

Jan Vishwas (Amendment Of Provisions) Bill, 2025 – Polity

Recently, the Union Commerce and Industry Minister introduced the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 to decriminalise minor offences.

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023

It was the first consolidated legislation aimed at systematically decriminalising minor and technical offences across various Central laws. The Act decriminalised 183 provisions spread across 42 Central Acts administered by 19 different Ministries and Departments. It replaced the provisions of imprisonment or harsh fines for trivial offences with monetary penalties, warnings, or administrative actions. The underlying philosophy was to build a trust-based governance model where minor defaults are treated with corrective measures rather than criminal punishment. It served as a foundation reform, signalling the government's intent to simplify regulations, reduce judicial burden, and create a business-friendly environment.

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025

The Bill expands on the 2023 Act, with the primary objective of further enhancing Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and Ease of Living (EoL) in India. It specifically focuses on decriminalising minor, procedural, and technical contraventions, thereby improving regulatory efficiency. In total, the Bill proposes amendments to 355 provisions across 16 Central Acts administered by 10 Ministries/Departments. Out of these, 288 provisions are decriminalised with respect to business regulations, while 67 provisions are rationalised to simplify compliance for citizens. For first-time contraventions in 76 cases, only advisory notes or warnings will be issued instead of punitive measures. It introduces a mechanism of empowering designated officers to impose administrative penalties, thereby reducing dependence on courts and easing the burden on the judiciary. To keep penalties contemporary, it establishes an automatic revision clause, wherein fines and penalties will increase by 10% every three years.

Key Acts Affected

New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 (NDMC Act) – Provisions rationalised to simplify compliance in urban governance.

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 – Focus on warnings and administrative penalties for first-time offences, reducing criminalisation.

Tea Act, 1953 – Filing defaults now attract warnings/penalties instead of imprisonment.

Legal Metrology Act, 2009 – Misuse of weights, mislabelling, or document errors moved from criminal punishment to warning-first and escalating penalties later.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 – Certain minor regulatory lapses moved to administrative domain to avoid litigation burden.

Central Silk Board Act, 1948 – Obstruction of Silk Board officers no longer carries imprisonment; handled with warnings and monetary fines.

Illustrative Examples of Changes

Legal Metrology Act, 2009

Earlier: Use of non-standard weights/mislabelling attracted both fines and imprisonment.

Now: First offence leads to an improvement notice, while repeat offences attract escalating fines (doubling each time). Imprisonment removed.

Central Silk Board Act, 1948

Earlier: Obstructing an officer punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment or fines.

Now: First offence gets only a warning, repeat offences attract penalties between ₹25,000 and ₹1 lakh. Imprisonment removed.

Tea Act, 1953

Earlier: Non-filing of returns or false information could result in fines and imprisonment for repeated contraventions.

Now: First offence gets a warning, repeat offences attract penalties up to ₹1 lakh. Jail provision removed.

Significance of the Bill

Trust-based Governance - Reduces criminalisation of minor defaults, shifting the approach from punitive to corrective.

Improved Business Climate - Directly supports the government's reform agenda of Ease of Doing Business, making India more investment-friendly.

Efficient Justice Delivery - By transferring cases from courts to administrative authorities, it reduces unnecessary litigation and judicial delays.

Regulatory Simplicity - Ensures that minor, procedural lapses do not disrupt business or citizen life, creating a climate of confidence.

Dynamic Penalty Framework - Automatic 10% penalty escalation ensures penalties remain relevant with time, reducing the need for frequent legislative amendments.

Conclusion

The Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 laid the groundwork by decriminalising offences across multiple sectors, and the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2025 builds upon it with broader reforms. Together, they mark a major shift towards "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance", promoting trust, reducing compliance burden, and modernising regulatory frameworks in India. The reform represents India's broader agenda of strengthening its Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living indices, while also ensuring that governance is more responsive, citizen-friendly, and efficient.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/government-introduces-jan-vishwas-amendment-of-provisions-bill-in-lok-sabha-refers-to-select-committee/article69946496.ece>

