# Jan Vishwas Bill 2026 – India's Major Decriminalisation Reform

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## Jan Vishwas Bill Latest News

- Parliament has passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026, expanding India's decriminalisation exercise across multiple laws.

## Jan Vishwas Bill 2026

- The Jan Vishwas Bill, 2026, is a major legislative reform aimed at rationalising criminal provisions across various laws.
- It builds upon the earlier Jan Vishwas Act, 2023, which amended 183 provisions across 42 laws.
- The 2026 Bill significantly expands the scope by:
    - Amending 784 provisions across 79 Central laws.
    - Decriminalising or rationalising 1,018 offences.
- The reform reflects a shift from punitive criminal enforcement to a more balanced regulatory approach.

## Scope and Coverage

- The Bill spans a wide range of sectors affecting both businesses and citizens.
    - **Industry and business laws:** Tea Act, Coir Industry Act, Legal Metrology Act.
    - **Municipal governance:** Delhi Development Act, Municipal Corporation laws, Cantonments Act.
    - **Infrastructure and transport:** Motor Vehicles Act, Coastal Shipping Act, pipeline laws.
    - **Colonial-era laws:** Cattle Trespass Act, Livestock Importation Act, Indian Succession Act.
- This wide coverage indicates a systemic overhaul rather than a sector-specific reform.

## Key Features of the Bill

- **Decriminalisation**
    - A total of 805 offences are decriminalised.
    - Criminal penalties such as imprisonment are replaced with civil penalties or warnings.
    - These offences are removed from the criminal justice system.
- **Omission of Offences**
    - 125 obsolete or redundant offences are removed.
    - Some offences are omitted because they are already covered under general criminal law, such as BNS.
- **Compounding of Offences**
    - 35 offences are made compoundable.
    - This allows settlement through payment, reducing litigation burden.
- **Rationalisation of Punishments**
    - 53 offences see reduced or revised penalties.
    - Disproportionate punishments such as life imprisonment are removed.

## Shift from Criminal to Civil Enforcement

- A key conceptual change is the distinction between fines and penalties.
    - **Fines** are imposed by courts and involve criminal proceedings.
    - **Penalties** are civil in nature and imposed by adjudicating officers.
- This shift aims to:
    - Reduce burden on courts.
    - Enable faster resolution of minor violations.
    - Improve regulatory efficiency.

## Types of Offences Addressed

- **Outdated and Minor Offences**
    - Removal of trivial offences such as minor public nuisances.
    - Elimination of obsolete provisions from colonial-era laws.
- **General Contraventions**
    - Omnibus provisions criminalising any violation are reduced.

    - Example: Under the Motor Vehicles Act, first violations may now attract warnings instead of criminal action.
- **Procedural Defaults**
    - Minor compliance failures such as filing delays are decriminalised.
    - Example: Failure to furnish returns under the Tea Act now attracts civil penalties.
- **Obstruction-Related Offences**
    - Vaguely defined offences like “obstruction of public servants” are rationalised or removed.

## Graded Enforcement Mechanism

- The Bill introduces a progressive enforcement framework.
- Instead of immediate criminal penalties, it provides:
    - Warnings for first-time violations.
    - Improvement notices to correct behaviour.
    - Escalation to penalties or sanctions for repeated violations.
- For instance, some laws now follow a sequence of notice, suspension, and cancellation for repeated non-compliance.
- This ensures proportionality in enforcement.

## Need for the Reform

- India’s regulatory landscape has been characterised by excessive criminalisation.
    - There were **7,305 criminal offences across 370 Central laws**.
    - Around **5,333 offences carried imprisonment provisions**.
    - Over **74% of these laws were regulatory, not core criminal laws**.
- This created:
    - High compliance burden.
    - Fear of criminal prosecution for minor lapses.
    - Inefficiencies in the criminal justice system.

## Significance of the Bill

- The Jan Vishwas Bill represents a structural shift in governance philosophy.
    - Promotes **ease of doing business**.
    - Reduces **overcriminalisation** in regulatory laws.
    - Enhances **trust-based governance**.
    - Improves the **efficiency of legal enforcement mechanisms**.
- It reflects a move from a control-based state to a facilitative regulatory framework.

**Source: TH | IE**

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