

# Legislative Brief

## The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 18, 2025. The Bill has been referred to a Select Committee (Chair: Mr. Tejasvi Surya).

### Highlights of the Bill

- ◆ The Bill proposes amendments to 17 laws. It aims to decriminalise a range of offences across sectors such as municipal governance, motor vehicle regulation, commodity boards, apprenticeships, and export-related activities.
- ◆ The Bill converts several fines into penalties, and designates Adjudicating Officers to levy these penalties.
- ◆ The Bill provides a 10% increase in fines and penalties in the 17 Acts every three years. The Bill adds that if an Act already prescribes a method of revision, the method in the Act will apply.
- ◆ The Bill amends the process for levying of property tax under the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994. The Bill specifies that property tax will consist of a building tax and a vacant land tax.
- ◆ The Bill introduces improvement notices for several offenses under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009. Such notices require rectifying non-compliance within a specified time.

### Key Issues and Analysis

- ◆ Punishments and civil penalties for similar offences vary across laws. While the Jan Vishwas reforms address some inconsistencies, differences may persist or re-emerge. Other countries have devised systems such as standardised scales that apply across laws.
- ◆ In some cases, the Bill decriminalises offences but retains the same monetary amount as the previous fine. In certain other cases, the fine amount has not been revised.
- ◆ Similar offences continue to attract different punishments across Acts. For similar offences, some laws provide for civil penalty, and other laws make them punishable with imprisonment or fine.
- ◆ The Bill retains imprisonment or fines for certain procedural lapses, and in some instances removes imprisonment but keeps fines.
- ◆ Under the Apprentices Act, 1961, the Bill empowers the government to set penalties through Rules. Prescribing penalty through subordinate legislation without any guidance in the Act may be excessive delegation.
- ◆ For the Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950, the Bill replaces imprisonment with penalties but does not specify adjudication or appeal mechanisms.
- ◆ The Bill removes penalty for the offence of unlicensed export under the Coir Industry Act, 1953, but continues to list it as an offence.

**Vaishali Dhariwal**  
vaishali@prsindia.org

**November 26, 2025**

## PART A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

### Context

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 proposes amendments to 17 laws. It seeks to decriminalise a range of minor offences across sectors such as municipal governance, motor vehicle regulation, commodity boards, apprenticeships, and export-related activities, and to ease compliance burdens that may deter economic activity. The Bill converts several offences punishable by fines into civil penalties, enabling administrative adjudication without court prosecution. The Bill also designates adjudicating officers to levy such penalties while removing imprisonment for many procedural and technical violations. The Bill builds on the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, which had amended 42 laws with similar objectives. Together, these reforms seek to rationalise minor offences, simplify regulatory compliance, and promote a more facilitative, trust-based approach to governance.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee examining the 2022 Bill had recommended that the government continue this exercise by reviewing other central laws and introducing similar legislation in future. It further advised that States and Union Territories undertake similar reforms. The Committee also suggested that the government institutionalise this reform process by constituting a standing expert group to periodically identify provisions across various laws that may be decriminalised. Additionally, it suggested periodic review of penalties and harmonising adjudication mechanisms across ministries to ensure uniformity and predictability in enforcement.<sup>1</sup> The 2025 Bill has been referred to a Select Committee of Lok Sabha (Chair: Mr. Tejasvi Surya).

### Key Features

The Bill amends 17 Acts, including the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the Apprentices Act, 1961, the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Act, 1994, and the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.

