

THE MAHARASHTRA ESSENTIAL SERVICES MAINTENANCE ACT, 2023

[Text as on 15th January 2025]

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MAHARASHTRA ACT No. XXIX OF 2023¹

[THE MAHARASHTRA ESSENTIAL SERVICES MAINTENANCE ACT, 2023.]

[This Act received the assent of the president 19th June 2023; assent first published, in the “*Maharashtra Government Gazette*”, Part IV on the 30th June 2023.]

An Act to provide for the maintenance of certain essential services and the normal life of the community; and to provide for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the maintenance of certain essential services and the normal life of the community; and to provide for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto; it is hereby enacted in the Seventy-fourth Year of the Republic of India, as follows :—

1. Short title, extent, commencement and duration.— (1) This Act may be called the Maharashtra Essential Services Maintenance Act, 2023.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Maharashtra.

(3) It shall come into force on such date² as the State Government may, by notification in the *Official Gazette*, appoint and shall cease to have effect on the expiry of the five years from the said date except as respects things done or omitted to be done before such cesser of operation of this Act; and section 7 of the Maharashtra General Clauses Act (I of 1904), shall apply upon such cesser of operation of this Act, as if it had then been repealed by a Maharashtra Act.

2. Definitions.— In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “essential service” means,—

(i) any transport service for the carriage of passengers or goods, by land or water, with respect to which the State Legislature has power to make laws;

(ii) any service connected with the supply of gas or milk or water or electricity with respect to which the State Legislature has power to make laws;

(iii) any service connected with the maintenance of public health and sanitation including hospitals and dispensaries;

(iv) any public service, post and employment in connection with the affairs of the State and also persons appointed to the secretarial staff of both Houses of the State Legislature, and the officers and employees of the High Court;

(v) any service or post in connection with the affairs of the local authorities;

(vi) any other service, post, employment or class thereof, connected with matters in respect of which the State Legislature has power to make laws and when the State Government is of opinion that strike in such service, post, employment or class thereof would prejudicially affect the public safety or the maintenance of the supplies or services essential to the life of the community or would result in the infliction of grave hardships on the community, and which the State Government by notification in the *Official Gazette*, declares to be an essential service for the purpose of this Act;

(b) “strike” means the cessation of work by a body of persons employed in any essential service acting in combination or a concerted refusal or a refusal under a common understanding of any number of persons who are or have been so employed, to continue to work or to accept employment, and includes,—

¹ For Statement of Objects and Reasons of the L. A. Bill No. VIII of 2023, see *Maharashtra Government Gazette*, 2023, Extraordinary No. 7, Part V-A, dated 10th March 2023, page 6.

² This Act came into force on the 4th August 2023, vide Government Notification, G.A.D, No. MIS-1123/C.R. 003/16-A, dated the 4th August 2023.

(i) refusal to work overtime, where such work is necessary for the maintenance of any essential service;

(ii) any other conduct, which is likely to result in, or results in, cessation or substantial retardation of work in any essential service;

(c) words and expressions used in sections 5 and 6 and not defined herein but defined in the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (14 of 1947), shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them in that Act.

3. Laying of notification before each House of State Legislature.— (1) Every notification issued under sub-clause (vi) of clause (a) of section 2 shall be laid before each House of the State Legislature, immediately after it is made, if it is in session, and on the first day of the commencement of the next session of the House if it is not in session and shall cease to operate at the expiration of forty days from the date of its being so laid or from the re-assembly of the State Legislature, as the case may be, unless before the expiration of that period, a resolution approving the issue of the notification is passed by both Houses of the State Legislature.

(2) Where any notification ceases to operate by or under sub-section (1), the cesser shall be without prejudice to anything done or omitted to be done before such cesser.

Explanation.— Where the Houses of the State Legislature are summoned to re-assemble on different dates, the period of forty days shall be reckoned from the later of those dates.

4. Power to prohibit strike in certain employments.— (1) If the State Government is satisfied that in the public interest, it is necessary or expedient so to do, it may subject to the provisions of sub-section (5), by general or special order, prohibit strike in such essential service from such date as may be specified in the order.

(2) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be published in such manner, as the State Government considers best calculated to bring it to the notice of the persons affected by the order.

(3) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be in force for six months only, from the date specified therein, but the State Government may, by a like order published in like manner, and subject to the provisions of sub-section (5), extend it for a further period not exceeding six months, if it is satisfied that in the public interest it is necessary or expedient so to do.

(4) Upon the issue of an order under sub-section (1) or sub-section (3),—

(a) no person employed in any essential service to which the order relates shall go or remain on strike ;

(b) any strike declared or commenced whether before or after the issue of the order, by persons employed in any such service shall be illegal.

