Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018

Why in news?

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The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 was issued recently, dissolving the Medical Council of India (MCI).

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What is the ordinance for?

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- It amends the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 which set up the MCI that regulates medical education and practice.
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- The Ordinance provides for the supersession of the MCI for a period of one year.
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- In the interim period, the central government will constitute a 7-member Board of Governors (BoG).
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- The powers of the Council have been vested in the BoG led by NITI Aayog Member Dr. V.K. Paul.
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- The BoG will continue to perform till an alternative comes into place as per the legal provisions in one year time.
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How did it evolve?

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- **Parliamentary Committee** - There were some serious concerns with the functioning of the MCI.
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- A 2016 Parliamentary Standing committee report noted that mere incremental alterations to MCI would not give the expected results.

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- **Supreme Court** - In May 2016, the Supreme Court had set up a three-member oversight committee.
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- With one year tenure, the committee, headed by former Chief Justice of India RM Lodha, was to guide the MCI in its functioning.
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- The Lodha oversight committee, at the end of its term, submitted a report.
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- It detailed how the MCI openly defied the oversight committee's directives.
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- Despite this, the Centre, instead of scrapping the MCI, in July 2017, proposed setting up a new oversight committee to the SC.
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- In July 2018, this oversight committee members resigned, citing noncompliance of their instructions by the MCI.
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- **Bill** - The government introduced the National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill, 2017, in the Lok Sabha, in December, 2017.
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- This Bill, to replace the MCI with a National Medical Commission, is pending in Parliament.
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- Given all these, the government is now forced to issue the ordinance.
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What next?

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- The BoG is likely to make the much-required reforms in the field of medical education and promote access to quality healthcare.
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- The government must now move urgently on bringing the NMC Bill.
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- There are some concerns with the Bill in its current form despite amendments to accommodate some of them
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- It is essential that the government address these concerns.
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Source: PRS India, The Hindu, Financial Express

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