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50% quota: Women brace up for more power

Radha Sharma, TNN 13 November 2009, 06:45am IST

AHMEDABAD: Women in the state have expressed their readiness to make the most of the state government's decision on Wednesday to raise women's quota from 33 to 50 per cent in the local self-governing bodies at the urban and rural level.

"The hike in reservation for women at the local level is a step forward. Women leaders are not mere rubber stamps. Our experience with women sarpanches has been very encouraging. We found them fighting their way into leadership," said Sejal Dand of Anandi. She said that the government move has now made them look forward to reservation for women in Parliament as well.

Ila Vakharia of Chetna said that she has been working for the past one year with women who are active in grassroots politics and social welfare. She said her organization has trained nearly 50 potential women leaders. Women from SC, ST and tribal areas have been specifically chosen to empower them to voice their stand on various important issues at the village level, Vakharia added.

"The 50 per cent quota for women in local self-governing bodies was long due. It is essential that women are encouraged to

participate in the political process. We also aim to persuade those who are successful at the local governance level to enter the state assemblies and Parliament," said Vakharia.

"Women's participation in politics will ensure that the issues of fair sex and children that usually get ignored at the rural and even urban level will assume significance. We want that more women be strengthened to persue active politics. With more seats reserved for women, they will now also find a place in decision-making bodies like the standing committees," said Dand.

Sanita Xelox of Sahrwaru, which has been actively working in 17 districts with rural women, said a few of their candidates groomed for political roles also participated in the women's parliament, held in New Delhi, as ministers. "The training has made women confident and encouraged them to take on the mantle of politics," said Xelox.