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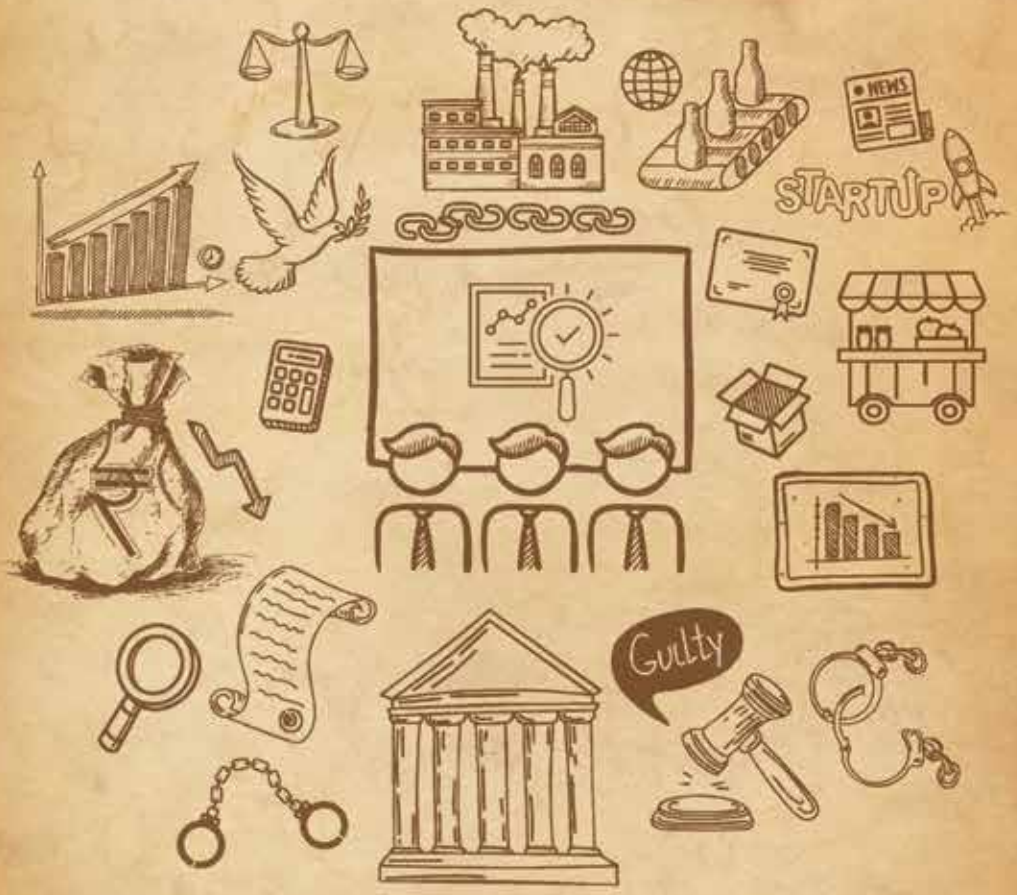
SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

TRUST-BASED GOVERNANCE:

Decriminalization for Development



Trust-Based Governance: Decriminalisation for Development

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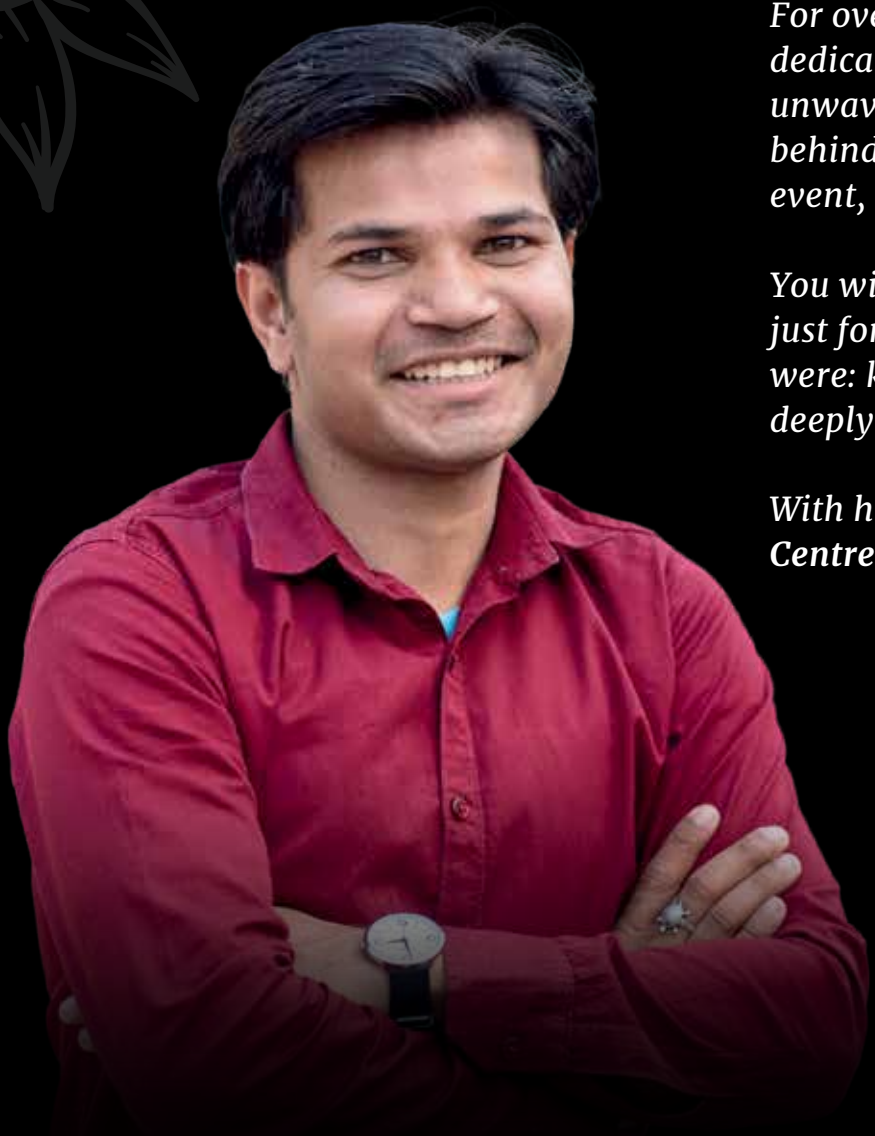

Some souls leave an imprint so deep, their absence echoes in every corner. Govind Kashyap was one of them.

For over 14 years, he served with quiet dedication, gentle strength, and unwavering loyalty – the steady force behind every successful program, event, and milestone that mattered.

You will be remembered always not just for what you did, but for who you were: kind, dependable, humble, and deeply loved.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Centre for Civil Society

Rest In Peace

Govind Kashyap

7 December 1992 - 9 May 2025

Acknowledgement

Ten principles, six states, one central framework, twenty-two scholars, months of reading and research, long evenings of debates, and Google Sheets — that is what it took to bring together *Trust-Based Governance: Decriminalisation for Development.*

We congratulate this year's Researching Reality Scholars — **Gunter Daniel Dass, Tapasya Srivastava, Chetna Anjali, Swikruti Mohanty, Neehra Sharma, Lavanya Mitra, Kaushiki Ishwar, Ishant Sharma, Anasuya Avadhanan, Sakshi Niranjan, Harshali Benny, Shashank Acharya, Chetna Rani, Ankit Shubham, Nikita Bhandari, Jigyasa Chaturvedi, Animesh Sabat, Rimmon Dass, Manan Singh, Shubhangi Yadav, Kritika Sharma, and Aadya Bharti** — for their commitment, perseverance, and ability to meet deadlines while navigating a dense and challenging research theme. Their efforts across Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Assam, and central frameworks form the analytical backbone of this compendium.

Dr. Akanksha Bisoyi, as Volume Editor, brought scholarly rigour and her unique perspective on legal design. **Vagmi Sharma**, as Chief Curator & Research Coordinator, deserves recognition for coordinating research and writing, while **Shaivy Maheshwari** sharpened the clarity of this work as Copy Editor. Design credits go to **Ravi Yadav**, who gave the volume its distinctive form. Special thanks are due to the project support team — **Anusuya Avadhanam, Jigyasa Chaturvedi, Lavanya Mitra, Mereena Abraham, Sumangala Bhargava, Swikruti Mohanty, Vaishali Patro, and Varini Vij** — for ensuring the smooth functioning of each stage.

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We are especially thankful to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) for graciously hosting our team and engaging with our research efforts. We owe a debt of gratitude to policymakers, regulators, entrepreneurs, and civil society representatives who engaged with our scholars and shared their lived experiences. Their perspectives ensured that this compendium remained grounded in reality, not just doctrine.

As always, we thank the **Centre for Civil Society** for institutional mentorship and support. Above all, this publication reflects the collaborative spirit of everyone involved — scholars, editors, mentors, and partners — who shared the belief that India's regulatory state can be reimagined on the foundation of trust.

Nitesh Anand
Senior Fellow, Centre for Civil Society

Date: 22 August 2025

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Introduction

Good governance rests on a simple yet often overlooked premise: citizens are not adversaries of the state, but partners in building prosperity. In India, the legacy of overcriminalisation continues to cast a long shadow. Minor procedural lapses are often treated with the same severity as deliberate wrongdoing, and compliance is driven more by fear of sanction than by commitment to shared rules. This suspicion-driven system burdens enterprise, stifles innovation, and erodes trust between state and citizen. Law, however, when grounded in trust and liberty rather than suspicion and control, can become an instrument for expanding opportunity, protecting rights, and enabling enterprise. This compendium confronts that challenge directly, setting out a vision of governance anchored in proportionality, predictability, and the restoration of agency to those who live and work under its laws.

India's long-running experiment with modern governance is at a pivotal juncture. The passage of the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2023 signaled a decisive move away from reflexive regulation and punitive enforcement towards a framework that prizes proportionality, predictability, and trust between state and citizen. By decriminalising a wide range of minor economic and procedural offences, the Bill sought to restore agency to entrepreneurs and ordinary citizens alike, and to reduce the chilling effect of criminal sanction on legitimate enterprise. *Trust-Based Governance: Decriminalisation for Development* situates itself in this broader reform landscape, drawing from these advances to chart the way forward for redesigning the legal architecture of everyday economic life so that it advances dignity, fosters enterprise, and enhances wellbeing.

The urgency of this compendium becomes clearer when placed against the backdrop of India's economic trajectory. Recent achievements such as sustained macroeconomic expansion and rising nominal GDP underscore the imperative of systemic reform to make those gains inclusive and durable. Recent official estimates record robust growth in 2024-25, with nominal GDP at current prices expanding sharply and real growth outpacing global averages, underscoring both the opportunities ahead and the imperative of systemic reform to make those gains inclusive and durable. Central to that project is legal reform. Laws are not merely tools of punishment; they shape incentives, allocate risk, and define the boundaries of possibility for millions of small businesses and marginal entrepreneurs. A legal ecosystem that criminalises minor, procedural, or technical lapses imposes real economic and social costs: draining time, diverting scarce capital to legal contingencies, and chilling the entrepreneurship that should be the engine of employment and innovation. (Press Information Bureau, 2024) (World Bank, 2020).

Internationally, this shift echoes in the World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business* framework, OECD recommendations on regulatory coherence, and reforms in jurisdictions such as Singapore and New Zealand. **Singapore** exemplifies this approach through its *Online Business Licensing System (OBLS)* (Government of Singapore, n.d.), which allows entrepreneurs to obtain multiple government licenses in a single online transaction, dramatically reducing compliance burdens. New Zealand's regulatory model, shaped by a strong emphasis on *transparency* and *plain-language lawmaking*, enables citizens and businesses to navigate legal requirements without excessive reliance on intermediaries (New Zealand Government, 2017). At the multilateral level, the **OECD's** focus on regulatory coherence (OECD, 2012) has become a benchmark for rules that are clear, proportionate, and citizen-centric - principles that underpin the recommendations of this compendium.

Within India, several policy research institutions have laid the groundwork for this paradigm. The **Observer Research Foundation's (ORF)** *Jailed for Doing Business study* (Observer Research Foundation, 2020) highlighted how excessive criminal penalties for minor, non-malicious infractions stifle entrepreneurship. The **Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy** has conducted detailed reviews on overcriminalization, offering legal rationalisation strategies (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2021). **CUTS International** has advanced the case of regulatory impact assessments (CUTS International, 2019), while the **Centre for Policy Research** has examined broader legal and institutional reforms (Centre for Policy Research, 2018). Government bodies, most notably the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, have contributed through expert committee reports (DPIIT, 2023). Together, these efforts converge on a shared conclusion: modernising India's regulatory state requires embedding principles of proportionality, predictability, and economic efficiency.

Against this backdrop, the Jan Vishwas initiative, now in its second iteration, captures the magnitude of the policy moment. Building on the insights of these studies and recommendations, it represents a deliberate attempt by the

state to reimagine its sanctioning architecture, substituting custodial remedies with proportionate civil penalties, expanding the scope for compounding minor infractions, and removing redundant or technologically obsolete provisions that no longer serve public interest. At the central level, the departmental review underpinning Jan Vishwas 2.0 examined hundreds of statutory provisions across ministries, identifying dozens of priority areas for decriminalisation. This initiative signals an institutional commitment to reduce the penal footprint of regulation and to institutionalise periodic statutory review as a core governance practice. Its stated objectives - rationalising sanctions, improving the predictability of enforcement, and enabling voluntary compliance - are consequential because they shift the presumption away from coercion and towards a calibrated relationship of trust between the regulator and the regulated. (The Economic Times, 2023) (Press Information Bureau, 2024)

Yet Jan Vishwas at the Centre, however significant, is necessarily partial. Much of India's day-to-day regulatory interface, licensing regimes, municipal by-laws, sectoral permissions and many taxation touchpoints remain territorially anchored in state statutes and subordinate rules. This is where the *Researching Reality 2025* residency finds its raison d'être. Designed as an intensive, interdisciplinary capstone exercise, RR2025 deliberately pivots from the narrower notion of "repeal" to the broader, more nuanced project of decriminalisation and structured amendment. The program's work spans six diverse states—Maharashtra, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh—while engaging with central legislative frameworks. Across these jurisdictions, scholars and mentors have interrogated how law, institutions and practice interact, identifying where penalties eclipse proportionality, where procedural complexity imposes undue transaction costs, and where the coexistence of central and state rules generates duplication and uncertainty.

