Empowering Women Work Force - Kerala Model

Why in news?

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Kerala government has proposed amendments to Kerala Shops and Establishments Act.

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What are the recent amendments about?

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- The proposed amendments to the 1960 Kerala Shops and Establishments Act to provide a secure and healthy environment for women workers.
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- It seek to address demands of a large section of the labour force in the state.
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- The changes include the right of women workers to sit during work hours, which has been a long-standing demand of those employed, especially in textile retail establishments.
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- The cabinet has also decided to remove the ban on employment of women in night shifts,it mandates employers to provide transport for those on night duty.
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What are the reasons behind the recent amendments?

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- The credit for forcing the Kerala government to amend the concerned Act goes to a new generation of women labour leaders.
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- Women's of the state have been struggling to get the state and the male-dominated leadership of trade unions recognise the gender dimension in

labour rights.
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- For nearly a decade, unions involving women in the unorganised sector have risked the censure of employers and the indifference of the political mainstream to demand rights.
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- This includes of textile shop assistants to sit during work hours, access to rest rooms and so on.
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- Various campaigns and peaceful mobilisations have forced the political class and civil society to do a gender audit of work spaces and public policy.
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- These courageous activists also exposed the established trade unions as male preserves and called out the built-in discrimination towards women in labour laws that regulate the services sector.
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What are the concerns with status of women workers ?

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- The recognition of the gender dimension in labour rights comes at a time when Kerala is reporting a decline in women's work participation.
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- Structural changes in the state's economy the decline of primary sectors like agriculture and the expansion of the services sector, especially retail trade have created a large mass of unorganised workers, mainly women work for relatively low wages, and few workplace rights.
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- In this regard changes to the Kerala Shops and Establishments Act is a step that recognises its presence, and acknowledges the rights of its constituents.
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Source: The Indian Express

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