- **Decriminalising certain offences:** The Bill decriminalises several offences. For example, under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, driving by a person who is mentally or physically unfit to drive, is punishable with a fine. The Bill instead levies a civil penalty.
- **Removal of imprisonment term:** In some cases, the Bill removes the imprisonment term for an offence. For example, under the Electricity Act, 2003, non-compliance with an order or a direction is punishable with imprisonment up to three months, a fine, or both. The Bill removes imprisonment, and imposes only a fine.
- **Removal of offences:** The Bill removes certain offences. For example, under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985, obstructing an officer and failure to produce book is an offence punishable with imprisonment up to six months, fine up to Rs 1,000 or both. The Bill removes these as offences.
- **Revision of fines and penalties:** The Bill increases the fines and penalties for various offences in the specified Acts. The fines and penalties will be increased by 10% of the minimum amount every three years.
- **Removal of penalties for the first instance of an offense:** The Bill amends some Acts to provide for warnings in the first instance of an offence. For example, the Central Silk Board Act, 1948 penalises providing false information with imprisonment, a fine, or both. The Bill amends this to provide for issuance of a warning in case of the first offence, and levy of a monetary penalty for subsequent offences.
- **Improvement notices:** Under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, several offences, such as manufacturing, using, or selling non-standard weights and measures, are punishable with fines. The Bill instead provides that an improvement notice may be issued in case of the first offence. Such notices require rectifying non-compliance within a specified time. Subsequent offences will be punishable with a fine.
- **Adjudication and Appeal:** The central government may appoint one or more adjudicating officers for determining penalties. These officers may summon individuals for evidence and conduct inquiries into violations of the respective Acts. The Bill also specifies the appellate mechanisms for the orders passed by these officers. For instance, in the NDMC Act, 1994, an officer not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner will be appointed as an adjudicating officer. Similarly, an officer one rank above the adjudicating officer will be appointed as an appellate authority.
- **Property Taxation:** The Bill amends the property taxation system in the NDMC Act, 1994. The Bill specifies that property tax will consist of a building tax and a vacant land tax. It establishes a Municipal Valuation Committee to recommend base value for vacant lands and buildings, and manner of determining and revising property tax. The following offences will be punishable with imprisonment term between one month and seven years, and a fine amounting to at least 50% of the tax evaded: (i) wilful default in payment of property tax, (ii) wilful failure in furnishing return of property tax in due time, and (iii) furnishing wrong information in return of assessment. The Bill also removes provisions for levying advertisement tax.

## PART B: KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

### Need for a standardised framework to ensure consistency in penalties

Currently, punishments for comparable offences vary across Acts. Penalties may differ despite involving similar degrees of harm or culpability. Similar offences may attract civil penalty in one law and criminal fine and/or imprisonment in another. Further, monetary value of criminal fines and civil penalties may remain unrevised, diminishing their deterrent effect over time. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 and the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025 address some of these issues in select Acts (42 Acts and 17 Acts, respectively), including increasing fines and penalties by 10% every three years. Such issues may remain unaddressed across other laws. Further, future amendments to laws covered by the Bill may reintroduce these differences.

Other jurisdictions have adopted alternate approaches to address these issues. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the standard scale system aims to ensure consistency in setting fines for petty offences.<sup>2</sup> It establishes five levels of fines, from level 1 to level 5, each corresponding to a specified maximum amount. Instead of prescribing fixed sums for fines in every legislation, offences are linked to a level on the standard scale. This allows all fines to be updated simultaneously through a single amendment. Similarly, in Australia, the penalty unit system provides fines through penalty units, each unit representing a set monetary value.<sup>3</sup> This system enables governments to adjust the value of a penalty unit through regulation, automatically updating all fines across legislation without needing to amend each law.

### Unrevised penalties and fines in some Acts may weaken deterrence

The Bill decriminalises several offences by replacing imprisonment or fine with civil penalties. However, in certain cases, penalty amount under the Bill remains at the same level as the Act. For example, under the NDMC Act, 1994, certain offences punishable with fine ranging between Rs 25 and Rs 100 are replaced by civil penalties at the same level. These fine amounts have remained unchanged since the law's enactment in 1994.

In certain other cases, the Bill has not revised the fines (see Table 1 and Table 2 for examples). Keeping penalties at such levels may weaken the deterrence, as the cost of violation may be negligible compared to the potential gains from non-compliance. While Clause 3 of the Bill provides for an automatic 10% increase in penalties every three years, this increase would start from a low base, limiting its effectiveness.

**Table 1: Examples of offences where the Bill decriminalises, but civil penalties remain unchanged or low (amount in rupees)**

Act	Section	Offences	Criminal fine under the Act	Civil penalty under the Bill
Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957	128 (1) (2)	Failure to give notice of transfer or devolution of land or building	50	50
	319	Failure to comply with requisition to have ground floor doors, etc., so altered as not to open outwards	50	50
NDMC Act, 1994	74 (1) (2)	Failure to give notice of transfer or devolution of land or building	50	50
	122	Failure to disclose liability	100	100

Sources: Respective Acts, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025; PRS.

**Table 2: Examples of offences where the Bill has neither decriminalised nor changed the fine amount**

Act	Section	Offence	Fine under the Act (in rupees)	Amount last revised (year)
NDMC Act, 1994	173	Injury to, or interference with free flow of contents of municipal drain communicating with municipal drain	50	1994
	186 (4)	Non-compliance with requisition to close, remove or divert a pipe or drain	50, 5 daily	1994
Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957	397 (1) (2) (3)	Commission of nuisances	50	1957
	421	Keeping a lodging house, eating house, tea shop, etc., without licence or contrary to licence	100	1957
Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940	34AA	Vexatious search	1,000	1983

Note: Only offences that have not been revised post 2015 are included.

Sources: Respective Acts, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025; PRS.