Building on this state and central-level focus, the *Researching Reality 2025* methodology combines applied legal-economic analysis with people-centred legal design. Teams employed multicriteria decision analysis (MCDA) to prioritise reform measures, balancing criteria such as public safety, economic cost, administrative feasibility, and distributive impact, ensuring that recommendations are not only normatively defensible but also operationally pragmatic. Stakeholder mapping and primary interviews are a core part of the process: regulatory officials, municipal practitioners, small-firm owners, and sectoral intermediaries were consulted to uncover implementation frictions, informational asymmetries, and perverse incentive structures that cannot be detected from reading statutes alone. This empirical anchoring is what distinguishes RR2025: proposals arise from an iterative engagement between doctrinal analysis, economic valuation and lived experience, producing reforms that are attuned both to administrative realities and to the needs of those whose livelihoods depend on predictable governance.

The compendium's recommendations rest on a coherent normative framework: the **10 Principles of Trust-Based Governance**, which collectively orient the project toward a *jurisprudence of trust*. These principles, ranging from a *presumption of liberty* and *constitutional restraint to subsidiarity and transparency*, are not rhetorical adornments but functional decision rules. They guide trade-offs, shape drafting choices, and make explicit the policy logic behind decriminalisation. Through this lens, criminal sanctions are an exceptional measure, warranted only for conduct that is malicious, fraudulent, or seriously harmful to a person or property. Where harms are primarily economic and remedial, civil liability and graduated monetary sanctions are more appropriate accountability instruments. The aspiration is not merely to ease the act of doing business, but to craft regulations that enable people to live, work, and innovate freely, within a framework grounded in trust and predictability.

The Jan Vishwas Bill, 2023 signalled a decisive move towards proportional and trust-based regulation. Building on that reform, the recommendations in this compendium propose transparent governance mechanisms such as sunset and review clauses to keep laws responsive, and institutional reforms that shift routine enforcement away from criminal courts toward lighter-touch adjudication. Each suggestion is paired with an assessment of compliance gains, enforcement savings, and reduced transaction costs, aiming to raise voluntary compliance while lowering system-wide legal friction. Calibrated to improve ease of living, support micro and small enterprises, and limit disproportionate state intrusion in low-risk activities, these reforms extend the Jan Vishwas agenda and anchor legal change firmly within the aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

This emphasis on *ease of living* is deliberate. Policy must ultimately be judged by its impact on citizens' lived experiences: lowering compliance costs for the informal grocer, reducing the time a proprietor spends in court, simplifying registration procedures so that entrepreneurship is not the preserve of the legally adept. By foregrounding quality of life alongside macroeconomic targets, this compendium reframes decriminalisation as a social infrastructure - integral to livelihoods, not just growth metrics.

Accordingly, the compendium offers more than recommendations; it provides a practical legislative toolkit for policymakers, civil servants and reform-minded legislators. The research set out implementation modalities and monitoring indicators, making it feasible for authorities to move from principle to practice within manageable legislative cycles. The intent is not to prescribe a one-size-fits-all solution but to offer adaptable templates—sensitive to local institutional capacity—that can be deployed across India's heterogeneous federal landscape.

As India pursues the ambitious task of transforming its economic structure in the coming decades, the legal system must act as an enabler, not an impediment. Judicious decriminalisation reduces the burden on courts, lowers the compliance costs for small actors, and frees regulatory energies to focus on genuine threats to public welfare. The Jan Vishwas initiative at the national level, together with state-level reform efforts such as those documented here, form complementary strands of a broader reform narrative -one that replaces reflexive punishment with calibrated accountability, elevates trust as a policy instrument and recognizes that generous institutional design, not merely punitive strictures, is the foundation of a prosperous, free and resilient nation.

It is in that spirit that this compendium is submitted to policymakers, practitioners and public intellectuals: as an empirically-informed, principle-driven, and legislatively-ready contribution to the remaking of India's regulatory state - so that by 2047, the promise of Viksit Bharat is not measured not only in aggregate economic indicators, but in the everyday freedoms and flourishing of its people.

1. Structure of the Compendium

This volume moves deliberately from principle to policy to practice. It opens with an Introduction that situates the current reform moment, followed by Nitesh Anand's "*Trust-Based Governance: A Principled Blueprint for Regulatory Renewal*" that sets out the normative spine of the work. It further includes Dr. Akanksha Bisoyi's "*Legal Design towards Decriminalisation for Development*" which brings people-centred methods into legal drafting and enforcement. From DPIIT's perspective, the compendium also incorporates the insights presented in "*From Sanctions to Synergy: India's Shift Towards Trust-Based Economic Governance*" authored by Dr. Amit Chandra, Dr. Jivisha Joshi, and Lavanya Mitra. The heart of the compendium is a state-centric case study and **key analytical profiles** for Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Assam, alongside central legislation, translating principles into recommendations grounded in MCDA and stakeholder interviews.

Across the states, each case study offers a distinct lens on legal reform. The Central team's "*Blueprint for Economic Transformation: Fostering Trust and Agility through Decriminalisation*" points to the systemic challenge of aligning state-level reforms with overarching national objectives, ensuring that legal simplification translates into tangible ease for citizens and enterprises. "From Punitive to Progressive: Decriminalising Regulatory Compliance to Advance *Ease of Doing Business* in Maharashtra" offers a nuanced example of balancing regulatory compliance with economic priorities, particularly in high-growth sectors. "*Facilitating Enterprise: Advancing Ease of Doing Business through Regulatory Simplification in Uttar Pradesh*" underscores the tension between ambitious legal reforms and the state's vast administrative spread, where implementation consistency remains a hurdle. "Ease Over Enforcement: Rajasthan's New Rationalisation Governance Model" analyses how sector-specific laws remain untouched by broader reform drives, especially in traditional industries. "*Navigating Regulatory Complexity: Andhra Pradesh's Journey Toward Transparent and Decentralised Industrial Policy*" captures a reform narrative driven by findings that reflect a strong push for digitalisation paired with persistent ground-level gaps in awareness and adoption. Empowering Enterprises: Building a Progressive Business Climate through Decriminalisation in Delhi explores a capital city grappling with unusually complex challenges of a Union Territory with multiple overlapping authorities, where even well-intentioned reforms are slowed by jurisdictional fragmentation. "*Towards Ease of Doing Business: Assam's Legacy of Repeal and Reform*" highlights a state that has already undergone multiple rounds of legislative repeal, yet the narrative uncovers how residual obsolete laws and procedural overlaps still weigh on businesses and citizens.

A *Methodology Note* and *Key Analytical Profiles* follow, providing technical references for each state study and the central-level legislative recommendations. The volume rounds off with the Conclusion, Bibliography, and Scholar Profiles.

Trust-Based Governance: A Principled Blueprint for Regulatory Renewal

Nitesh Anand

Abstract

India's business regulatory architecture remains burdened by over 26,000 criminal provisions in business laws, many of which penalise non-harmful, procedural infractions. While recent initiatives like the *Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023*, and the Union Budget 2025 signal a shift toward decriminalisation, these reforms require a deeper normative and institutional foundation. This article proposes a trust-based governance framework rooted in public choice theory and Indian constitutional values. Drawing on Locke, Bastiat, Hayek, Friedman, Ostrom, and Indian thinkers like Masani and B. R. Shenoy, the paper outlines three core principled themes: liberty as the regulatory default, institutions that build trust, and constitutional restraint on punitive state action. It critically engages with concerns about weak state capacity, behavioural biases, and regulatory capture, arguing that decentralised, transparent, and consent-based regulation can better serve economic and democratic goals. Trust-based governance offers India a path to reimagine its regulatory state, not by reducing rules alone, but by reorienting them around liberty, dignity, and institutional legitimacy.

1. Introduction: From Punitive Compliance to Constitutional Trust

India's regulatory landscape has historically operated on the presumption of guilt and compliance through deterrence. Small traders, micro-enterprises, and informal sector participants face criminal penalties for procedural violations that often involve no direct harm. A 2022 study by the Observer Research Foundation revealed that Indian business laws contain over 26,134 clauses that can lead to imprisonment, many for non-violent, administrative infractions (Chikermane et al. 4).[1]

These include criminal penalties for delayed license renewals, documentation errors, and signage violations. The implications are severe: they create a chilling effect on entrepreneurship, deter formalisation of enterprises, and lead to widespread discretion-driven enforcement. The World Bank's Doing Business reports have regularly flagged such burdens as critical impediments to market access and enterprise growth in India (World Bank 2020).[2]

Yet the Jan Vishwas Act and the government's intent in Budget 2025 to expand decriminalisation reforms suggest a normative shift. This analysis highlights that such reforms must not merely aim to reduce caseloads or improve rankings but must be grounded in a broader vision of trust-based governance. This model, rooted in political economy and Indian constitutionalism, repositions the state as an enabler rather than an enforcer- building institutional trust by default, not fear.

1 Chikermane, Gautam, and Rishi Agrawal. Jailed for Doing Business: The 26,134 Imprisonment Clauses in India's Business Laws. Observer Research Foundation, 2022.

2 World Bank Group. Doing Business 2020. World Bank Publications, 2020.

2. Liberty as the Regulatory Default

2.1. Presumption of Liberty

In his *Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke famously argued that liberty is the natural state of man, and that legitimate governance arises from the consent of the governed and exists solely to secure natural rights- life, liberty, and property (Locke 8). His theory of government, foundational to modern liberal constitutionalism, [3]positions liberty not as a privilege the state granted, but as a pre-political entitlement that precedes it.

Frédéric Bastiat, writing a century later in post-revolutionary France, offered a complementary critique in The Law. He warned that when the state exceeds its core function of protecting individual rights, it engages in what he called "legal plunder", that is, the use of law to achieve ends that would be considered theft if undertaken by private individuals (Bastiat 12).[4] Bastiat feared that a bloated state,[5] acting under the guise of public interest, might institutionalise coercion and undermine voluntary exchange and civil order.

In the Indian context, this tradition resonates with the ideas of B. R. Ambedkar, who described the Indian Constitution as a restraint against "the tyranny of the majority" and sought to limit the discretionary powers of the state so that they do not encroach upon individual liberty (Constituent Assembly Debates).[6] Minoo Masani and B. R. Shenoy, two of the most prominent Indian voices advocating limited government, vigorously opposed the License Raj, not just on economic efficiency grounds, but as an affront to personal freedom and moral agency.[7] Their critiques of state-led development and central planning were rooted in a normative defence of liberty: that state overreach distorts not only markets but the ethical foundations of governance itself.

2.2 Voluntary Exchange and Free Markets

The classical defence of economic liberty is grounded in the idea that voluntary exchange, freely entered into and mutually beneficial, is the most ethical and effective basis for organising production and distribution. Adam Smith articulated this in The Wealth of Nations, observing that when individuals pursue their own interests within the rules of justice, they unintentionally promote the collective good (Smith 23).[8]

Milton Friedman advanced this argument in Capitalism and Freedom, asserting that political and economic freedoms are interdependent: a society that denies individuals the right to choose how to earn a living or enter markets inevitably restricts their civil liberties (Friedman 10).[9] In Friedman's analysis, concentrated economic power in the hands of the state leads to political coercion, not public welfare.

In India, the persistence of laws criminalising minor business activities, such as operating without licenses, exceeding quota limits, or employing more workers than permitted, stands in tension with this vision. Though procedurally framed, these infractions carry punitive costs disproportionate to the harm involved and foster a climate of fear, informalisation, and rent-seeking.

Decriminalisation, then, is not merely a technocratic fix; it is a restoration of the moral architecture of markets. When legal systems assume good faith and protect voluntary exchange rather than criminalising it, they enhance trust, reduce compliance costs, and dignify the act of enterprise.

3 John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, argues that political authority derives from the consent of the governed and is legitimate only to the extent that it secures individuals' natural rights, life, liberty, and property. This work profoundly influenced liberal constitutionalism in both Europe and America. Locke, John. Two Treatises of Government, 1689.

4 In The Law, Bastiat critiques the state's tendency to legalise what would otherwise be considered theft if done by individuals, what he terms "legal plunder." Written in post-revolutionary France, it is a foundational libertarian text opposing coercive redistribution and protectionism. Bastiat, Frédéric, 1850.

5 Frédéric Bastiat argued that a bloated state, one that extends beyond its proper role of protecting life, liberty, and property, risks turning law into a mechanism of coercion. Under the guise of serving the public interest, such a state may institutionalise legal plunder, inhibit voluntary exchange, and destabilise civil society (Bastiat, 10–22).

6 Ambedkar's speeches during the Constituent Assembly Debates reflect his concern that majoritarian politics could erode constitutional guarantees. He insisted on institutional checks to protect liberty from populist impulses and bureaucratic coercion. See: Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. XI.

