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Kerala sets apart 50 pc seats in civic bodies for women

In a major pro-women policy initiative, the CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala on Wednesday decided to set apart 50 per cent of elected seats in panchayats and all other local bodies for women.

Announcing this after a cabinet meeting, Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan said a special session of the state Assembly would be convened from September 8 to 17 to bring in a legislation in this regard.

The liaison committee of the coalition government had last week evolved a consensus among the ruling front partners to formulate such policy.

Presently, 33 per cent of seats in civic bodies are constitutionally guaranteed for women. If necessary, states have powers to bring in amendments to their respective laws to enhance women's representation up to 50 per cent. States like Chattisgargh, Bihar and Maharashtra have already taken initiative in this direction.

The amendment would also help increase women's representation on

administrative panels of civic bodies like standing committees, giving them a decisive say on important matters like Budget allocations for welfare schemes. LDF circles hailed this as a crucial aspect since many of the welfare schemes concerning women and children were now being implemented through local bodies.

Greater presence of women on civic bodies would make formulation of schemes, budget allocations and implementation far more gender-sensitive, they said.

Kerala has 999 village panchayats, 152 block panchayats, 14 district panchayats, 53 municipalities and five city corporations.