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Jan Vishwas Bill 2026: India's Largest Decriminalisation Exercise

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Jan Vishwas Bill 2026: India's Largest Decriminalisation Exercise


PIB Special Features
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Source: PIB Backgrounder, April 4, 2026

The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026** amends **79 Central Acts administered by 23 Ministries, covering 784 provisions**, by far the largest decriminalisation exercise in Indian legislative history. Over 1,000 offences are decriminalised: criminal fines and jail terms for minor procedural lapses become civil penalties, warnings and graded enforcement.

WHAT THE 784 PROVISIONS DO

CHANGE	COUNT
Fines converted to civil penalty	317
Fines removed entirely	158
Jail + fine converted to civil penalty	113
Jail + fine removed	57
Warning/notice for first-time default	63
Imprisonment removed	29
Jail terms reduced	17
Compounding introduced	17
Offence scope limited	6
Ease-of-living reforms	67

Four declared pillars: **Warning before Punishment, Proportionate Penalties, Faster and Fair Resolution, Dynamic Penalty Framework.**

REFORMS CITIZENS WILL FEEL

- Motor Vehicles Act 1988:** driving licence stays valid 30 days after expiry; accident victims get up to 12 extra months to file claims; ticketless travel becomes a civil penalty up to Rs 500

- **Delhi Police Act 1978:** being outdoors at night without “satisfactory explanation” is no longer a crime (Section 102© abolished; previously up to 3 months jail)
- **Railways Act 1989:** refusing to vacate a reserved berth becomes a civil penalty up to Rs 1,000
- **Clinical Establishments Act 2010:** minor deficiencies attract civil penalty up to Rs 10,000
- **MMDR Act 1957:** up to 2 years jail replaced by monetary penalty up to Rs 50 lakh

THE LINEAGE

The **Jan Vishwas Act 2023** amended 42 Acts and decriminalised 183 provisions. The 2025 Bill (16 Acts, 355 provisions) went to a Parliamentary Select Committee, which held 49 sittings, reported on March 13, 2026, and proposed 62 additional Acts, producing the expanded 2026 Bill.

MAINS ANGLE

The case for: colonial-era statutes criminalised procedure, clogging courts and chilling enterprise; proportionate civil enforcement is both pro-citizen and pro-business. **The caution:** decriminalisation must not become de-regulation for offences with real public harm (safety, environment); adjudicating officers need independence and capacity, or civil penalties become negotiable. **Way forward:** publish penalty-collection and recidivism data, and extend the model to state laws where most citizen friction lives.

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SCALE:

2026 Bill: 79 Acts, 23 Ministries, 784 provisions (717 decriminalisation + 67 ease-of-living)

2023 Act: 42 Acts, 183 provisions; 2025 Bill: 16 Acts, 355 provisions; Select Committee: 49 sittings, reported March 13, 2026

SAMPLE REFORMS:

Driving licence: 30-day grace after expiry; ticketless travel: civil penalty up to Rs 500

Delhi Police Act night-time provision abolished; reserved-berth refusal: Rs 1,000 civil penalty

MMDR Act: jail replaced by penalty up to Rs 50 lakh

Sources: [PIB](#), [PRS Legislative Research](#)



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