7 Minoo Masani was a co-founder of the Swatantra Party in 1959, which aimed to protect individual liberties against the growing tide of socialist planning. B. R. Shenoy, famously the sole dissenter in the Second Five-Year Plan, warned against deficit financing and excessive state intervention. See: Masani, Minoo. Freedom and Dignity. Freedom First, 1960; Shenoy, B. R. "Memorandum of Dissent on the Second Five-Year Plan." Planning Commission Archive, 1955.

8 Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations introduced the concept of the "invisible hand," arguing that market economies, when guided by voluntary exchange and the rule of law, align self-interest with public interest. Smith, Adam. The Wealth of Nations. Bantam, 2003.

9 Milton Friedman, in Capitalism and Freedom, warned that economic centralisation enables authoritarianism and reduces civil liberties. His work was foundational to the economic liberalisation movements of the late 20th century. Friedman, Milton. Capitalism and Freedom. University of Chicago Press, 1962.

3. Institutions of Trust

3.1 The Rule of Law and Legal Clarity

In The Constitution of Liberty, Friedrich Hayek outlines the essential role of the rule of law in a free society, defining it as a system where laws are general, predictable, and equally applicable to all (Hayek 112).[10] He argues that unchecked and often invisible discretionary power in the hands of government officials undermines liberty by encouraging arbitrary decisions and fostering a climate of fear and dependence.

India's current regulatory environment exemplifies this problem. Contradictory and overlapping rules, inherited from colonial frameworks, make compliance expensive and opaque. Even well-meaning businesses often unintentionally violate the law, opening them to criminal charges. Trust-based governance calls for not only the decriminalisation of minor infractions but also legal codification and simplification. Laws must be understandable to ordinary citizens and equitably applied.

Without this clarity, the law ceases to function as a tool of justice. Instead, it becomes a weapon of selective enforcement, especially against those lacking resources to navigate the bureaucratic maze.

3.2 Decentralisation and Polycentric Governance

Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons refutes the dominant "tragedy of the commons" narrative, which assumes that only top-down state intervention can prevent overuse of shared resources. Through extensive fieldwork, including studies in Nepal, Kenya, and parts of India, Ostrom demonstrated that local communities, when trusted, often design and enforce more sustainable rules than distant bureaucracies (Ostrom 92).[11] Her idea of polycentric governance allows overlapping authorities to co-exist and respond flexibly to local contexts.

In the Indian federal structure, this insight is especially valuable. Empowering local government institutions, such as panchayats and municipal corporations, to determine which regulatory infractions warrant punitive sanctions versus those better handled through administrative procedures or community norms can reduce regulatory overload and enhance legitimacy.

Critics often warn that decentralisation might worsen local elite capture. In Why Nations Fail, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson argue that weak institutions without proper checks can become extractive, sustaining inequality and rent-seeking (Acemoglu and Robinson 97).[12] However, Ostrom's empirical work provides a rebuttal: decentralised institutions can succeed if supported by transparency, grievance redressal mechanisms, and community monitoring.

Trust-based regulation does not mean abandoning the state's role; it means recalibrating it to prioritise citizen agency and institutional accountability at the point of impact.

4. Constitutional Restraint and Institutional Legitimacy

The Indian Constitution envisions a state constrained by procedural rigour [13] and accountable to its citizens.[14] Its structure is grounded in the belief that governance must operate within the defined limits to uphold liberty and dignity. Constitutional restraint is not synonymous with deregulation; instead, it demands that regulation be proportional, justified, and transparent.

10 Hayek, Friedrich A. The Constitution of Liberty. University of Chicago Press, 1960. Hayek emphasises that liberty is preserved when laws are known, general, and not subject to bureaucratic whim. His work laid the foundation for rule-of-law constitutionalism in liberal democracies.

11 Ostrom, Elinor. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. Cambridge University Press, 1990. Ostrom challenged Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" theory, proving that decentralized collective action can be more effective than centralized governance, particularly in resource management.

12 Acemoglu, Daron, and James A. Robinson. Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty. Crown Business, 2012. The authors highlight how institutional weakness, particularly in decentralised systems without accountability, can reinforce elite control and undermine inclusive development.

13 The Constitution of India establishes procedural rigor through provisions that guarantee fairness, due process, and protections against arbitrary state action, including Articles 14 (equality before the law), 20(3) (protection against self-incrimination), 21 (protection of life and personal liberty), and 22 (safeguards during arrest and detention). The Supreme Court's ruling in Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978) notably expanded the scope of procedural fairness under Article 21.

14 Accountability to citizens is ensured through constitutional provisions protecting freedoms and democratic mechanisms, including Articles 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression), 32 (right to constitutional remedies), 326 (universal adult suffrage), and the Directive Principles of State Policy (arts. 36–51). Additionally, constitutional bodies such as the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Election Commission are established under Articles 148 and 324 to promote transparency and electoral integrity.

The proliferation of criminal penalties for minor regulatory breaches, such as delayed filings, signage violations, or clerical errors, undermines this constitutional spirit. Excessive criminalisation erodes the rule of law by normalising discretion, encouraging rent-seeking, and alienating the citizenry from the state.

B. R. Shenoy's dissent to the Second Five-Year Plan captured this constitutional anxiety. In his critique, Shenoy warned that unchecked state planning would crowd out private initiative, disrupt market incentives, and foster public distrust in institutions. He argued that overregulation was not only economically counterproductive but institutionally corrosive (Shenoy).[15] His fears materialised in the License Raj era, where bureaucratic overreach hindered innovation and invited corruption.

Trust-based governance, as articulated here, does not advocate laissez-faire liberalism. It calls for principled regulation prioritising consent, accountability, and decentralised decision-making. Critics like Dani Rodrik caution that liberalisation, without institutional checks, may lead to regulatory capture by entrenched interests (Rodrik 56).[16] This is a valid concern that supports institutional reform, not criminalisation.

Rodrik's warning strengthens the argument for embedded accountability within regulatory institutions. Trust-based governance mechanisms, such as open consultations, citizen review panels, and periodic regulatory audits, can reduce elite bias and restore legitimacy.

Behavioural economists have raised further objections. Angus Deaton, for instance, points out that bounded rationality, low levels of financial literacy, and local distortions prevent individuals from making optimal economic decisions (Deaton 78).[17] While valid, these critiques argue for "nudge-based" governance and not punitive regimes. Behavioural insights can be used to simplify compliance, guide decision-making, and reduce friction, all while preserving the agency and dignity of the regulated individual.

In sum, trust-based governance aligns with constitutional restraint by reframing regulation as a tool of facilitation, not coercion. Its goal is not to abdicate the state's role but its refinement, toward justice, liberty, and institutional legitimacy.

5. Conclusion

Trust is often dismissed in policy discourse as a soft, cultural virtue, perceived as probable valuable, but challenging to institutionalise. This article argues the opposite- that trust is a constitutional and economic imperative for a democratic, plural society like India.

By embedding principles of liberty as the regulatory default, codifying institutional clarity, and decentralising regulatory discretion, India can transition from a compliance-enforcing to a trust-enabling state. This reorientation strengthens not only economic productivity but also state legitimacy. As seen throughout history, coercive systems may survive, but only voluntary, trust-based systems flourish.

The decriminalisation agenda in the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023 and the Union Budget 2025 is a promising step. But unless it is grounded in constitutional values, classical jurisprudence, and empirical institutional design, it risks being perceived as a technocratic adjustment rather than a systemic reset.

Elinor Ostrom's work reveals that people are capable of self-regulation when institutions signal respect, provide transparency, and enforce fairness (Ostrom 92).[18] Similarly, Frédéric Bastiat and Milton Friedman remind us that the moral foundation of the market lies in consent and mutual benefit, not force. [19]When the law criminalises voluntary, non-harmful behaviour, it ceases to serve justice and instead perpetuates dependence, discretion, and distrust.

15 Shenoy, B. R. "Memorandum of Dissent on the Second Five-Year Plan." Planning Commission Archive, Government of India, 1955. Shenoy argued that centralised economic planning would damage long-term growth prospects and erode trust in state institutions.

16 Rodrik, Dani. One Economics, Many Recipes: Globalization, Institutions, and Economic Growth. Princeton University Press, 2007. Rodrik emphasizes that without effective institutions, liberalisation may entrench elite power, undermining its own objectives.

17 Deaton, Angus. The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality. Princeton University Press, 2013. Deaton explores how poor information, inequality, and systemic biases distort individual decision-making, reinforcing cycles of poverty.

18 Ostrom, Elinor. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. Cambridge University Press, 1990. Ostrom's fieldwork across continents revealed how inclusive and participatory institutional design can outperform top-down enforcement in managing resources and resolving collective dilemmas.

19 Bastiat, Frédéric. The Law. Institute of Economic Affairs, 2007; Friedman, Milton. Capitalism and Freedom. University of Chicago Press, 1962. Both thinkers argue that law and regulation must align with principles of voluntary exchange and individual sovereignty, or risk legitimising coercion under the banner of public interest.

India has the opportunity to demonstrate that democratic regulation need not mean rigid centralism. Trust-based governance is not a retreat from regulation; it is a regulation in maturity. It upholds liberty not as a theoretical aspiration but as a guiding principle for the everyday workings of the state. The question is no longer whether we can trust the citizen, but whether the citizen can trust the state.

Legal Design towards Decriminalisation for Development

Dr. Akanksha Bisoyi

Abstract

This paper examines legal design as a normative, participatory approach to decriminalisation within India's over-criminalised regulatory framework. While recent reforms, such as the Jan Vishwas Act 2023, have reduced penal provisions, these technocratic adjustments alone cannot close the justice gap between institutional legality (Niti) and lived justice (Nyaya). Drawing on design thinking and proactive law, legal design reframes legal reform as a human-centred, iterative process grounded in empathy, co-creation, and accessibility. Using methods such as stakeholder mapping and empathy building, information design and accessibility, prototyping and iterative legislative drafting, and people-centred evaluation, it seeks to transform law into an enabling instrument for trust-based governance, economic development, and inclusive justice. Comparative insights from the UK and Singapore demonstrate the potential of people-centred approaches to enhance proportionality, transparency, and regulatory agility. The paper argues for embedding reflexivity and pluralism to avoid technocratic capture, positioning legal design as both a methodological intervention and a capability-building tool for equitable, sustainable reform.

1. Introduction

Decriminalisation refers to the process by which the legislature removes criminal sanctions against an act, omission, article, or behaviour deemed a crime. Importantly, decriminalisation does not necessarily render such acts legal; rather, it reclassifies them in a manner that eliminates prosecution (Cornell LII Wex, 2022). Penalties, if any, may instead take the form of civil fines or administrative obligations. This process becomes particularly relevant in legal systems burdened with overcriminalization, where minor infractions are met with disproportionately punitive responses. Over time, such overregulation generates what has been described as a justice gap, a disjuncture between legal norms and the lived reality of the law.

The justice gap serves as a functional metaphor to identify the systemic challenges constraining access to justice. Sen's distinction between Niti (institutional justice) and Nyaya (realised justice) offers a conceptual lens through which to understand this phenomenon. While Niti refers to the correctness of institutions and organisations, Nyaya emphasises the practical realisation of justice in everyday life (Sen, 2011). According to Sen, focusing solely on formal legal structures obscures the injustices that persist despite them. Only when we examine how law is experienced and enacted do we begin to recognise and address these injustices.

India's over-criminalised regulatory landscape exemplifies this justice gap. With more than 26000 imprisonment clauses embedded in economic laws across central and state jurisdictions, amounting to over 800 criminal clauses across 1500+ laws (Chikermane & Agrawal, 2022), the law often criminalises routine economic activities. In this context, decriminalisation, particularly concerning the state's *Ease of Doing Business* reforms, demands more than a technocratic removal of punitive provisions. It necessitates a deeper reflection on the lived impact of criminalisation on business entities and citizens. Excessive criminal sanctions create a chilling effect on entrepreneurship, deter innovation, and inhibit investment (Rajagopalan & Tabarrok, 2021). The critical question, then, is whether

decriminalisation can serve not just as a tool for economic development, but also as a vehicle for achieving justice.

A people-centred approach to justice offers a compelling way forward. Such an approach recognises the material realities, diversities, and socio-legal backgrounds of individuals and communities interacting with the justice system. It aligns with the emphasis on a realisation-focused approach to justice by identifying issues of agency, capacity, and security. In international legal scholarship, this approach is called legal design, an artefactual instrument that serves as a conscious and method-led application of design thinking processes to the law (Ducato & Strowel, 2021; Doherty, 2024; Hagan, 2015).

2. What is Legal Design?

Law and Design are intertwined social practices (Brown, 2019; Ducato & Strowel, 2021; Doherty, The Resolution between Legal and Design Cultures: Tension and Resolution, 2021) that complement each other. Designing a law involves determining how it is presented and organised – from a visual design of legal text to the architecture of court buildings, processes, and procedures. Such design decisions impact the accessibility and functionality of law, which are made or defined in the course of legal work, and the processes during which legal solutions are designed and developed, relate to the legal design method at its primary level (Berger-Walliser, Barton, & Haapio, 2017; Rooy, 2024). The process of legislative debate is a prime example of legal design, where legal argumentations used can be regarded as design decisions, in the context of interpreting a law, as deliberate choices and arguments characterise them.

While legal design aimed originally to make legal processes and documents more user-friendly through clarity and accessibility, its focus has broadened to embody the normative principles of respect for human dignity, individual agency, and access to justice (Jackson, Kim, & Sievert, 2020). It can be characterised as a normative practice that advocates for pluralism and participatory legitimacy (Hagan, Legal Design as a Thing: A Theory of Change and a Set of Methods to Craft a Human-Centered Legal System, 2020), reinforcing the 'inner morality of law'. It does not merely improve the delivery of law; it challenges the traditional asymmetries of legal knowledge and authority. Building on the preventive approach and the school of proactive law[20] (Haapio, Barton, & Corrales, 2021), legal design conceptualises law as a tool for shaping future social and economic developments and sustainable relationships between different actors, rather than viewing it exclusively as a repressive instrument for sanctioning and compensating for misconduct. It manifests itself not only in a preventive dimension aimed at preventing unwanted violations of law, but also in an implementing dimension that actively promotes the realisation of desired goals. In the context of legal design, this proactive legal conception transforms legal design from reactive problem management to strategic enabling.

