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 servicesto 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

IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative