenship rights to WP refugees

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ET Report

JAMMU, Dec 3: The BJP Government at the Centre on Tuesday raised its hands in the Lok Sabha and expressed its helplessness, saying the Central Government had no power to grant citizenship rights to the refugees from West Pakistan. There are more than one lakh refugees from West Pakistan residing in different parts of Jammu since 1947. They have been struggling since then to obtain all rights which are available to the state subjects, but with no result because the Kashmiri-dominated successive Governments in the state opposed their democratic demand. As a result, these hapless refugees have been leading a miserable life.

The leadership of West Pakistan refugees had expressed full faith in the BJP during the Lok Sabha election and voted for the BJP candidates. They voted for the BJP because they were misled by the BJP leadership to believe that the BJP will redress their past wrongs and grant them all citizenship rights if it came to power at the centre. However, on Tuesday, the BJP Government let these refugees down and put all the eggs in the basket of the J&K Government, saying only the State Government could grant permanent residency for the refugee from West Pakistan. There would be no permanent residency for refugees from Pakistan settled in Jammu and Kashmir since 1947 unless the State Constitution is amended," the Union Government on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha.

"They (refugees from West Pakistan) are citizens of India and have the right to vote in Parliamentary elections, but they do not enjoy voting rights to the State Assembly and local bodies. This Ministry (MHA) has requested the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to consider conferment of permanent status to West Pakistan refugees settled in Jammu and Kashmir…There would be no permanent residency to the refugees from West Pakistan settled in Jammu and Kashmir unless the state constitution is amended," MoS Home Kiren Rijiju said in the Lok Sabha during the question hour.

It is obvious that the statement of MoS Home will be exploited by the political rivals of the BJP in the ongoing Assembly elections to further expose the BJP and its double-speak. The Congress has already started a campaign against the BJP saying the BJP Government at the centre has fooled the refugees from PoJK by not accepting the financial package the State Government recommended to it just on the eve of elections. The latest stand of the BJP Government on the refugees from West Pakistan would further strengthen the anti-BJP forces in the state. Besides, an impression is

gaining ground in Jammu that the BJP has completely deviated from its original agenda. This is not a good impression as far as the future of the BJP in J&K is concerned.

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