Taking a 'design turn' in legal scholarship connects systematic forethought (logos) with lived human experience (pathos and ethos) (Perry-Kessaris, 2019; Buchanan, 1992). Its iterative, empathy-based approach reveals the complex interdependencies between legal norms, institutional structures, and the needs of those subject to the law. Prototyping and testing phases generate systematic knowledge about latent interests of actors, unintended norm effects, and structural barriers (Head, 2019), inviting different stakeholders to understand, question, shape, and contest the law. A design approach proves particularly valuable when addressing complex legal problems ("wicked problems"), as it reveals new, empirically sound insights into systemic interrelationships and potential solutions through experimental interventions. This advances accountable government where the citizens are enabled, especially those historically marginalised, to become co-creators in the norm-making process.

3. Legal Design for Decriminalisation in India: A Methodological Intervention

One of the wicked problems in the Indian economic regulatory landscape is the overcriminalization feature, often rooted in colonial-era frameworks, which disproportionately impacts small businesses, startups, and the informal sector, that face 69000 compliance requirements, many carrying criminal penalties for minor infractions (Confederation of Indian Industry, 2021). With the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act 2023 coming into effect, 183 provisions across 42 Acts have been decriminalised by replacing imprisonment with fines, building on amendments to the Companies Act 2013, which reduced penalties for procedural lapses (Press Information Bureau, 2023). Legal artefacts, including the art of decriminalisation, often rely on systemic design, which analyses dependencies rather than

20 The school of proactive law was developed primarily in the Nordic countries.

individual needs to identify points for systemic change (Jones & Kijima, 2018). However, this must be complemented by legal design to foster trust-based governance.

The methodological approach of legal design is fundamentally problem-oriented and context-specific, with methods selected pragmatically, guided by the specific requirements and challenges of the respective design task. One key structuring of the design process is the double diamond design process[21], which formalises problem-solving in four phases: discover, define, develop, and deliver, alternating between divergent and convergent thinking. In the context of decriminalization and legal reform, the double diamond design process can be divided into the following iterative steps - problem identification and user research, ideation, prototyping, and testing – which can be tailored to include mapping stakeholders and empathy building, improving information design and accessibility, prototyping and iterative legislative drafting, and metrics for evaluation. Design thinking emphasises generating diverse ideas, prototyping early, and embracing a 'fail early to learn fast' culture, where early testing reduces the cost of the process and accelerates learning.

3.1 Stakeholder Mapping and Empathy Building

In legal design intervention, the mapping of stakeholders is the starting point for identifying problems and understanding user needs. Drawing from qualitative social research and user experience (UX) design (Borthwick & Tomisch, 2021), techniques such as qualitative interviews or ethnographic observations primarily serve to reveal compliance pain points, systemic gaps, and unintended consequences on the people. This is especially vital for actors in the informal sector, whose interactions with state systems often go unrecognised in official reform narratives. Stakeholder mapping brings together MSMEs, regulators, compliance professionals, and civil society to co-shape reform priorities, ensuring legal reform is multi-dimensional rather than singular in perspective. Participation here is not purely consultative but serves as an agenda-setting mechanism (Hagan, Legal Design as a Thing: A Theory of Change and a Set of Methods to Craft a Human-Centered Legal System, 2020), redistributing decision-making power and enhancing transparency, predictability, and participatory legitimacy. Legal design broadens the repertoire of participation, from a reactive user test to proactive co-innovation formats (Lawson, Caringi, Pyles, Jurkowski, & Bozlak, 2015) where stakeholders are integrated into the design process, not merely as feedback providers but as decision-makers, allowing their suggestions to be implemented immediately, moving beyond traditional democratic processes that limit input to ex-post stages. These ex-ante and differentiated forms of participation strengthen democratic legitimacy, incorporate indispensable expertise to future-oriented regulatory issues, and secure normative social engagement concerning practical acceptance of legal reforms (Deffains & Flue, 2020).

3.2 Information Design and Accessibility

Legal design intervention also addresses the inaccessibility of legal instruments, which are, by default, drafted in dense, archaic prose, that alienates the people they govern. Legal design confronts this asymmetry by transforming complex statutes into simplified, visual, and interactive configurations that enhance usability without diluting the legal text interpretation. Mellinkoff notes legal language as 'contagious verbosity' where the language of law thrives on obscure jargon (Mellinkoff, 2004). This culture undermines the spirit of the rule of law, which demands clarity, foreseeability, and equal access. The aim is not to 'dumb down' law but to reconstruct it around actual user needs, improving discoverability and understanding. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the urgency of this approach. In the Netherlands, legal design principles guided the creation of everyday language resources, visual communication tools, target group-appropriate structuring, and iterative feedback mechanisms (Hilborne, 2024) (National Crisis Communication Core Team (NKC) - Government of the Netherlands, 2021). Initiatives like the "Plain Language Brigade," the CoronaMelder app, and multilingual resources demonstrated the value of clarity, and at the same time also revealed challenges such as fragmented implementation between different administrative levels, tensions between data protection and transparency requirements, and barriers to access to digital solutions among older and low-income populations.

3.3 Prototyping and Iteration in Legislative Drafting

Prototyping, here, in the legal design intervention, supports policy prototyping to test the early drafts of legal norms and rules, as well as their rationale in real-world contexts prior to formal adoption of the legislative change. Through parallel drafting and sandbox experiments, proposed legal solutions are evaluated for usability, clarity, proportionality,

21 This design process was developed by the British Design Council between 2004 and 2005.

and unintended consequences, enabling refinement through feedback loops and stress-testing that detect regulatory failures early. In this respect, legal design overlaps with the desiderata and methods of management and behavioural science approaches (Dunoff & Pollack, 2017), focusing on how particular ideas impact reality and how those affected perceive and accept it. However, legal design goes beyond these disciplines by offering structured methodologies for innovation in law that apply to legislative reform and constitutional change (Stone, 2016). By systematically testing and iterating, it reveals how vague definitions or poorly framed exemptions could invite non-compliance or abuse, ensuring laws are robust before they are enacted, and looks back on a long and successful tradition.

Legal design offers a systematic approach to exploring these legal drafting design processes. Its function is twofold: Firstly, it provides an analytical toolkit to evaluate existing drafting practices. This enables systematic learning, for example, by investigating why certain legal drafting practices are more successful than others. Secondly, it facilitates establishing design methods that can be applied prospectively to optimise legal design processes. Particularly in standard setting, it assists the exploration of different goals and solution options, opening up new possibilities for legal interventions. Viewing norms as 'positively marked possibilities' that orient social practice, legal design positions itself as an epistemological tool, by systematically exploring alternative possibilities, it generates the knowledge bases for normative stipulations and thus for legal development.

3.4 Metrics and Evaluation

Legal design intervention, lastly, focuses on evaluating legal reform through both traditional enforcement metrics and people-centred assessment methods. Beyond quantitative enforcement measures, this stage incorporates design audits, legal capability assessment, and procedural justice indicators to evaluate fairness, trust, and accessibility. Such tools ensure that the formal legality of legal reform is matched by its functional legitimacy, confirming laws are not only legitimately enforceable but also just, comprehensible, and actionable. Ex-post methods such as A/B testing are also employed to evaluate and optimise solution designs. This synthesis of legal evaluation and iterative design methods establishes a continuous feedback loop, enabling the law to evolve responsively to user experiences and reinforcing the rule of law in practice.

4. International Development

Jurisdictions like the UK and Singapore have adopted people-centred approaches to regulatory reform. These initiatives aim to streamline laws, enhance compliance, and foster trust in governance systems, particularly in rapidly evolving digital and economic environments.

4.1 United Kingdom

The UK's Better Regulation Framework (BRF), formulated by the Department for Business & Trade, is a structured system embedded with the principles of proportionality, transparency, and user-centricity to guide policymaking across governments. It emphasises the use of alternatives to regulation, mandates earlier and more holistic scrutiny of regulatory proposals, and ensures consistent evaluation of implemented regulations (UK Department for Business and Trade, 2023). The framework fosters transparent decision-making supported by cost-benefit analyses, ensuring that the government regulation is proportionate and applied only when non-regulatory alternatives cannot achieve the desired policy outcomes or would do so at a disproportionate cost. By such an approach, the BRF helps guarantee that new regulations are introduced only when there is clear evidence of their potential to generate net positive outcomes for society. It aims to implement and enforce regulations in a manner that minimises burdens on businesses and consumers, while supporting other priorities such as innovation and competition. The Framework builds on the principles of appraisal and evaluation to ensure that objective analyses are provided to support decision-making, holding the Government accountable for new regulations. When government intervention necessitates a legislative or policy change, departments are expected to analyse and assess the impact of the change on the various affected groups, typically through an impact assessment.

4.2 Singapore

Singapore exemplifies a user-centric and legally adaptive regulatory model for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As highlighted in the OECD's Good Regulatory Practices to Support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Southeast Asia, Singapore stands out as a regional exemplar for its systematic use of regulatory tools, such as administrative burden reduction, stakeholder engagement, e-government, and regulatory impact assessment, to cultivate a stable and transparent regulatory environment for SMEs. Singapore has pursued a 'service delivery' approach from the late 1980s, intensifying after the Asian Financial Crisis, with a strong focus on boosting SME productivity and internationalisation, while more recently targeting priority sectors to ready enterprises for evolving economic challenges (OECD, 2018). This approach still supports initiatives like the Pro-Enterprise Panel (PEP) established in 2000 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which fosters a pro-enterprise environment through a private-public partnership, reviewing rules and regulations to encourage innovation, streamlining regulations to minimize compliance costs for businesses, and encouraging regulatory innovation to support new business models (Singapore Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2025), with over 1100 of 2000+ suggestions implemented across industries. It offers three regulatory sandboxes: the First Mover Framework, the New Idea Scheme, and the Green Economy Regulatory Initiative, which offers a controlled environment for testing innovative ideas and business models. These sandboxes embody a user-centric, non-linear approach, simplifying complex regulations, enhancing transparency, and co-creating iterative solutions with businesses to balance innovation and compliance. Through these initiatives, the PEP facilitates regulatory agility and embeds trust, clarity, and accessibility into the legal landscape, thereby strengthening the rule of law in a fast-evolving economic context.

5. Opportunities and Challenges

Integrating legal design into India's decriminalization agenda presents a generational opportunity to rebuild trust in state-citizen relations and reposition regulation as a shared enterprise rather than a top-down command structure.

Legal Design functions as an artefactual instrument that offers a structured and reflexive approach to guide the development of creative yet systematic solutions, especially in complex situations with multiple possible outcomes. It promotes participatory governance by enabling citizens, entrepreneurs, regulators, and civil society actors to collaboratively shape legal norms. As an inclusive process, legal design redistributes power among various parties and addresses the long-standing legitimacy deficit. Further, it advocates for not merely the removal of penal provisions but urges policymakers to reconsider the fundamental objectives, communication, and procedures of regulation, ensuring that laws are not only simpler to adhere to but also more intuitive and discoverable. Finally, legal design supports legal capability-building. Drawing on Nussbaum's capability approach (Nussbaum, 1997), it promotes inclusive legal empowerment by ensuring that citizens can actually navigate and benefit from the law, thereby addressing the structural inequalities that often exclude marginalised communities from formal legal processes and supports freedom of expression and dissent.

Despite its promise, legal design is not without limitations. One key concern is the risk of instrumentalising design as a technocratic fix. As scholars like Stone and Perry-Kessaris have warned, design is not, by default, neutral (Perry-Kessaris, 2019; Stone, 2016); without critical awareness, design processes can inadvertently reproduce existing power structures, silence dissent, and bypass deeper political reform. Legal design must therefore remain reflexive and politically conscious, resisting the temptation to become a depoliticised managerial toolkit. Its transformative potential lies in its embrace of messiness, reflexivity, and pluralism, values essential to equitable and inclusive legal reform.

Another noteworthy challenge is institutional resistance. Legal systems often operate within legacy frameworks, prioritising deterrence over trust, and bureaucratic inertia can hinder the adoption of design-oriented approaches. Such conservatism can make it difficult to embed participatory and experimental methods without formal law-making processes.

Finally, legal design is inherently dependent on specialised legal expertise (Morgan & Allbon, 2021). The design of legal content, processes, or communication tools requires a sound understanding of legal norms, legal terminology, institutional functioning, and established dogmatics. This expertise not only ensures that the design outputs are legally compliant but also provides a necessary prerequisite for developing effective and legally compliant solutions in legal design.

6. Conclusion

Legal design offers more than a set of specific methods; it provides a holistic approach to addressing design challenges that affect various dimensions. It encompasses guidance on group composition, fosters an empathetic and iterative mindset, and draws on experience in meaningful stakeholder involvement. Through the application of design principles such as empathy, iteration, and co-creation to the legal systems, legal design aims to reshape how laws are created, communicated, and meaningfully experienced by those they govern. It positions the law as a communicative and relational practice rather than a static collection of norms.

From Sanctions to Synergy: India's Shift Towards Trust-Based Economic Governance

Amit Chandra, Jivisha Joshi Gangopadhyay, & Lavanya Mitra

For much of India's history, governance has been shaped by a posture of control and suspicion. Born of colonial maladministration and reinforced during the Licence Raj, these regulatory systems were designed to prevent wrongdoing through dense compliance requirements and the constant threat of criminal sanction. Over time, this deterrence-first approach imposed disproportionate burdens on the business enterprises, driving up costs, fuelling procedural uncertainty, rent seeking behaviour, and eroding trust between the state and the market (Pti, 2024).

