

## **Essential Defence Services Bill**

### **Why in news?**

Union Minister of State for Defence recently introduced the Essential Defence Services Bill in the Lok Sabha.

### **What is the bill about?**

- The Bill empowers the government to declare services mentioned in it as essential defence services.
- [The cessation of work of such services would prejudicially affect the production of defence equipment or goods.]
- The Bill prohibits strike and lockouts in any industrial establishment or unit engaged in essential defence services.
- The Bill is meant to provide for the maintenance of essential defence services to secure the security of the nation, and life and property of public at large.

### **What is the need?**

- Indian Ordnance Factories is the oldest and largest industrial setup.
- It functions under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence.
- The ordnance factories form an integrated base for indigenous production of defence hardware and equipment.
- The primary objective is self-reliance in equipping the armed forces with state-of-the-art battlefield equipment.
- An uninterrupted supply of ordnance items to the armed forces should be maintained.
- This is essential for the defence preparedness of the country.
- This is especially true given the prevailing situation on the northern front of the country.
- With these, it was felt necessary that the Government should have power to meet any emergency and ensure the maintenance of essential defence services.

### **What will the impact be?**

- Recently, the government announced corporatisation of the Ordnance

Factory Board (OFB).

- Under this, the 41 factories ammunition and other equipment to the armed forces became part of seven government owned corporate entities.
- The OFB was directly under the Department of Defence Production and worked as an arm of the government.
- So, the Bill now is aimed at improving the efficiency and accountability of these factories.
- It has a direct bearing on around 70,000 employees of the 41 ordnance factories around the country.
- They are unhappy with the corporatisation of OFB, fearing that it would impact their service and retirement conditions.
- The government has however assured that it would take care of the conditions of service of the OFB employees.

**Source: The Indian Express**

