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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

A Roadmap to Fast-Track Women's Reservation in Parliament

INDIAN EXPRESS

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A Roadmap to Fast-Track Women's Reservation in Parliament

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CONTEXT

The Indian Express editorial discusses the **implementation challenges** of women's reservation in Parliament under the **106th Constitutional Amendment Act (2023)** — the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** — and proposes a roadmap to accelerate the delimitation process. The editorial argues that the amendment's linkage to delimitation and Census should not become an excuse for indefinite delay — women's political representation demands urgency.

THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

- 1 **The amendment is locked behind delimitation** — the 106th Amendment explicitly states that women's reservation will be implemented after the next Census AND delimitation; with delimitation now proceeding (543→816 seats), implementation is finally possible
- 2 **30 years of delay** — the women's reservation bill was first introduced in 1996; passing it in 2023 without immediate implementation added yet another layer of delay
- 3 **Delimitation must be fast-tracked** — the editorial proposes completing delimitation within 12-18 months (not the historical 2-3 years) using digital Census data and GIS-based boundary drawing
- 4 **Rotation mechanism** — reserved seats will rotate every 15 years; the editorial argues the first rotation should be based on a transparent algorithm (not political convenience) to prevent gerrymandering
- 5 **State assemblies too** — the amendment covers both Lok Sabha and state assemblies; the editorial urges simultaneous implementation to avoid a gap between central and state levels



WOMEN IN INDIAN LEGISLATURES — CURRENT STATUS

LEGISLATURE	WOMEN MEMBERS	PERCENTAGE
17th Lok Sabha (2019-2024)	78 of 543	14.4%
18th Lok Sabha (2024-)	74 of 543	13.6%
Rajya Sabha (current)	~35 of 245	~14.3%
State assemblies (average)	~9%	Varies widely
Panchayats (post-73rd Amendment)	~46%	Constitutional minimum: 33%

The contrast between panchayats (~46% women) and Parliament (~14%) is stark — proving that reservation dramatically increases representation. The 73rd Amendment (1992) mandated 33% reservation in panchayats; actual women’s representation now exceeds this.

106TH AMENDMENT — KEY PROVISIONS

PROVISION	DETAILS
Amendment number	106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023
Official name	Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam
Reservation	33% (one-third) of Lok Sabha and state assembly seats
Scope	Lok Sabha + state legislative assemblies (NOT Rajya Sabha, NOT legislative councils)
Trigger	After next Census + delimitation
Rotation	Every 15 years
SC/ST women	Reserved within existing SC/ST quotas
Duration	15 years from commencement (renewable)



HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

YEAR	EVENT	OUTCOME
1996	81st Amendment Bill (Deve Gowda govt)	Lapsed
1998-2003	Reintroduced by Vajpayee govt multiple times	Lapsed due to opposition
2008	108th Amendment Bill (UPA-II)	Passed Rajya Sabha (March 2010); never taken up in Lok Sabha
2023	128th Amendment Bill (NDA) → became 106th Amendment	Passed by both Houses; linked to Census + delimitation

Why Did It Take 27 Years?

- **OBC sub-quota demand** – parties like SP, RJD, JD(U) demanded that the 33% women's quota include a sub-reservation for OBC women; this was never agreed upon
- **Political will** – when parties had the numbers, they lacked the will; when they had the will, they lacked the numbers
- **Census-delimitation linkage (2023)** – provided a face-saving compromise: pass the law now, implement later

GLOBAL COMPARISON

COUNTRY	WOMEN IN LOWER HOUSE	MECHANISM
Rwanda	61%	Constitutional quota
Cuba	53%	Party mandate
Mexico	50%	Constitutional parity
Sweden	47%	Voluntary party quotas
France	37%	Parity law
UK	35%	Party shortlists
India	14%	106th Amendment (not yet implemented)
USA	29%	No quota



UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 – Polity & Governance

- 106th Amendment: provisions, implementation, rotation
- Delimitation and its linkage to reservation
- Women’s political representation: history and challenges

GS Paper 1 – Indian Society

- Role of women and women’s organisations
- Social empowerment: political participation
- Panchayat reservation as a model for Parliament

Mains Probable Questions:

- “The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam represents a historic legislative achievement but its delayed implementation risks becoming yet another unfulfilled promise. Critically examine.” (250 words)

FACTS CORNER

- India ranks **143rd out of 190 countries** in women’s parliamentary representation (IPU rankings, 2025) – below Bangladesh (93rd), Pakistan (95th), and Nepal (52nd)
- The **73rd Amendment (1992)** reserved 33% of panchayat seats for women; today **~46% of elected panchayat members are women** – exceeding the constitutional minimum, demonstrating that reservation works
- The term “**Sarpanch Pati**” describes the phenomenon where husbands of elected women sarpanches exercise proxy power – a challenge that political reservation alone cannot solve without complementary measures (education, economic empowerment)
- **Rwanda** achieved the world’s highest women’s legislative representation (61%) after its 2003 Constitution mandated 30% reservation – a post-genocide institutional choice
- The new **Parliament building** (inaugurated May 2023) was designed for **888 Lok Sabha seats** – structurally ready for the expanded house of 816 members under delimitation



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