Trust-based governance is an idea that seeks to reverse this equation. What begins with the presumption that the majority of actors act in good faith also ascertains that compliance is best achieved through facilitation rather than coercion. While we draw upon this idea, which has informed reforms in other economies, be it Singapore's "light-touch" regulatory model to New Zealand's responsive compliance systems (OECD, 2012; World Bank, 2020), its growing adoption in India reflects a deeper need for national recalibration. In the run-up to Viksit Bharat 2047, policymakers and the government increasingly recognise that the path to becoming a high-income, innovation-led economy lies not in micromanaging enterprise but in enabling it with transparency, accountability, and predictability (Sharma, 2025; Viksit Bharat @ 2047, n.d.).

1. Vision & Governance Shift

The present wave of regulatory reforms seems to emerge from a larger consciousness that the growth ambitions of Viksit Bharat 2047 cannot be met through systems built for an economy of scarcity and suspicion despite India's historical inclination towards economic regulation that leaned heavily on the apparatus of deterrence (Viksit Bharat 2047: Vision for a Developed Nation, n.d.).

The current shift in governance reframes this relationship between the state and enterprise enabling systems to be anchored in proportionality and predictability, such that businesses have clear and consistent rules to operate by. National priorities such as the Make in India, *Ease of Doing Business*, and Startup India initiatives are not merely policy slogans, rather they form practical expressions of a broader transition towards enabling, rather than constraining legitimate enterprise (DPIIT, n.d. -a; Kakodkar, 2025).

The ultimate vision is a regulatory compact where the state assumes good faith as a starting point, and businesses reciprocate with higher voluntary compliance and ethical conduct. One that balances ambition with accountability, and positions India as a credible and facilitative destination for both domestic and global investment.

2. Legislative & Policy Reform

In this shift towards trust-based governance, the minimisation of the role of government has taken a tangible form through a series of policy reforms and legislative amendments. This transformation has required sustained inter-ministerial coordination, focused on two-fold priorities: decriminalising minor offences and streamlining compliance processes (Joint Committee on the Jan Vishwas Bill, n.d.-b).

Some of our major efforts taken to initiate a system-wide decriminalisation process have required targeting laws where imprisonment clauses applied to technical or procedural lapses. For instance, amendments to the Companies Act replaced jail terms for delayed filings with monetary penalties, while also introducing compounding provisions that allow violators to settle matters administratively. Such changes in the voice and motive of the law have reduced the spectre of criminal prosecution for minor errors, enabling entrepreneurs to focus on growth rather than litigation (Complinity, 2024).

Penalty rationalisation frameworks have been a second major pillar, where attempts are made to recalibrate fines to reflect both the seriousness of the offence and the capacity of the enterprise, preventing situations where a small firm faces crippling penalties for an administrative oversight (Revised Implementation Guidebook, n.d.-c).

Beyond statutory amendments, the reform agenda extends to ensure regulatory simplification. Initiatives such as the National Single Window System, consolidating multiple layers of approvals and licences into a single digital platform (DPIIT, n.d.-a), have significantly reduced the time, cost, and complexity of compliance. These measures draw on global best practices, adapting lessons from jurisdictions where clear, accessible, and proportionate regulatory systems have become a source of competitive advantage (World Bank, 2020; OECD, 2012).

While these reforms are far from complete, they represent a decisive pivot from a punitive to a facilitative legal environment, where enforcement is more targeted, and trust becomes an operational principle rather than a rhetorical aspiration.

3. Stakeholder Engagement

A deliberate inclusion of stakeholder voices in policy design has now become a crucial enabler of this reform trajectory. Recognising that compliance burdens are best understood by those navigating them, the government has institutionalised multiple feedback channels, be it public consultations and online portals, to targeted industry roundtables and webinars.

For decades, industry associations such as CII and FICCI, MSME collectives, startup founders, and compliance professionals have consistently flagged concerns over the criminalisation of minor defaults, regulatory opacity, and the risk of harassment under discretionary enforcement powers (Pti, 2024). Incorporating these inputs has become instrumental to prioritising reforms, particularly in identifying provisions that are most frequently misused or that impose disproportionate penalties.

In sectors such as logistics and manufacturing, stakeholder consultations have led to phased reform timelines and sector-specific compliance adjustments. Feedback loops have also been strengthened through grievance redress dashboards, which allow policymakers to track recurring issues and refine regulations accordingly. While trust cannot be legislated into existence overnight, reforms that are co-created have laid a foundation for a more cooperative regulatory culture (Revised Implementation Guidebook, n.d.-c).

4. Institutional Challenges & Trade-offs

India's enforcement and regulatory agencies have, for decades, operated within a command-and-control framework. A central challenge in this front is capacity-building: officers long accustomed to strict enforcement must be trained to distinguish between genuine error and deliberate evasion, and to apply proportionate remedies (Sharma, 2025). This becomes particularly complex in decentralised regulatory ecosystems, where interpretations of the same provision can vary significantly across jurisdictions, and even between individual officers.

Another tension lies in public perception. In a country where high-profile corporate frauds periodically dominate headlines, there is political and social pressure to demonstrate toughness on economic wrongdoing. Overly lenient treatment of violators can invite criticism that trust-based governance is a licence for impunity. Striking the right balance between trust and deterrence will require not only precise legal drafting but also visible, credible enforcement against serious offences.

At this stage, inter-agency coordination becomes critical. Many businesses operate under overlapping oversight, from multiple regulators - company law authorities and sectoral regulators to tax departments and labour inspectors. Without harmonised frameworks, a trust-based approach in one domain can be undermined by punitive practices in

another, eroding confidence in the reform agenda (Pti, 2024).

Equally important is balancing the trade-off between the speed of reform with the rigour of implementation. A rapid overhaul risks creating gaps in oversight; a slow pace risks losing reform momentum. Navigating this balance demands due political will, sustained administrative leadership, and a clearly sequenced set of priorities.

In short, trust-based governance is as much about institutional transformation as it is about legislative change. The laws may lead, but culture will decide whether the shift takes root.

5. Evidence & Outcomes

The shift towards trust-based regulatory reforms is already reshaping the contours of India's economic governance. Though still at an early stage, the move from punitive deterrence to proportional, facilitative oversight is beginning to yield results that are both tangible in practice and symbolic in signaling a new governance ethos.

A clear marker of progress is the significant reduction in criminal prosecutions for minor economic offences, reflecting the shift towards proportional enforcement (Joint Committee on the Jan Vishwas Bill, n.d.-b). Amendments across corporate and sectoral laws have steered thousands of cases away from criminal courts, easing the load on the judiciary while allowing enforcement agencies to focus their energies where misconduct is deliberate and damaging.

Alongside this, a quiet but meaningful behavioural shift is underway. Increasingly, businesses, especially startups and MSMEs, are voluntarily disclosing and correcting inadvertent lapses (Complinity, 2024). The assurance that genuine mistakes will not attract disproportionate penalties or criminal charges encourages openness, in turn strengthening mutual confidence between the state and enterprise.

The reform momentum is also being felt in the time and cost of compliance. What once involved weeks of paperwork and in-person follow-ups can now, in many cases, be completed in days through streamlined digital processes (DPIIT, n.d.-a). For smaller enterprises, this efficiency is more than a convenience; it is a competitive advantage.

Perhaps the most telling sign of progress is attitudinal. Conversations with entrepreneurs increasingly feature descriptions of regulators not as adversaries but as partners in problem-solving. That change in perception, subtle as it may seem, carries deep implications for the long-term health of India's economic ecosystem.

The impact of these gains is beginning to be reflected in international ease-of-doing-business rankings and enterprise sentiment surveys (Viksit Bharat @ 2047, n.d.; World Bank, 2020). Yet, translating early promise into lasting systemic change will require persistence over the next decade, keeping reform focused on trust, clarity, and proportionality.

6. Tech-Enabled Trust

Digital infrastructure has become the quiet backbone of India's shift toward trust-based economic governance. By redesigning the interface between state and enterprise, technology has helped make compliance less about fear of enforcement and more about ease of participation.

Platforms like Startup India, Udyam Registration, and sector-specific grievance redress dashboards are now functioning not just as administrative tools but as trust-building spaces. They enable entrepreneurs to interact with regulators in real time, track the status of filings, and receive prompt resolutions, transforming processes that once felt opaque and unpredictable into experiences marked by transparency and predictability (Kakodkar, 2025; DPIIT, n.d.-a).

Crucially, these systems do more than digitise old forms; they create feedback loops. Data from filings, self-disclosures, and user inputs feed directly into policy refinement, allowing rules to evolve in step with on-ground realities (Revised Implementation Guidebook, n.d.-c). This reduces the need for heavy-handed enforcement by pre-empting non-compliance through clarity, simplicity, and timely support.

The design philosophy is increasingly people-centric. Automated reminders, intuitive dashboards, and integrated payment systems reduce friction and make compliance an almost seamless extension of normal business activity. For many, the act of "being compliant" is shifting from a burdensome chore to a natural part of running a legitimate enterprise.

By embedding trust into the very architecture of governance, digital tools are doing more than speeding up transactions; they are transforming the nature of state-market engagement. The result is a regulatory environment where facilitation takes precedence over suspicion, and where the ease of doing business is as much about mindset as it is about metrics.

7. Future Outlook

India's journey toward a dignity-based regulatory regime is still unfolding, but the path forward is unmistakable. The immediate priority is to deepen and institutionalize the reforms, ensuring they are no longer viewed as isolated policy experiments but as the fundamental framework - the default grammar of governance (Sharma, 2025).

One important step will be the creation of a Model Compliance Code for state governments by offering a common framework of proportional penalties, simplified processes, and digital integration that can be adapted across diverse regulatory landscapes. This could help bridge the gap between the progressive states with modern compliance regimes and those still anchored in older, more punitive approaches.

Decriminalisation is likely to expand into new areas, including labour, environmental, and state-level economic laws, where excessive criminal provisions often deter investment and innovation without necessarily improving outcomes. The challenge will be to preserve accountability for serious violations while removing unnecessary friction for genuine businesses.

To track progress and sustain momentum, a proposed National Ease of Compliance Index could benchmark reforms across ministries and states, fostering transparency and healthy competition in building entrepreneur-friendly environments (Pti, 2024).

Extending the benefits of these changes to India's vast informal and nano-enterprise sector will be critical. For millions of small businesses (Viksit Bharat 2047: Vision, n.d.), trust-based governance is not just about legal relief; it is about being invited into the formal economy with dignity, clarity, and predictability.

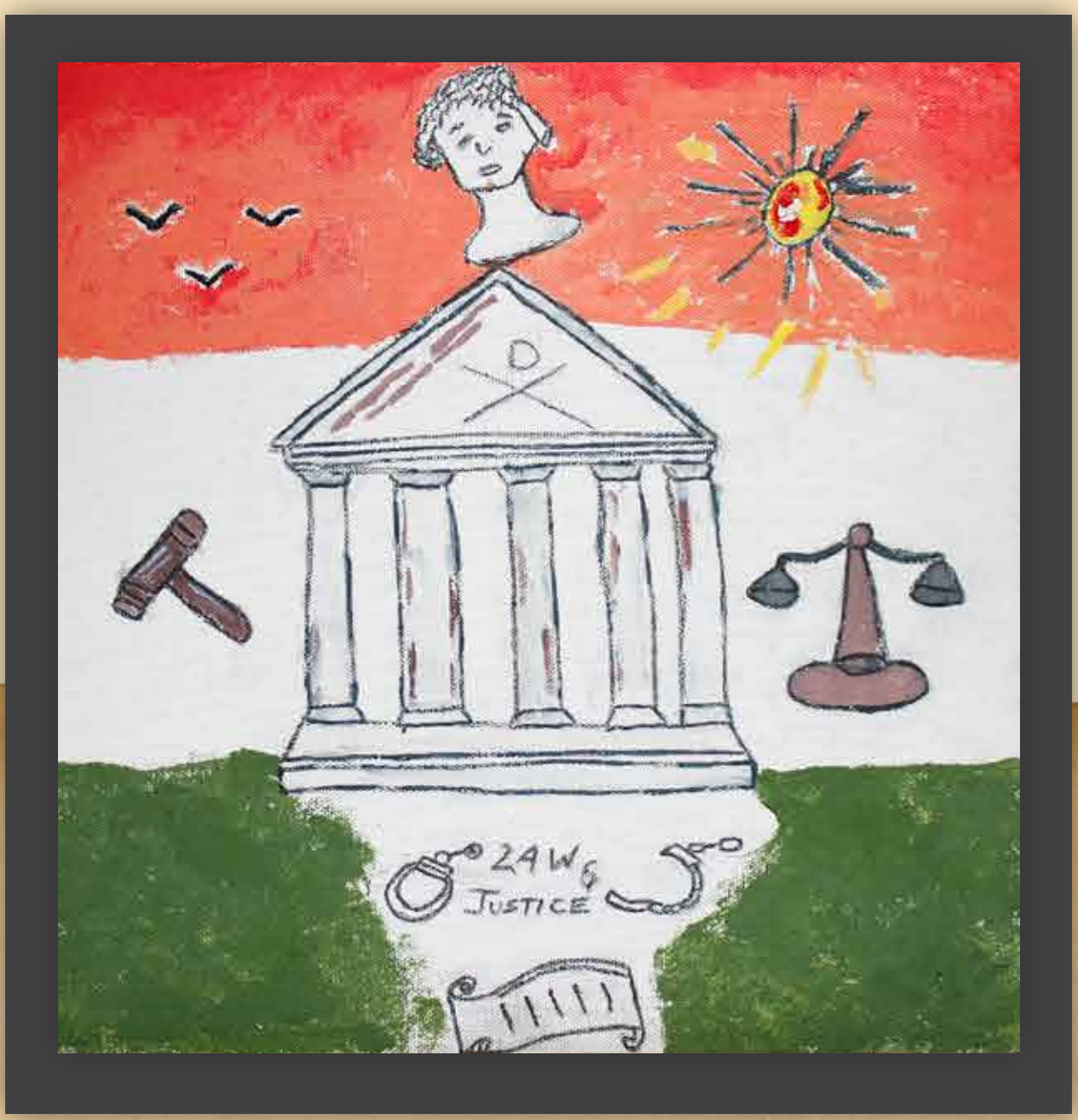
If sustained, this shift could redefine the state's economic role from gatekeeper to growth partner - laying a crucial foundation for the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

8. Conclusion

The journey from Sanctions to Synergy is neither linear nor without friction. Trust-based governance challenges deeply entrenched habits on both sides of the regulatory table. It requires the state to willingly cede certain controls, while calling on businesses, to uphold the transparency and responsibility that justify that trust.

