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## **State to reserve 50% seats for women in self-governing bodies**

The Narendra Modi government on Wednesday decided to reserve 50 per cent seats for women in all the local self-government bodies. The government will bring a Bill to this effect in the next Assembly session.

Gujarat will be the sixth state to have 50 per cent quota for women in such bodies after Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Briefing media persons after the weekly Cabinet meeting, government spokesman Jay Narayan Vyas said the decision follows an initiative taken by the Chief Minister towards woman empowerment. Recently, the state BJP's executive committee had passed a resolution to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in the local self-government bodies, he added.

Meanwhile, sources in the state Urban Development and Panchayat departments said that the local self-government bodies include all the seven municipal corporations — Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar and Junagadh — the 159 municipalities, 26 district panchayats, 224 taluka panchayats and 13,600 village panchayats. The government is already providing 33 per cent reservation for women in these bodies, a senior Panchayat official said.

The official added that the 50 per cent representation for women was one of the recommendations incorporated in a report on the proposed electoral reforms suggested by the State Election Commission recently. The Commission is likely to submit this report to the government shortly.

Leader of the Opposition Shaktisinh Gohil told The Indian Express: “The Congress-led UPA government had, at its recent Cabinet meeting, passed a resolution to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in these bodies across the country. Modi is just following the Congress policy to empower women.”