



ESTD. 1953

ALL INDIA DEFENCE EMPLOYEES' FEDERATION

'S. M. Joshi Bhavan', Survey No. 81, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, Khadki, Pune - 411 003.

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K.Sivakumar

Debjyoti Basu

Working class of India must strongly oppose Essential Defence Services Bill- 2021.

S.N. Pathak,

President,

All India Defence Employees Federation.

Sr. Vice President,

Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Lok Sabha passed the Essential Defence Services Bill-2021 (EDSB) on 3 August 2021 and the Rajya Sabha passed it hurriedly on 5 August 2021. The Bill takes away the right of defence workers to strike, work to rule, mass leave and even to refuse to do overtime.

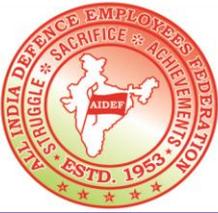
The EDSB converts the Essential Defence Services Ordinance (EDSO), promulgated on 30 June 2021 into an Act. EDSO was brought in to stop the proposed strike of nearly 80,000 ordnance factory workers against the corporatisation of ordnance factories and dissolution the Ordnance Factory Board.

Besides ordnance factories, the bill covers all establishments involved in production of defence equipment, services, maintenance and operation of defence establishments. Even private companies producing for defence forces and supplying goods to ordnance factories are covered under the Bill.

It allows the use of police force to ensure "functioning, safety or maintenance of the essential defence services".

According to the EDSB, the punishment for participating in a strike will be imprisonment of up to one year or fine of Rs 10,000 or both. The persons instigating, inciting, or taking actions to continue "illegal" strike will be punished with up to two years of imprisonment or Rs 15,000 fine or both. All offences will be non-bailable. It empowers the management to dismiss workers participating in strikes without any enquiry

Ordnance factory workers, supported by all other civilian defence workers have been strongly opposing repeated attempts of the government over the last twenty years to convert 41 ordnance factories into corporations. On 16 June 2021, the central government announced the decision to dismantle the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and convert it into 7 corporations. Knowing fully well that corporatisation is the first step towards privatisation, immediately on 17 June all sections of defence civilian employees began their protest against the decision. They decided to go on the indefinite strike from 26 July 2021. The EDSO and later the EDSB have been brought in to stop ordnance factory workers from exercising their right to strike.



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When the ordnance factory workers had gone for one month strike in 2019, within five days of the commencement of the strike, during the conciliation procedure held by chief labour commissioner(central) the government requested workers to withdraw the strike and said that there is no such proposal of corporatization in written. once again ordnance factory workers had decided to go on indefinite strike from 12 th of October again during the conciliation procedure held by chief labour commissioner (central) the government forced workers to withdraw the strike by using provisions given in the industrial dispute act 1947 and a series of meetings was held with MOD officials. After no settlement achieved MOD once again approached chief labour commissioner(central) to resolve the dispute and just before the cabinet decision chief labour commissioner (central) reported conciliation failed. Without giving sufficient time to ordnance factory works govt is proceeding very fast towards corporatization of ordnance factories in 7 corporations.

Former Defence Ministers had assured ordnance factory workers not to corporatize ordnance factory board. Now, the government keeps going back on its promise and continues to attempt to corporatize the ordnance factories.

While many unions and worker's organizations including AITUC, CITU, HMS, AIUTUC, AICCTU, UTUC, SEWA, LPF, Mazdoor Ekta Committee (MEC), ICTU, INTUC and TUCC have organised protests against the EDSO, **it is important that every working person in the country realises the gravity of the attack on the right of workers and opposes the EDSB.**

The Right to Strike is one of the most important rights won by the workers of the world during the first 3-4 decades of last century. We, the workers produce all the wealth of the country. Striking work means lot of hardship for us workers. Hence, we resort to this step only as a last resort in defence of our rights when all other means are exhausted. The moment we stop working, the wheels of the economy come to a standstill and capitalists stop getting their profits. That is why capitalists and governments are most scared of our right to strike.

If the attack on the right to strike of defence workers goes unopposed today, the right of workers all other sectors will be taken away tomorrow. We workers will be back in 19th century when we had no rights.

The EDSB is an attack not only on rights of defence workers but threatens the rights of every worker in the country.

Every worker, irrespective of the sector in which she or he works, must stand in solidarity with defence workers and participate in protest actions to protect her/his right and of future generations to strike.