Yet, the stakes could not be higher. In a world where capital, talent, and innovation are mobile, the economies that thrive will be those where the relationship between state and enterprise is not adversarial but collaborative. For India, the embrace of trust-based governance is not a cosmetic reform; it is a strategic choice aligned with the ambitions of Viksit Bharat 2047.

If implemented with care, consistency, and courage, it can reduce compliance burdens, unleash entrepreneurial energy, and project a global image of India as a facilitative, predictable, and fair place to do business. In doing so, it will transform governance from a mechanism of control into a platform for shared national progress, one in which trust is not just a sentiment but a structural strength. At the end *Ease of Doing Business* has to be about Ease of Living improving Quality of Life for all the citizens of India.



“Trust is nurtured when the law is upheld with integrity rather than misused as leverage.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Central team, illustrated by Gunter Daniel Dass, Kritika Sharma and Tapasya Srivastava.

Blueprint for Economic Transformation: Fostering Trust and Agility through Decriminalisation

Gunter Daniel Dass, Kritika Sharma and Tapasya Srivastava

1. Central Overview

India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047, encapsulated in the Viksit Bharat Mission, necessitates a profound transformation of its economic legal architecture (NITI Aayog, Viksit Bharat@2047, 2023). The current system, rooted in presumed guilt and punitive measures, has inadvertently created an environment that impedes innovation and entrepreneurial dynamism. This report weaves a story of a series of legislative reforms designed to transition from a control-oriented paradigm to one of partnership and enablement, providing the essential legal foundation for India's next phase of economic growth. The Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, serves as a compelling model, demonstrating the transformative potential when the architecture of law is intentionally designed to foster business and investment through single-window clearances and a promotional, rather than punitive, approach. Achieving the ambitious vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and growing into a $5 trillion economy requires more than just capital; it demands an operating system of laws that is inherently fair, efficient, and modern. Anchored in the "Jan Vishwas" (Public Trust) philosophy, these reforms translate this vision into a tangible legal reality through four pillars: reinstating the presumption of innocence, decriminalising economic activity, modernising laws for the digital economy, and systematically reducing compliance burdens.

2. Reinstating the Presumption of Innocence

The principle of "innocent until proven guilty," a cornerstone of liberal democracies, is undermined by "reverse onus" clauses in specific Indian economic statutes (Avtar Singh v. State of Punjab 1965 AIR 666). These clauses presume a "culpable mental state" (mens rea), shifting the burden of proof onto the accused, effectively creating a "guilty until proven innocent" standard. This contradicts the government's trust-based governance objectives.

To address this, specific reforms are imperative. Sections 10C and 14 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, which mandates the presumption of mens rea, and which wrongly places the burden of proving the existence of a permit or license on the accused respectively, should be omitted to restore standard criminal jurisprudence, ensuring that the prosecution, which alleges, for instance, the lack of a license, bears the burden of proving that fact. Similarly, Section 9C of the Central Excise Act, 1944, a legacy tax law containing an identical presumption of guilt, should also be omitted to ensure fairness and adherence to fundamental legal principles.

Such clauses foster an adversarial state-entrepreneur relationship, increasing perceived risks for investors, raising yield requirements, and deterring capital inflow. They cultivate fear, discourage innovation, and contribute to the judicial backlog by diverting resources to cases with presumed guilt. Eliminating reverse onus clauses is a critical step toward a trust-based economic architecture, signalling a shift in the state's approach to entrepreneurs.

3. Decriminalising Economic Activity for Growth

The overuse of criminal law for civil and procedural lapses significantly stifles entrepreneurship and burdens the justice system. A prominent example of this dysfunction is Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 188, which criminalises cheque dishonour, contributing to 3.8 - 4.3 million pending cases (Business Standard, Cheque Bounce Cases Account for 8% of All Pending Cases). The average resolution time for these cases often exceeds three and a half years (PRS Legislative Research, Decriminalising India's Legal Framework), defeating the law's original intent as a speedy remedy. The provision, originally designed to enhance cheque credibility, is misused as a debt recovery tool, with lenders demanding post-dated cheques as security and holding the threat of a two-year prison sentence over debtors.

A holistic solution is required here. Section 138 should be decriminalised, replacing it with a 'Civil Liability for Dishonour of Cheque' provision, focusing on recovery without the penalty of imprisonment. A fast-track civil path should be created, allowing the cheque amounts to be considered as civil court decrees under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, as a "summary suit" for expeditious resolution. Furthermore, for claims below a certain threshold, a new Section 142B should mandate Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), with the award being enforceable as a court decree, leveraging technology for scalable, low-cost justice.

For corporate governance, the Companies Act, 2013, should be amended to remove imprisonment for non-compliance with financial statement requirements (Section 129(7)), reserving criminal liability for deliberate fraud under Section 447. In capital markets and taxation, the SEBI Act, 1992, the Customs Act, 1962, and the CGST Act, 2017 should be amended to distinguish procedural lapses from willful fraud, applying civil penalties for minor contraventions and reserving imprisonment for cases with clear evidence of mens rea.

These reforms will reduce judicial backlog, lower contract enforcement costs, and foster a corrective regulatory stance. A NITI Aayog report highlights the economic impact, estimating lost revenue of approximately Rs 15,000 crore for the industry and Rs 8,000 crore for the government, alongside job losses affecting around 75,000 persons, with 16,000 workers directly losing jobs due to the delay in judicial decisions between mid-2018 and mid-2021 (NITI Aayog, Economic Impact of Judicial Delays). Decriminalisation enhances judicial efficiency, supports MSMEs, and encourages entrepreneurial risk-taking. By shifting to civil remedies and mandatory ODR for minor disputes, the reforms make dispute resolution faster and more accessible for MSMEs, who often lack the resources for prolonged litigation. This reduces the "friction" for businesses and transforms the regulatory stance from punitive to corrective, fostering a positive compliance culture where businesses are not constantly threatened by criminal prosecution for minor errors, thereby encouraging greater entrepreneurial activity and risk-taking.

4. Modernising Laws for a Digital-First Economy

India's commercial laws, drafted in a pre-digital era, are ill-suited for a technology-driven economy. The Indian Contract Act, 1872, for instance, struggles to address e-commerce and smart contracts. To address this, a new Section 5A on electronic contract formation should be introduced, complementing the existing Section 10A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, by clarifying the key aspects of digital contracts. This addition will add value to the Indian Contract Act, which was originally based on the traditional postal rule, to accommodate the modern digital communication landscape. Furthermore, the current rigid ban on non-compete clauses (Section 27) is outdated; it should be replaced with an 'updated' reasonableness test, making such clauses enforceable to the extent necessary to protect legitimate interests like trade secrets, aligning with global best practices. The doctrine of frustration (Section 56), which voids a contract when performance becomes impossible, is a relatively rigid approach; a proviso should be added to temporarily suspend obligations during disruptions, such as supply chain crises, thereby preserving contractual relationships.

Moreover, the Sale of Goods Act, 1930, written for tangible property, lacks provisions for digital products. To address this, the definition of "goods" in Section 2 must be amended to include digital products, encompassing software and e-books. Further amendments should aim at codifying e-commerce realities, such as clarifying that a website display constitutes an "invitation to treat" and granting consumers a statutory right to examine goods post-delivery.

Similarly, governing digital platforms also requires an updated framework. The Information Technology Act, 2000, must provide a "stable" digital intermediaries environment. The current regulatory landscape suffers from legal "whiplash," with rules fluctuating between liberal judicial rulings and stringent executive orders. Key judicial

principles should be embedded directly into the parent Act to create long-term stability. To address this, Section 79, which refers to intermediary liability, should be amended to state that an intermediary is only obligated to remove content when they receive actual knowledge through either a court order or a notification from the appropriate government agency. This codifies the Supreme Court's narrow interpretation, providing a clear, predictable standard (Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, AIR 2015 SC 1523). To prevent arbitrary censorship, any government directions to block online content under Section 69A of the said Act must be supported by reasoned, written explanations, with the provision of the right to appeal, and copies of the order must be provided to both the intermediary and content originator.

These reforms reduce legal ambiguity, encourage digital investment, and stabilise the regulatory environment, supporting India's goal of becoming a global technology hub. The ability to enforce non-compete clauses helps protect intellectual property and talent, making India a more attractive destination for research and development and technology companies. The "legal whiplash" and fluctuating rules for digital intermediaries create an unstable regulatory environment, which is a major deterrent for large global technology companies considering significant investments. Codifying judicial principles and ensuring transparent content blocking procedures signals a maturing digital governance framework, improving predictability and attracting foreign direct investment into India's digital economy.

5. Streamlining Compliance and Enhancing Enterprise Agility

A modern economy necessitates an agile legal framework. Property, finance, and taxation procedures, which remain anchored in older statutes, can be streamlined to reduce friction and enhance efficiency. For instance, the Registration Act, 1908, a century-old law, ought to be amended to enable digital, Aadhaar-authenticated document registration, eliminating the need for physical appearances, reducing corruption, and benefiting Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) by saving travel costs and reducing fraud. Introducing a single-window facility for multi-property transactions would further boost efficiency, while the current structure of property registration fees, typically 1% of the property value plus state-specific stamp duty, could be rationalised for greater transparency and predictability.

Similarly, financial procedures under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, can be made fairer and more accountable. Borrower's redemption rights could be extended until a sale certificate is issued, and administrative accountability could be strengthened by deeming an application for assistance as approved if a District Magistrate fails to act within 60 days. Such measures would protect stakeholders while maintaining the integrity of the recovery process.

Tax compliance, a critical aspect for MSMEs and SMEs, also demands recalibration. The Income Tax Act must raise the turnover threshold for mandatory audits from Rs 1 crore to Rs 5 crore, and increase the permissible cash loan limit from Rs 20,000 to Rs 2 lakh, accompanied by reduced penalties. In parallel, amendments to the CGST Act, 2017, should introduce a cure period for first-time registration failures and a lower cap on late filing fees for SMEs.

The amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) 2020 have a particularly debilitating impact on the non-profit sector. The ban on sub-granting foreign funds under Section 7 should be lifted to permit transfers between FCRA-registered organisations, restoring an effective philanthropic model. This prohibition has stopped the flow of resources, impeding smaller grassroots groups' ability to operate and deliver critical services, including COVID relief efforts. Likewise, the rigid 20% cap on administrative expenses under Section 8, reduced from 50%, should be replaced with a flexible, disclosure-based system. The current cap severely limits organisations' ability to cover essential costs like salaries, professional fees, and utility bills, hampering their effectiveness. The consequences are stark: over 10,000 NGOs have been unable to renew their FCRA certification, while another 17,000 have had theirs cancelled, leading to decreased employment in the social sector and disruptions in services to millions of beneficiaries, including the urban poor and marginalised communities (Indian Express, Over 10,000 NGOs Lost FCRA License in 2022)(Observer Research Foundation, The FCRA Amendments and India's Social Sector).

Addressing such systemic bottlenecks requires not only legal reform but also innovative delivery mechanisms. Here, technology becomes a critical equaliser. Expanding the use of digital platforms, such as mandatory Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) for small cheque-bounce cases and e-commerce disputes, offers a scalable response to the cost and delays of traditional litigation. By providing low-cost, accessible, and time-efficient forums for dispute resolution, ODR democratizes access to justice for millions of consumers, entrepreneurs, and MSMEs, ensuring that the rule of law reaches beyond formal courtrooms into everyday economic life.

Heavy regulatory burdens impose significant indirect economic costs on businesses, often outweighing direct compliance expenses, by raising barriers to entry, reducing competition, and stifling entrepreneurial moments. Such effects are visible in sectors as diverse as social development and property markets: excessive constraints on NGOs undermine social inclusion, while outdated property registration processes impede capital flow and investment. Reforming these regimes is therefore not merely a matter of convenience or compliance—it is central to unlocking economic potential, improving trust in transactions, and aligning governance with the "Viksit Bharat" vision.

6. The Economic Imperative: Unlocking India's Potential

The current legal and regulatory framework imposes substantial economic costs, hindering India's full economic potential. The proposed reforms aim to foster a "high-trust, low-friction environment". This will support the vision of the *Ease of Doing Business* initiative by removing criminalisation for minor lapses and simplifying procedures. Entrepreneurship will be significantly boosted as reduced fear of prosecution and lower compliance burdens encourage new ventures and growth. Legal certainty, predictable regulatory environments, and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms will make India a more attractive destination for global and domestic capital. Furthermore, the decriminalisation of cheque bounce cases, coupled with the introduction of ODR, will substantially reduce judicial backlog, freeing up courts for more serious matters and improving overall justice delivery. By embracing these comprehensive reforms, India can construct that essential system, thereby unleashing the full potential of its entrepreneurs and firmly establishing itself as a desirable and competitive destination for global investment.

