

# The Statesman

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## **‘Pressure groups will help women play larger role in politics’**

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NEW DELHI, 10 MAY: Women need to organise themselves as pressure groups to be able to play a larger and significant role in politics, women journalists told a panel discussion on ‘Women & Politics: Elections Today & Tomorrow’ organised by Ficci Ladies Organisation (FLO). Ms Navika Kumar, Ms Nistula Hebbar and Ms Smita Sharma, representing different newspapers and TV channels, expressed their views on why women have been left behind in the political arena both as leaders and voters when they have excelled in private and public sectors in the last few decades. Participation of women was dismal in legislatures as they have not been able to stress the need to be heard, the said.

In 1911, women were allowed to vote in just two countries in the world. Today, a century later, that right is virtually universal and a fundamental right. But how many women actually step out and exercise their electoral rights? How are women's issues placed in the manifestoes of political parties? How many women candidates are actually fielded by political parties to contest elections? What is happening to the women's reservation Bill? These were some of the questions that were focused on during the discussion.

Political parties must become more sensitive towards women and should reserve 33 per cent for women in organisational posts or give them party tickets, they said. It was also highlighted that national parties should clearly draw out a roadmap for women-related issues and deliver results.