

NOW EVERYONE'S

A VOTER!

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By KENNY NAIDOO

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A COUPLE was astounded by official notices urging them to vote in an House of Delegates by-election — even though they had not registered as voters.

Durban photographer Mr Omar Badsha and his wife Nasima — both strong opponents of the tricameral Parliament — received post card notices from Pretoria telling them where and when to vote in Wednesday's by-election for the Brickfield constituency.

The seat, vacated by Mr A G Joosab, is being contested by Mr Abdulla Khan of the National People's Party and Mr Reuben John of Solidarity.

The notices also listed the Badshas' voter numbers. A check revealed that Mr and Mrs Badsha were listed in the latest voters' roll for Brickfield. Neither was listed in the 1984 roll.

The Sunday Times established this week that as a result of an amendment to the Electoral Act, Indians, whites and coloureds over 18 years old and who possess identity documents are automatically registered as voters — irrespective of whether they like it.

Amended

The Act was amended to allow for automatic registration shortly after the August, 1984 tricameral elections, for which there was a low, 20 percent poll.

Prior to the amendment, registration as a voter was compulsory for people over 18. Failure to register carried a possible fine.

But despite the risk of prosecution, thousands of Indians and coloureds did not register — and consequently did not vote — in the 1984 elections.

An electoral officer attached to the Department of Home Affairs, Mr Wessel Blumeris, explained the changes in the system. He said the Population Registration and Election Amend-



HE'S A VOTER: Photographer Omar Badsha ... surprised to discover that he and his wife are registered as voters

ment Act 103 was passed in September 1984, allowing for voters' rolls to be compiled from the Population Register.

"Therefore, all people over the age of 18 who possess identity documents are automatically registered as voters," said Mr Blumeris.

Updated

Mr Badsha said the introduction of automatic registration was "disturbing"

"I find it absolutely reprehensible that one has no choice," he said.

"I would have rather not

registered and paid a fine than have this imposed on me."

Mrs Badsha said: "I suppose they amended the law to reflect a much higher number of voters. It was probably the only way they could have done so."

Before the law was amended to allow for automatic registration, the roll for the Brickfield constituency listed a total of 12 088 voters.

The updated roll for 1986 lists a total of 17 019 voters — an increase of more than 4 900.

(Report by Kenny Naidoo, 12 Devonshire Place, Durban)