“The burden of justice.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Maharashtra team, illustrated by Aadya Bharti, Harshali Sreenivas Benny, Neehra Sharma and Nikita Bhandari.

From Punitive to Progressive: Decriminalising Regulatory Compliance to Advance Ease of Doing Business in Maharashtra

Aadya Bharti, Harshali Sreenivas Benny, Neehra Sharma and Nikita Bhandari

1. State Overview

Maharashtra is a cornerstone of India's economy, contributing 13.5% to national GDP and consistently ranking among the highest per capita incomes. It has long maintained its leadership in manufacturing output and export performance, while also emerging as a powerhouse for innovation and entrepreneurship. The state's economy spans well-developed sectors, from real estate and automotive manufacturing to advanced services, supported by policies that actively seek to facilitate market functioning and unlock new growth potential.

A defining feature of Maharashtra's recent success is the dynamism of its start-up ecosystem. The state hosts the highest number of start-ups in India (Press India Bureau, 2022), with the government aiming to create an additional 1.25 lakh entrepreneurs in the coming years through its recent startup policy (The Indian Express, 2025). The Maharashtra State Innovation Society, established in 2017, serves as the principal agency for nurturing this ecosystem, complemented by initiatives such as Start-Up Week and the Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Women's Start-up Scheme. These efforts have fostered grassroots innovation, empowering local communities while enhancing the resilience and adaptability of the state's start-up networks.

The momentum is reflected in the latest Economic Survey (Marpakwar, 2025), which records that Maharashtra has the highest share of start-ups recognised by the Centre's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, with at least 15 in every district. The state is home to 27 of India's 117 unicorns. Targeted policies like the Seed Money Scheme, providing financial support to unemployed individuals to launch their own ventures, have further bolstered this growth, with Maharashtra recording the highest number of beneficiaries in the country (Financial Express, 2025).

Yet, this impressive trajectory is constrained by the persistence of archaic laws and overcriminalised regulatory frameworks. The Observer Research Foundation (Chikermane, 2022) found that Maharashtra has 1,210 imprisonment clauses in its business laws—more than any other state. Such overcriminalisation undermines trust in governance, imposes arbitrary restrictions on economic activity, and erodes the liberty a thriving business environment requires. Reforming these provisions is essential to sustain Maharashtra's growth story, restore predictability in regulation, and create a legal ecosystem that supports enterprise rather than constrains it.

2. Inter-State Comparison

A blend of regional ambition and national policy shapes India's economic landscape. The regulatory framework for *Ease of Doing Business*, alongside sectors like Real Estate, reflects states' distinct approaches, driven by local governance priorities, investor-friendly climates, and urban planning capacities. A closer examination highlights their varied performance. The 2022 Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) Survey evaluates key indicators of operational ease

of enterprising, such as single window systems, utility permits, and reduced compliance burden. Gujarat was the sole "Top Mover" state, leading the rankings. Other high-performing states include Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, and Delhi, each demonstrating unique strengths in fostering a conducive business environment. These rankings exhibit the promotion of the rule of law, ensuring predictable and equitable regulations that build trust among businesses.

India's Real Estate Sector has seen stark inter-state variations, with different regions emerging as hubs of rapid growth. According to the National Housing Bank's RESIDEX index (National Housing Bank, 2025), UP's Ghaziabad and Greater Noida have taken the lead in terms of real estate development in the state, while Panvel and Mira Bhayander have emerged as growth nodes in Maharashtra. Andhra Pradesh's coastal city, Vishakhapatnam (Vizag), is similarly setting the pace in the southern state. A comprehensive analysis by the Indian Institute of Human Settlements in The State of Real Estate Regulation in India (2023) sheds more light on these trends. It shows that Maharashtra recorded the highest contribution of real estate to its Gross State Value Added at a substantial 23% in 2021-2022, followed by UP at 14.8% and Andhra Pradesh at 8.3%. Employment numbers in the field also mirror this divergence: Maharashtra led with 1.1 Lakh people employed in this sector, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 50,000 and Andhra Pradesh with 28,000. Maharashtra's real estate dominance reflects the power of voluntary exchange and free markets, where reduced regulatory barriers enable developers and investors to create mutual value. Further deregulation could amplify this sector's contribution to economic trust and prosperity. Notably, Mumbai continues to maintain its primacy in the premium segment of the market, by ranking third in Knight Frank's India Prime City Index Report 2024. Together, these indicators point to a dynamic but scattered direction of real estate development across India's States.

3. Reasons for Choosing the 20 Laws

The methodology involved carefully curating a repository of 80 laws, based on the premise that these laws contain provisions that overcriminalize economic activity, ultimately hindering entrepreneurial initiative in the country. Establishing an encouraging regulatory environment is essential with a renewed focus on indigenizing the business sector, MSMEs and homegrown unicorns. This list of laws was subjected to further scrutiny, leading to the selection of 40 laws for the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA). From the MCDA results, 20 laws were identified with the highest scores and the most significant potential for decriminalization, forming the basis of this research essay's analysis.

The analysis revealed several laws exhibit significant overcriminalisation, particularly the Bombay Municipal Corporation Act, 1888; the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, 1950; the Maharashtra RERA, 2016; and the Bombay Prohibition Act, 1949. Common barriers to conducting business activities emerged in many of these laws. A notable issue is the overlap of provisions with Central legislation, creating a dual compliance burden for citizens. For instance, Section 403 of the BMC Act criminalises the absence of a specific license issued by the Commissioner, irrespective of compliance with FSSAI guidelines, further complicating matters.

Another significant concern is the lack of tiered penalties. Many laws in Maharashtra impose a uniform penalty for diverse offences, disregarding the varying levels of severity and failing to distinguish between first-time and repeat offenders. This uniformity in penalties has tangible consequences, particularly for micro-entrepreneurs who rely on local business operations for their livelihoods.

An additional issue highlighted during the research was the overapplication of punishment-based penalty provisions, completely disregarding the behavioural and rehabilitative aspects of imposing such penalties. For instance, Section 66 of the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies Act, 1960, imposes a monetary penalty that can be increased to 10,000 rupees. However, based on the findings of this research, it has been recommended that this fine be replaced with skill-based services, which would be more practical and citizen-centric.

Targeted decriminalisation and citizen-focused reforms have the potential to ease regulatory burden and entrepreneurial activity, as well as better align Maharashtra's legal framework with its economic development goals. Establishing a dedicated task force to review and amend overcriminalized provisions, guided by trust-based governance principles, could streamline regulations and foster a citizen-centric business environment. This task force would prioritise transparency and stakeholder input to ensure reforms enhance trust and economic growth.

"The steep ladder of compliance for everyday business"

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Uttar Pradesh team, illustrated by Jigyasa Chaturvedi, Shashank Acharya and Swikruti Mohanty.

Facilitating Enterprise: Advancing Ease of Doing Business through Regulatory Simplification in Uttar Pradesh

Jigyasa Chaturvedi, Shashank Acharya and Swikruti Mohanty

1. State Overview

Uttar Pradesh is renowned for its rich and diverse culture, rooted in its history, religious traditions, and artistic heritage. Beyond its cultural significance, Uttar Pradesh plays a pivotal role in shaping India's demographic, economic, and political landscape. With a population of 241 million, it is India's most populous state (Census of India, 2011), offering a vast labour force and consumer base. Additionally, with a projected GSDP of Rs 30.8 lakh crore in 2025-26 and a 12% growth rate, Uttar Pradesh is a key contributor to the economy (Economic Times, 2024).

In the context of the *Ease of Doing Business* ranking, Uttar Pradesh sprang from the 12th position in 2018 to the 2nd position in 2021, achieving the 'Top Achievers' category (Hindustan Times, 2023). In 2022, UP decriminalized 34 laws, including 568 provisions, and simplified, rationalised, and digitalised 3310 business-related compliances. In addition, Uttar Pradesh launched the Nivesh Mitra portal, designed specifically to facilitate entrepreneurs in getting faster approvals/clearances online from various government departments (Economic Times, 2024). With such a progressive development, the state intends to create a business-friendly regulatory ecosystem. In such a scenario, reforming the legal architecture, particularly those laws that are outdated, excessively disproportionate, or counterproductive to entrepreneurship and compliance, is both necessary and urgent. The following section outlines why a targeted set of 20 laws was chosen for decriminalisation as part of this reform initiative.

2. Selecting Laws for Reform

The 20 laws chosen for review and decriminalisation reflect areas of frequent public interface, legacy overhang, low-risk offences, and high scope for administrative remedy, covering various sectors such as urban development, agriculture, finance and taxation, energy, and education. Of the 20 laws selected for decriminalisation, some are notable for their explicit bearing on urban administration, public services, and the most vulnerable.

For example, the Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act of 1973 governs urban development by managing zoning, building permits, and land-use regulations. However, criminal sanctions for procedural violations, such as constructing a building without the necessary approvals, impose disproportionate burdens on small developers and individual property owners, who often lack the legal expertise, financial resources, and institutional access needed to navigate criminal proceedings. Such penalties can lead to prolonged litigation, project delays, reputational damage, and even loss of livelihood, far exceeding the nature of the underlying infraction. Reforming these provisions to impose civil penalties instead would reduce delays, minimise legal uncertainty, and promote a more development-friendly environment.

The Uttar Pradesh Ground Water (Management and Regulation) Act, 2019, plays an essential role in managing the depletion of aquifers by regulating water usage. Nevertheless, the criminalisation of excessive water withdrawal and non-registration creates risks for farmers, small industries, and housing societies that may unintentionally violate

these provisions. Introducing timely access to compliance resources and replacing criminal penalties with civil fines would better support such stakeholders and encourage responsible water management.

Another relic of the colonial era, the United Provinces Excise Act of 1910, continues to impose harsh imprisonment sentences for relatively minor offences related to liquor possession, sale, or storage. Section 60 of this Act is frequently applied unevenly, disproportionately affecting poor individuals and marginalised communities. To uphold the principle of parity, criminal penalties should be reserved for serious offences involving organised criminal cartels, while minor infractions are dealt with through civil or administrative measures.

The Uttar Pradesh Electric Wire and Transformers (Prevention of Theft) Act, 1976, was originally designed to safeguard public electricity infrastructure from theft and vandalism. Over time, however, its broad definition of "unauthorised use" has led to criminal cases being filed against consumers for technical faults or billing disputes. Adopting civil or administrative remedies instead of criminal proceedings would ensure fairness and reduce unnecessary harassment.

The Uttar Pradesh Apartment (Promotion of Construction, Ownership, and Maintenance) Act, 2010, was enacted to regulate the growing apartment market and protect buyers' rights. However, its criminalisation of delays in registration, reporting, or formation of housing societies has discouraged participation from smaller developers. Transitioning these provisions to civil penalties could stimulate growth in the housing sector by reducing compliance burdens.

Finally, the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1975, seeks to eradicate street begging and visible destitution in public spaces. In practice, it treats the act of soliciting alms or merely being found in a state of destitution in public as a criminal offence, thereby targeting individuals whose poverty leaves them no alternative means of survival. Criminalising a condition of extreme deprivation, without providing adequate rehabilitation, shelter, or livelihood support, is difficult to reconcile with the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The Supreme Court has interpreted Article 21 to include the right to live with dignity and access basic necessities; punitive approaches that penalise homelessness without addressing its causes undermine this constitutional mandate.

These enactments collectively illustrate how over-criminalisation in areas touching public utilities, housing, and socio-economic vulnerability leads to regulatory excess, harassment, and administrative inefficiency. Moving towards decriminalisation and emphasising civil or administrative remedies is essential to creating a more equitable, facilitative, and development-oriented governance framework in Uttar Pradesh.

3. Inter-State Analysis

UP's EoDB reforms, achieving 100 per cent implementation of 352 BRAP (DPIIT's Business Reform Action Plan) 2022 recommendations, wherein 261 action points were directed toward business processes and 91 toward citizen services, focus on digitisation and administrative streamlining (Hindustan Times, 2023). However, these improvements remain centralised, lacking legislative depth compared to other states.

In contrast, Andhra Pradesh has taken a structured and proactive approach. It implemented all 187 BRAP 2019 reforms and executed all 344 recommendations under BRAP 2024 through department-level action plans (The Hindu, 2024). Despite a moderate 88 per cent implementation under BRAP 2022, Maharashtra also featured among the top achievers. It institutionalised legal reforms by reviewing 92 legislations across 26 departments, reducing 987 compliances and decriminalising 138 provisions (MAITRI, 2024). Maharashtra also introduced the District-level Business Reform Action Plan (DIBRAP) initiative much earlier in 2020-21, extending reforms to the district level across sectors, unlike UP, where district-wide implementation remains unclear. Other states like Rajasthan, Assam, and Delhi were placed in mid-performing categories such as "Recognised for Reforms" or "Needs Improvement," reflecting baseline alignment with DPIIT's reform recommendations (Udyog Samagam, 2024).

From a critical standpoint, while Uttar Pradesh's regulatory reforms have enhanced procedural ease, progress remains largely centralised and administrative rather than decentralised and legislative. Central authorities must defer to local solutions when possible, ensuring accountability closer to citizens. Thus, future reforms in Uttar Pradesh must embrace decentralisation, mirroring Maharashtra's subsidiarity-based governance by expanding reforms to the district level. Subsequently, unlike Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and even Assam, Uttar Pradesh has yet to institutionalise a culture of decriminalisation, sectoral legal rationalisation, and most importantly, statutory reforms. While procedural measures under EoDB and Reduce Compliance Burden exercises, such as Nivesh Mitra

(Single Window Clearance System), have been launched, they have not been matched by corresponding statutory reform.

