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Jan Vishwas Bill 2026 — Export Decriminalisation and India's Ease of Doing Business Push

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Jan Vishwas Bill 2026 — Export Decriminalisation and India's Ease of Doing Business Push

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✍ WHY IN NEWS

Parliament passed an amendment to the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act** in March 2026, decriminalising minor export-related violations in the Textiles, Handlooms, and APEDA (agricultural products) sectors — replacing imprisonment with graded financial penalties.

BACKGROUND — THE JAN VISHWAS REFORM JOURNEY

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023

The original **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023** was landmark legislation passed in August 2023. It:

- Amended **42 central Acts** across sectors including environment, agriculture, food safety, trade, and IT
- Decriminalised **183 offences** — converting them from criminal violations (with imprisonment) to civil/regulatory violations (fines, penalties)
- Was recommended by the **Advisory Committee for Decriminalisation of Provisions of Acts** constituted by the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Commerce in 2019

The guiding principle: **imprisonment should be proportionate to harm**. Minor technical non-compliance by businesses — paperwork delays, procedural violations, data submission gaps — should attract regulatory penalties, not criminal prosecution, which has disproportionate consequences (arrest, bail, criminal record, reputational damage) for small entrepreneurs.

2026 Extension to Export Sectors

The 2026 amendment applies this same logic specifically to export-related statutes — recognising that India’s MSME exporters face significant uncertainty from over-criminalisation of procedural violations.

WHAT HAS BEEN DECRIMINALISED?

Textiles Sector

Offence: Exporting or selling textiles or machinery contrary to prescribed quality/labelling norms under the Textiles (Development and Regulation) Order

ASPECT	BEFORE 2026	AFTER 2026
First offence	Up to 1 year imprisonment	Warning letter
Repeat offence	Imprisonment	Fine up to Rs 25 lakh

Handlooms Sector

Offences: Failure to provide required information to authorities; submission of false or misleading data; refusal to produce records for inspection

ASPECT	BEFORE 2026	AFTER 2026
All offences	Up to 3 months imprisonment	Fines: Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000

APEDA – Agricultural Products

Offences: Exporting scheduled agricultural goods (e.g., rice, spices, fruits, processed food) without required APEDA registration or compliance; obstructing APEDA officials; failure to maintain records

ASPECT	BEFORE 2026	AFTER 2026
All offences	Imprisonment provisions	Fines up to Rs 10,000 or twice goods' value (whichever is higher)

WHAT DOES APEDA DO?

The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** was established under the **APEDA Act, 1985** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**. Its mandate:

- **Export promotion** of 14 scheduled agricultural product groups (fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, cereals, processed foods, etc.)
- **Quality certification** for export standards compliance
- **Financial assistance** to exporters for infrastructure, packaging, and marketing
- **Market intelligence** on global agricultural trade trends

India is among the world's top agricultural exporters — agri-exports crossed \$50 billion in FY24, with rice, spices, buffalo meat, and fresh fruits as top categories.

INDIA'S EXPORT POLICY CONTEXT

Foreign Trade Policy 2023

The **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023**, unveiled in March 2023, targets:

- **\$2 trillion in total exports** (merchandise + services) by 2030
- Reduction of compliance burden through processes like single window systems, e-BOE (electronic Bills of Entry), and paperless trade facilitation

MSME Exporters – The Key Beneficiary

India has approximately **8 lakh registered MSME exporters**. For a small textile or handloom unit:

- Criminal prosecution for a paperwork delay is existential — it triggers bank credit withdrawal, reputational damage, and operational paralysis
- Converting such violations to fines allows the business to continue operations while paying the penalty
- This is structurally similar to **traffic fines vs. driving imprisonment** — proportionality in punishment

Ease of Doing Business Rankings

India moved from **142nd (2014) to 63rd (2020)** in the World Bank's Doing Business Rankings (now discontinued, replaced by Business Ready index). Legal decriminalisation is a major structural contributor to improving regulatory environment scores.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Prelims: Jan Vishwas Act 2023; APEDA Act 1985; APEDA under Ministry of Commerce; FTP 2023 — target \$2 trillion exports by 2030; 183 offences decriminalised in 2023 Act.

Mains GS-3 (Economy): Ease of doing business reforms; MSME ecosystem; export policy; regulatory framework for trade; decriminalisation as governance reform. **Mains GS-2 (Governance):** Criminal law reform; proportionality in punishment; commercial vs. criminal law interface.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

JAN VISHWAS ACT — COMPLETE REFERENCE:

Original Act: Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 — passed August 2023

Scope of 2023 Act: 42 Acts amended; 183 offences decriminalised

2026 amendment: Extends to Textiles, Handlooms, and APEDA export violations

APEDA: Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority

APEDA established: 1985, under APEDA Act, 1985; under Ministry of Commerce and Industry

India's agri-exports (FY24): ~\$50 billion+

India's MSME exporters: ~8 lakh registered

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Foreign Trade Policy 2023: Released March 31, 2023; target \$2 trillion exports by 2030 (merchandise + services)

World Bank Doing Business: Discontinued after 2021 data integrity issues; replaced by Business Ready (B-READY) index

India's rank in World Bank Doing Business: Improved from 142 (2014) to 63 (2020)

Advisory Committee on Decriminalisation: Constituted 2019; recommended Jan Vishwas approach

Compounding: Process of converting criminal liability to financial penalty — now standard practice under Jan Vishwas framework

NACH (National Automated Clearing House): Separate from Jan Vishwas — mentioned for context as NPCI payment infrastructure

Sources: [Ministry of Commerce](#), [APEDA](#), [PIB](#), [GKToday](#)

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