## Inconsistencies in punishments for similar offences across Acts

The Bill seeks to decriminalise offenses and provide adjudication to improve ease of doing business and ease of living. However, across various laws being amended, similar categories of offences are treated differently. In some cases, imprisonment continues, in others fines remain, and in some penalties or warnings are being introduced. In one instance, existing fine of Rs 200 has been replaced with imprisonment up to six months, fine up to Rs 5,000 or both (see Table 3 and Table 4 below).

**Table 3: Examples of similar offences with different penalties in Acts amended by the Bill**

Offence	Act	Section	Penalty under the Act	Section amended by the Bill?	Penalty under the Bill	
			Fine/Imprisonment		Fine/Imprisonment	Civil penalty
<b>Vexatious search</b>	Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940	34AA	Up to Rs 1,000	No	-	-
	Legal Metrology Act, 2009	42	Imprisonment up to one year, fine up to Rs 10,000 or both	No	-	-
<b>Projection upon streets</b>	Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957	317(1)	Rs 200	Yes	Imprisonment up to six months, a fine up to Rs 5,000, or both	-
	NDMC Act, 1994	211	Rs 200, Rs 50 daily	Yes	-	Rs 200, Rs 50 daily

Sources: Respective Acts, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025; PRS.

**Table 4: Examples of similar offences that have different penalties within the same Act**

Act	Clause/section	Offence	Fine/imprisonment/penalty
<b>Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940</b>	27	Manufacture, sale, distribution of misbranded/adulterated/spurious drugs, or without licence	Imprisonment ranging from one year to life, with fines (depending on category)
	33-I (1) (a)	Manufacture/sale of misbranded, adulterated Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani drugs, or without licence	Imprisonment up to one year and fine $\geq$ Rs 20,000, or three times the value
	33-I (1) (b)	Manufacture/sale of spurious Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani drugs	Imprisonment of one to three years and fine $\geq$ Rs 50,000, or three times the value
<b>Electricity Act, 2003</b>	142	Non-compliance with Commission's directions	Penalty up to Rs one lakh; 6,000 per day for continuing offence
	146	Non-compliance with general orders	Fine between Rs 10,000 and Rs ten lakh

Sources: Respective Acts, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025; PRS.

## Imprisonment and criminal fines retained for minor procedural offences

A key objective of the Bill is to reduce judicial burden and promote trust-based governance by replacing imprisonment provisions with civil penalties. However, in several Acts, imprisonment continues to apply to procedural or regulatory lapses, such as failure to give notice or comply with an administrative order (see Table 5 below). These offences generally involve non-harmful or technical non-compliance rather than acts causing direct injury or fraud. Retaining them as criminal offences appears inconsistent with the Bill's stated aim of improving ease of doing business and reducing unnecessary litigation.

**Table 5: Examples of procedural non-compliances which are retained as criminal offences**

Act	Section	Offence	Penalty
<b>NDMC Act, 1994</b>	238 (1)	Failure to give notice of intention to erect a building	Imprisonment up to six months, fine up to Rs 5,000, or both
<b>Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957</b>	334 (1)	Failure to give notice of intention to make /alterations to a building	Imprisonment up to six months, fine up to Rs 5,000 or both
<b>Electricity Act, 2003</b>	146	Failure to comply with any order/direction under the Act	Fine from Rs 10,000 to Rs 10,00,000
<b>Legal Metrology Act, 2009</b>	41	False returns	Improvement notices for first offence, fine up to Rs 5,000 for second offence, subsequently, double the fine as last offence up to Rs five lakh

Sources: Respective Acts, Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025; PRS.

### Imprisonment removed but criminal fines retained in certain cases

In some laws, the Bill removes imprisonment but retains criminal fines. For example, under the Electricity Act, 2003, non-compliance with orders or directions is currently punishable with imprisonment up to three months, a fine up to one lakh rupees, or both. The Bill replaces this with a fine between Rs 10,000 and Rs 10 lakh. Similarly, under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, contravention of provisions without a specified punishment attracts imprisonment up to six months and a fine up to Rs 10,000. The Bill replaces this with a fine up to Rs 30,000. The 2022 Committee had noted that simply replacing imprisonment with fines does not fully achieve the Bill's objective, as litigation continues.<sup>1</sup> It recommended replacing imprisonment, wherever feasible, with penalties adjudicated by designated executive authorities, rather than retaining such offences under criminal law.<sup>1</sup> The Committee observed that minor procedural defaults unnecessarily burden the judiciary and divert attention from serious offences.<sup>1</sup>

### Absence of alternative sanctions for minor offences

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 introduced community service as an alternative punishment for petty offences such as minor theft, public nuisance, and defamation.<sup>4,5</sup> However, the Bill does not incorporate this approach for comparable offences, for instance, nuisance-related offences under the NDMC Act, 1994 or the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957.

