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Women get 50% quota

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New Delhi Aug. 27: The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved a proposal to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in all three tiers of panchayats across the country, a major decision to ensure greater representation of women in the decision-making process at the local level.

The government will now bring a Constitution amendment bill in the next session of Parliament to enhance reservation for women in panchayats from the current 33 per cent to at least 50 per cent. The move will apply to the total number of seats filled by direct election, the office of chairpersons and seats and offices of chairpersons reserved for SCs and STs.

Panchayati raj minister C.P. Joshi said the decision aims at empowering women and recognising their contribution in nation-building. At present, of the total elected representatives of panchayats numbering approximately 28.18 lakh, 36.87 per cent are women. With the proposed constitutional amendment, the number of elected women representatives is expected to rise to more than 14 lakh. Panchayats play a vital role in women's emancipation.