

Rajya Sabha passes Jan Vishwas, forest & mining Bills

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Rajya Sabha Wednesday passed three Bills — Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill — even as the Opposition walked out seeking a debate on the Manipur violence issue.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023, that seeks to promote ease of business by decriminalising minor offences through amendments in 183 provisions of 42 Acts.

The Bill, which was cleared by the [Lok Sabha](#) on July 27, was passed by a voice vote in the Upper House.

The Bill converts many fines to penalties, so that court prosecution would not be necessary to administer punishments and removes imprisonment as a punishment for several offences. All offences under the Post Office Act of 1898 are being removed.

Introducing the bill in [Rajya Sabha](#), Minister of Commerce and Industry [Piyush Goyal](#) said it will promote the ease of doing business, and said a working group has been formed to take this forward.

The working group has representatives from industry associations, business chambers, legal professionals, legal experts and representatives from seven ministries as well as from the National Housing Bank (NHB), National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The Bill seeks to amend 183 provisions of 42 Acts administered by 19 ministries with the aim of reducing compliance burden on individuals and businesses.

Among Acts which will be amended through the Bill are the Press and Registration of Books Act, the Boilers Act, the Indian Forest Act, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

The Upper House also passed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, which exempts land within 100 kilometres of India's borders from the purview of conservation laws and permits setting up of zoos, safaris and eco-tourism facilities in forest areas. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on July 26.

The Bill was passed after a short debate and opposition members had walked out over the ethnic violence in Manipur.

Exempted forest land includes land located within 100 kilometres of international borders, Line of Control, and [Line of Actual Control](#), and is proposed to be used for the construction of strategic projects. It also exempts land up to 10 hectares proposed to be used for constructing security-related infrastructure, defence-related projects or paramilitary forces' camps and public utility projects, as specified by the Centre, not exceeding 5 hectares in a left wing extremism-affected area.

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said the Bill exempts land such as forest land along a rail line or a public road which are maintained by the government and provides access to a habitation or a rail and roadside amenity up to a maximum size of 0.10 hectares.

The Rajya Sabha also cleared a Bill that seeks to allow the private sector to mine six out of 12 atomic minerals, including lithium, and deep-seated minerals such as gold and silver, amid the walkout by opposition members.

Union Minister for Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi moved the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 and was passed by the Upper House by voice vote. It was approved by Lok Sabha last month.

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