### Prescribing penalty under Rules may be excessive delegation

*Apprentices Act:*  
Sections  
30, 31

*Bill:*  
Schedule,  
Serial  
No. 8

Under the Apprentices Act, 1961, offences include: (i) failure to furnish required information, (ii) engaging apprentices in overtime without approval, and (iii) breaching contracts of apprenticeship. These are punishable with a fine ranging between Rs 500 and Rs 1,000. The Bill decriminalises these offences. It provides for an advisory for the first offence. Subsequent offences will be punishable with a warning, a censure, or a civil penalty. However, the Bill has neither specified the civil penalty amount nor any limits (upper or lower) for the penalty amount. The penalty will be prescribed through subordinate legislation which may amount to excessive delegation of legislative power. The Supreme Court (1960) has held that, in the absence of clear standards, criteria, or principles guiding subordinate legislation, the Executive's discretion may exceed permissible limits.<sup>6</sup> It may be argued that penalties should be prescribed in the Act itself and not left to subordinate legislation.

*Road Transport Corporations Act:*  
Section  
46

*Bill:*  
Schedule,  
Serial  
No. 4

### Road Transport Corporations Act lacks adjudication and appeal mechanisms

The Road Transport Corporations Act, 1950 provides that contravention of Rules under the Act is punishable with a fine of up to Rs 500, and a further fine of Rs 20 for every day of continuing contravention. The Bill replaces this with a civil penalty. However, the Bill does not specify the adjudicating authority responsible for imposing civil penalties, nor does it create an appellate mechanism to challenge such orders. In certain other Acts being amended by the Bill, such as the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, and the Apprentices Act, 1961, the Bill specifies the adjudicating and appellate authorities. The Jan Vishwas Bill, 2022 similarly decriminalised several offences and replaced criminal punishments with civil penalties. The 2022 Committee had observed that the Act must provide a corresponding mechanism for adjudication and appeal to ensure fairness, and transparency.<sup>1</sup>

*Coir Industry Act:*  
Sections  
20, 21

*Bill:*  
Schedule,  
Serial  
No. 6

### No penalty for the offence of unlicensed export under the Coir Industry Act

The Coir Industry Act, 1953 prohibits the export of coir fibre, yarn, and other coir products without a licence issued by the Coir Board. Contravention of this requirement is punishable with a fine of up to Rs 500. The Bill removes the section prescribing the punishment, thereby removing the penalty for exporting such products without a licence, while retaining the action itself as an offence.

1. Report of the Joint Committee on the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022, Lok Sabha, March 20, 2023, [https://sansad.in/getFile/lsscommittee/Joint%20Committee%20on%20the%20Jan%20Vishwas%20\(Amendment%20of%20Provisions\)%20Bill,%202022/17\\_Joint\\_Committee\\_on\\_the\\_Jan\\_Vishwas\\_\(Amendment\\_of\\_Provisions\)\\_Bill\\_2022\\_1.pdf?source=loksabhadocs](https://sansad.in/getFile/lsscommittee/Joint%20Committee%20on%20the%20Jan%20Vishwas%20(Amendment%20of%20Provisions)%20Bill,%202022/17_Joint_Committee_on_the_Jan_Vishwas_(Amendment_of_Provisions)_Bill_2022_1.pdf?source=loksabhadocs).
2. Section 122, The Sentencing Act, 2020, United Kingdom, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/17/group/THIRD/part/7/chapter/1/crossheading/magistrates-court/enacted>.
3. Section 4AA, Crimes Act, 1914, Australia, [https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/ca191482/](https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca191482/).
4. Sections 224, 301, 353, 353 (2), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-04/250884\\_2\\_english\\_01042024.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-04/250884_2_english_01042024.pdf).
5. Sections 4F, 202, 209, 226, 303, 355, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/250883\\_english\\_01042024.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/250883_english_01042024.pdf).
6. Hamdard Dawakhana and Anr. v Union of India and ORs, Supreme Court of India, AIR 1960 SC 554, <https://api.sci.gov.in/jonew/judis/274.pdf>.

DISCLAIMER: This document is being furnished to you for your information. You may choose to reproduce or redistribute this report for non-commercial purposes in part or in full to any other person with due acknowledgement of PRS Legislative Research ("PRS"). The opinions expressed herein are entirely those of the author(s). PRS makes every effort to use reliable and comprehensive information, but PRS does not represent that the contents of the report are accurate or complete. PRS is an independent, not-for-profit group. This document has been prepared without regard to the objectives or opinions of those who may receive it.