(5) No order under sub-section (1) or sub-section (3) shall be made in respect of—

(a) persons appointed to the secretarial staff of the Houses of the State Legislature, except at the request of the Chairman of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly;

(b) officers and employees of the High Court, except at the request of the Chief Justice of the High Court.

5. Power to prohibit lock-out in certain establishments.— (1) If the State Government is satisfied that in the public interest, it is necessary or expedient so to do, it may, by general or special order, prohibit lock-out in any establishment pertaining to any essential service specified in the order.

(2) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be published in such manner as the State Government considers best calculated to bring it to the notice of the persons affected by the order.

(3) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be in force for six months only, but the State Government may, by a like order, extend it for a further period not exceeding six months, if it is satisfied that in the public interest, it is necessary or expedient so to do.

(4) Upon the issue of an order under sub-section (1) or sub-section (3),—

(a) no employer in relation to an establishment to which the order applies shall declare or commence any lock-out;

(b) any lock-out declared or commenced whether before or after the issue of the order, by any employer in relation to an establishment to which the order applies, shall be illegal.

(5) Any employer in relation to an establishment who commences, continues or otherwise acts in furtherance of a lock-out which is illegal under this section, shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees, or with both.

6. Power to prohibit lay-off in certain establishments.— (1) If the State Government is satisfied that in the public interest it is necessary or expedient so to do, it may, by general or special order, prohibit lay-off, on any ground other than shortage of power or natural calamity, of any workman (other than a *badli* workman or a casual workman) whose name is borne on the muster roll of any establishment pertaining to any essential service specified in the order.

(2) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be published in such manner, as the State Government considers best calculated to bring it to the notice of the persons affected by the order.

(3) An order made under sub-section (1) shall be in force for six months only but the State Government may, by a like order, extend it for a further period not exceeding six months if it is satisfied that in the public interest it is necessary or expedient so to do.

(4) Upon the issue of an order under sub-section (1) or sub-section (3),—

(a) no employer, in relation to an establishment to which the order applies, shall lay-off or continue the lay-off of any workman (other than a *badli* workman or a casual workman) whose name is borne on the muster roll of such establishment, unless such lay-off is due to shortage of power or natural calamity; and any laying off or continuation of laying off shall, unless such laying off or continuation of laying off is due to shortage of power or natural calamity, be illegal;

(b) a workman whose laying off is illegal under clause (a) shall be entitled to all the benefits under any law for the time being in force as if he had not been laid-off.

(5) Any employer in relation to an establishment who lays-off or continues the laying off of any workman shall, if such laying off or continuation of laying off is illegal under this section, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees, or with both.

7. Penalty for illegal strike.— Any person who commences a strike which is illegal under this Act or goes or remains on, or otherwise takes part in, any such strike shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees, or with both.

8. Penalty for instigation.— Any person who instigates or incites other persons to take part in or otherwise acts in furtherance of, a strike which is illegal under this Act, shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees, or with both.

9. Penalty for giving financial aid to illegal strike.— Any person who knowingly expends or supplies any money in furtherance or support of a strike which is illegal under this Act, shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to three thousand rupees, or with both.

10. Action under section 7, 8 or 9 in addition to disciplinary action.— Any action taken under section 7, 8 or 9 shall not affect, and shall be in addition to, any action of a disciplinary nature or any consequence which may ensue, and to which any person may be liable by the terms and conditions of his service or employment.

11. Power to arrest without warrant and offences to be non-bailable.— (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974), any Police Officer may arrest without a warrant any person who is reasonably suspected of having committed any offence under this Act.

(2) All offences under this Act shall be non-bailable.

12. Act to override other laws.— The provisions of this Act or any order issued thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in the Maharashtra Industrial Relations Act (XI of 1947), the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (14 of 1947) or any other law for the time being in force.

13. Repeal of Mah. XVIII of 2018 and saving.— (1) The Maharashtra Essential Services Maintenance Act, 2017 (Mah. XVIII of 2018) (hereinafter referred to as “the principal Act”) is hereby repealed.

(2) The repeal of the principal Act shall not affect—

(a) anything done or any action taken (including any notification or order issued) under the provisions of the principal Act, or

(b) any right, privilege or obligation or liability acquired, accrued or incurred under the principal Act, or

(c) any penalty or punishment incurred in respect of any offence under the principal Act, or

(d) any investigation, legal proceeding or remedy in respect of any such right, privilege, obligation, liability, penalty or punishment as aforesaid, and any such investigation, legal proceeding or remedy may be instituted, continued or enforced and any such penalty or punishment may be imposed as if the principal Act had not been repealed.