

## **4. Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019**

**Prelims Level: Governance-Policies**

**Mains Level: GS-II Government Policies & Interventions, for development in various sectors and Issues Arising out of the design and Implementation.**

### **Why in News?**

- Lok Sabha passed the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

### **Highlights:**

- The Bill seeks to enhance the punishment for existing offences like illegal manufacture, sale, transfer, etc.; illegal acquiring, possessing or carrying prohibited arms or prohibited ammunition; and illegal manufacture, sale, transfer, conversion, import, export, etc., of firearms.
- It also proposes to define new offences and prescribes punishment for them, such as taking away firearms from police or armed forces, involvement in organized crime syndicate, illicit trafficking including smuggled firearms of foreign make or prohibited arms and prohibited ammunition, use of firearms in rash and negligent manner in celebratory gunfire endangering human life, etc.
- Further, the Bill seeks to enhance the period of arms license from three years to five years and also to issue arms license in its electronic form to prevent forgery.
- The Amendment assumes significance in recent times as law enforcement agencies have indicated a growing nexus between possession of illegal firearms and commission of criminal offences.
- The trans-border dimensions of illegal arms trafficking are causing threat to internal security and to prevent the usage of illicit firearms so trafficked has also become a prime concern.
- To effectively curb crimes related to or committed by using illegal firearms and to provide effective deterrence against violation of law, there is an urgent need to strengthen the existing legislative framework by making appropriate amendments in the Arms Act, 1959.
- The licenses and arms ownership of sportspersons would not be adversely affected because of the Bill.
- The provisions related to ownership of arms by retired and serving personnel of armed forces also remain unaffected by the Amendment.

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### History of the Act:

- The original law was brought by the British after the Revolution of 1857, in order to prevent such a rebellion in the future.
- Mahatma Gandhi also connected the issue of arms ownership with the basic rights of Indians and demanded a repeal of the Indian Arms Act, 1878.
- This demand was also included in the eight-point agenda that Mahatma Gandhi presented to Lord Irwin.

