Women Empowerment

Why in news?

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The Women Reservation Bill occupied centre stage as Union Minister Urban Development Minister and Chief Minister of AP supported reservation of one-third seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women in The National Women's Parliament (NWP)

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What is the NWP?

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- It is a three-day event being organised by Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly with the theme “Empowering women — strengthening democracy”.
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- Over 10,000 women delegates, including women MPs, MLAs and those who have excelled in different walks of life from across the country and abroad, are attending the conclave.
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What is the status of the bill?

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- Commonly known as the **Women's Reservation Bill.**
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- It was introduced by the UPA-I government in May 2008.
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- The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010 but it lapsed following the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.
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What are the features of the then bill?

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- The **Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008** seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies.
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- The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by Parliament.
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- One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies.
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- Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.
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- Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of this Amendment Act.
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What were the issues?

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- There are divergent views on the reservation policy. Proponents stress the necessity of affirmative action to improve the condition of women.
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- Some recent studies on panchayats have shown the positive effect of reservation on empowerment of women and on allocation of resources.
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- Opponents argue that it would perpetuate the unequal status of women since they would not be perceived to be competing on merit.
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- They also contend that this policy diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reform such as criminalisation of politics and inner party democracy.
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- Reservation of seats in Parliament restricts choice of voters to women candidates. Therefore, some experts have suggested alternate methods

such as reservation in political parties and dual member constituencies.
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- Rotation of reserved constituencies in every election may reduce the incentive for an MP to work for his constituency as he may be ineligible to seek re-election from that constituency.
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- The report examining the **1996 women's reservation Bill** recommended that reservation be provided for women of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) once the Constitution was amended to allow for reservation for OBCs.
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- It also recommended that reservation be extended to the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils. Neither of these recommendations has been incorporated in the Bill.
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Source: PRS, The Hindu

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