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## **50% of seats in local bodies for women**

Special Correspondent

*Special House session from September 8 to enact law*

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*12 kg free rice for tribal people for Onam*

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*More communities included in OBC category*

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Cabinet on Wednesday decided to reserve 50 per cent of seats in local self-government institutions for women.

Briefing the media after the weekly Cabinet meeting, Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan said a law would be brought in on a priority basis for providing reservation for women. A special session of the Assembly would be convened from September 8 to 17 for enactment of legislations including the one on women's reservation.

## Oceanarium

Mr. Achuthanandan announced that a joint sector company would be formed for establishing an oceanarium complex and marine biological research centre at Puthuvypu near Kochi. The complex, to be set up with private participation, would be the first in the country.

He also announced that the government would provide 12 kg of rice free of charge to tribal people during Onam. Besides, all schoolchildren who were covered under the noon-meal scheme would get 5 kg of rice free during the festival. Free ration would be provided to the workers of the defunct Alappuzha port during Onam. They would also be given a purse of Rs.3,000 against Rs.2,500 paid last year. The workers of closed public sector units would get Rs.1,250. This was 25 per cent higher than the amount paid last year.

The Chief Minister said that the Pandaran, Dahni and Kachimemom communities would be included on the list of Other Backward Classes (OBC). A public sector company would be formed for the conservation and management of the Aralam farm in Kannur.

Replying to questions, Mr. Achuthanandan said that special secretary in his office N. Chandrasekhara Panicker had replaced S. Rajendran as his private secretary. The replacement was a routine procedure. (Mr. Rajendran was reportedly removed after the CPI(M) State secretariat discussed the Chief Minister's complaints against him.)

He said the government had decided to provide 25 acres of land at Vytilla in Ernakulam for setting up a bus terminal. This was aimed at reducing traffic congestion. The Collector had been asked to submit a proposal on the bus terminal. The land belonged to the Agriculture Department. So, the department would be provided with suitable land elsewhere.

He said the proposal for development of Metro Rail in Kochi faced fresh hurdles. The Union Finance Ministry had objected to joint funding of the project by the State and Central governments.