3.1 Single Window Clearance System

The operational limitations of Nivesh Mitra highlight this gap. Nivesh Mitra is a centralised digital platform integrating over 400 services across 33 departments to streamline regulatory approvals. While operationally robust with defined timelines, enforcement remains inconsistent. Despite mandated deadlines, delays persist. As of May 2025, 694 NOC applications across 23 departments were pending beyond the 30-day limit, including key clearances related to power and groundwater (Amar Ujala, 2025). This stems from its reliance on executive and administrative mechanisms, lacking a dedicated statutory framework. Uttar Pradesh does not yet have a standalone Single Window Clearance Act.

In contrast, states like Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have institutionalised their single window mechanisms through statutory backing. The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Single Window Clearance Act, 2002, mandates time-bound clearances, establishes nodal committees at the district level, and provides for deemed approvals. Similarly, Rajasthan has strengthened its clearance regime through the Rajasthan Enterprises Single Window Enabling and Clearance Act, 2011, with Section 12 empowering the nodal agency to override delays and authorise deemed approvals. Through the MAITRI Act, 2023, Maharashtra strengthens enforceability by legally mandating adherence to timelines.

Nivesh Mitra's efficacy is currently limited by the absence of deemed approvals, penalties for delays, and backend automation. To match the regulatory certainty offered by leading states, Uttar Pradesh must enact a dedicated Single Window Clearance Act, modelled on Andhra Pradesh's 2002 legislation. Such a move would ensure predictable clearance timelines, boosting investor trust. Automation of backend functions would reduce manual interventions and minimise bureaucratic discretion, ensuring transparency and constitutional restraint.

Beyond statutory reform, a citizen-centric legal design shall be pursued, wherein private sector or community-led solutions shape a self-regulatory compliance model rooted in the principles of limited government and spontaneous order. Community-driven alternatives to complement Nivesh Mitra, such as industry associations for compliance support or local business councils for grievance redressal, can be established. These mechanisms shift part of the regulatory burden away from the state and foster peer accountability, enhancing responsiveness through voluntary compliance, thus enabling businesses and communities to self-organise the compliance ecosystem.

3.2 Archaic Laws and Reform Gaps

A key finding from the comparative analysis of six states reveals continued reliance on redundant laws and archaic legislative provisions, many dating back to the colonial era. Uttar Pradesh is particularly affected by this legislative stagnation. The state still retains colonial-era statutes such as the Uttar Pradesh Excise Act, 1910, Municipal Corporation Adhiniyam, 1959, Jute Goods (Control) Act, 1950, Cinema (Regulation) Act, 1955, and Warehouse Act, 1958, most of which have seen only piecemeal amendments. They are characterised by overcriminalisation and excessive regulation, which disproportionately curtail economic freedom and violate constitutional restraints.

The obsoleteness of the legal framework is also reflected in the readability assessment under the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), where Uttar Pradesh recorded an average score of 3.42 out of 5. A higher score indicates poorer drafting clarity and readability. UP ranks third-worst among the six states examined, while Maharashtra (3.11), Rajasthan (3.0), and Assam (2.91) performed better, reflecting relatively more explicit legislative texts as per the Flesch Reading Index.

Although Uttar Pradesh enacted the Repealing Act, 2022, the efforts remain modest and symbolic compared to the legal reform and rationalisation efforts undertaken by other states. For instance, once similarly burdened with outdated colonial laws, Assam has taken substantive steps by passing the Assam Repealing Act, 2022, and seven additional repealing bills the same year, scrapping 48 obsolete laws (India Today, 2022). Similarly, Rajasthan followed a consistent legislative cleanup trajectory, most recently through the Rajasthan Laws Repealing Act, 2025, repealing 45 outdated statutes, continuing a legacy of major repeal exercises in 1954, 1962, 1997, 2015, and 2023 (Times of India, 2025).

Uttar Pradesh's limited reform can be attributed to the absence of a consistently functional institutional mechanism for legal auditing and statutory review. Despite establishing the UP State Law Commission in 2010, its efforts have been irregular, lacking continuity and momentum. Maharashtra, in contrast, distinguishes itself through institutionalised

mechanisms for reviewing and revising laws. The Maharashtra State Law Commission (MLC), active since at least 2002, has released a series of 10 reports identifying 191 laws for repeal decades ago, embedding legal audits into its governance architecture (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2021). Despite a formal law commission, Delhi has pursued legal rationalisation by decriminalising minor infractions and enabling compounding of offences through amendments to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (2022) and the Shops and Establishments Rules.

Thus, while states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Assam are undertaking comprehensive legal audits and repealing archaic statutes, reforms in Uttar Pradesh remain slow and fragmented. The retention of over-criminalised colonial-era statutes with limited rationalisation has led to a fragmented and outdated legal framework. To address this, Uttar Pradesh must adopt a comprehensive statutory reform agenda. Drawing from Maharashtra's model, the state should institutionalise a legal review mechanism under an empowered Law Commission that conducts periodic audits and legislative clean-ups, thus fostering a more trust-based and liberty-aligned regulatory environment.

4. Voluntary Norm-Setting by Business Ecosystem

The Uttar Pradesh government's drive to repeal and reform the archaic British-era state laws marks a paradigm shift in the state's regulatory philosophy, from coercive control to facilitative, economic-driven governance, emphasising positive reinforcement. Its role should be restricted to mere facilitators sitting on the fence rather than regulators treating business entities as possible defaulters or violators-in-waiting. Within this framework, the goal should not be only to get rid of the obsolete provisions at the government's end but to develop solutions and structures enabling business communities to self-regulate and function in an incentive-based compliance model. Positive reinforcement, primarily extended by the self-regulatory bodies and in coordination with the government entities, is not merely a regulatory tool but a core governance principle that redefines a state's temperament towards its entrepreneurs.

Historically, criminal penalties in business laws assumed that deterrence by fear was essential to ensure order and compliance. However, in reality, the threat of imprisonment for minor procedural lapses has led to a culture of fear, rent seeking, and discretionary harassment, especially of small enterprises and MSMEs. On the contrary, positive reinforcement will offer an incentive-compatible approach that rewards reasonable faith efforts, encourages and facilitates voluntary compliance, and increases accessibility within the business community to understand and meet regulatory standards. This shift is administratively rational and socially progressive in a state encompassing over 75 districts and an increasingly diversified entrepreneurial foundation.

At the heart of decriminalisation and positive reinforcement is the creation of trust between the state and its principal. Instead of disproportionate penal provisions, the decriminalized regime relies on warning mechanisms, rectification windows, graded sanctions, and civil penalties. This encourages self-reporting, timely disclosures, and corrective behaviour, outcomes that criminal prosecution often stifles. For instance, rather than penalising a first-time procedural lapse in groundwater extraction, the new regime may create a self-regulatory body that provides time-bound notices and allows rectification through a digital portal. This allows seamless operations on the MSMEs' end without the chilling effect of litigation or fear of conviction.

From an economic standpoint, restorative justice reduces procedural complexity associated with disproportionate criminalisation, like police appearances, reputational risks, bail applications, etc. Introducing a single window mechanism like Nivesh Mitra further operationalises this vision by enabling businesses to self-regulate, access approvals, and monitor their compliance status transparently and efficiently. From the government's perspective, positive reinforcement also strengthens institutional capacity. When regulators are unburdened from pursuing minor, low-risk infractions, they can focus on high-risk or willful violations with mala fide intentions that pose real threats to public interest, such as recurring environmental degradation, fraudulent activity, or cartelized crime. There needs to be a risk-based allocation where the high-risk transgressions should be prioritised to improve governance outcomes while preserving due process and fairness.

Promoting voluntary compliance and self-reporting through training sessions and workshops, as well as redressal mechanisms, create a more robust compliance culture than one based on penal threat. This helps the business community view the state as an enabler rather than an enforcer. The legitimacy of compliance increases, and with it, their effectiveness. In essence, positive reinforcement under the decriminalized regime should aim for the dilution of regulatory oversight and focus on enabling businesses to thrive without constant state intervention. It replaces fear with fairness, coercion with collaboration, and punishment with performance; this pivot towards a facilitative legal framework is not merely an administrative reform. It is a commitment to equity and prosperity.

“The scales of justice through the lens of decriminalisation.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Rajasthan team, illustrated by Kaushiki Ishwar, Ishant Sharma and Sakshi Niranjan.

Ease Over Enforcement: Rajasthan's New Rationalisation Governance Model

Ishant Sharma, Kaushiki Ishwar, Sakshi Niranjan

1. State Overview

Rajasthan is a key contributor to India's economy, with a GSDP of ₹14.41 lakh crore (USD 173 billion) for 2023–24 and a per capita income of ₹1.93 lakh (Government of Rajasthan, 2024). The state has more than 80 million residents, over 75% of whom live in rural areas, though rising urbanisation is evident with over 25% of the population now in urban centres (Census of India, 2011). Rajasthan's economic growth is driven by a diversified economy encompassing agriculture, industry, services, and tourism. Social indicators are improving: literacy has increased from 69.7% (2011), poverty has fallen to 14.71% (NITI Aayog, 2023), and the state's Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.629 reflects medium-level progress in health and education (UNDP, 2024).

Agriculture remains the backbone of Rajasthan's economy, employing over 62% of the labour force in crops such as wheat, mustard, bajra, and pulses (Government of Rajasthan, 2024). Industrial sectors include textiles, cement, chemicals, ceramics, car parts, and handicrafts. Rajasthan is India's leading mineral producer, with significant outputs of gypsum, marble, sandstone, zinc, and silver (RIICO, 2024). Tourism contributes substantially, with popular destinations including Jaipur, Udaipur, Jaisalmer, and Pushkar. Additionally, Rajasthan leads in renewable energy, boasting the largest solar potential in India (142 GW) and significant wind and solar developments (MNRE, 2023).

The state hosts over 30 industrial areas and 360 RIICO-developed zones, with key commercial hubs in Jaipur, Bhiwadi, Alwar, Kota, Bhilwara, and Jodhpur. It was recognized as a top performer in DPIIT's State Startup Ranking 2022 (DPIIT, 2022) and features SEZs such as Mahindra World City Jaipur. Investment promotion is strengthened through platforms like RajSSO and the Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme (RIPS), which provide interdepartmental coordination, real-time tracking, and standardized applications (RajSSO, 2024). The One Stop Shop (OSS) initiative, launched in 2022, ensures district- and state-level assistance for faster investment clearances, aligning with the *Ease of Doing Business* reforms under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) (Government of Rajasthan, 2024).

Rajasthan ranks fourth nationally in DPIIT's *Ease of Doing Business* index, thanks to its fully operational Single Window Clearance System, structured inspection timelines under the Central Inspection System, and alignment of its BRAP with national standards. Legal reforms such as the Rajasthan MSME Facilitation of Establishment and Operation Act, the Rajasthan Right to Hearing Act, and the Guaranteed Delivery of Public Services Act have significantly reduced procedural bottlenecks for businesses.

Entrepreneurs can start businesses digitally via the RajNivesh platform or using an SSO ID. The Single Window Clearance System enables tracking and acquiring all required approvals, NOCs, and licenses. RIICO facilitates land allocation and essential services like electricity and logistics. Most approvals are issued within 30–45 working days, with some departments offering auto- or presumed approvals. Digital platforms for tax, labour, and environmental filings simplify ongoing compliance, supplemented by grievance redressal mechanisms and integration with national platforms such as DPIIT, GSTN, and MCA.

2. Regulatory Philosophy and Decriminalisation Efforts

Rajasthan's regulatory approach is guided by a philosophy that citizens and businesses are collaborators in growth, not default criminals (NITI Aayog, 2025). The state emphasises trust-based compliance, aligning with global discussions on regulatory fairness and national strategies promoting ease of doing business (PRS India, 2025). Proper penalties, active enforcement, and fair procedures distinguish between intentional violations and failures due to lack of knowledge, skill, or inadequate digital infrastructure (EaseOfDoingBusiness.org, 2024).

For example, a food seller operating in an unregulated market or a street vendor with an expired license is not automatically a willful offender. Decriminalisation enables responses like warnings, compliance periods, or monetary penalties without burdening the criminal justice system, which is costly, time-consuming, and disproportionately affects the poor (PHDCCI, 2025).

Over recent years, Rajasthan has rebalanced its regulatory framework toward facilitative compliance, moving away from punitive approaches (Rising Rajasthan Portal, 2025; PIB, 2020). The state could further strengthen this approach by establishing district-level business councils or nodal agencies to monitor local business needs, improve RajSSO services, support the Single Window System, and supervise penalty processes (Government of Rajasthan, 2024; RajSSO, 2024).

These reforms complement central initiatives to simplify contract enforcement, inspection processes, and remove outdated restrictions under laws such as the Rajasthan Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1958. Decriminalisation fosters a business-friendly environment while challenging entrenched bureaucratic mindsets by promoting self-compliance and nurturing entrepreneurship.

3. Problem identification & Mapping of the Acts

Despite Rajasthan's efforts to foster trust-based governance and ease of doing business, overcriminalisation remains a persistent challenge across multiple regulatory frameworks. A key concern is the disproportionate penalties embedded in specific laws. For instance, under the Rajasthan Excise Act of 1956, minor infractions, such as delayed license renewals or failing to display rate cards, can trigger jail sentences or license termination. These sanctions rarely differentiate between intentional misconduct and minor, often inadvertent, mistakes, creating a culture of fear rather than compliance.

Overlapping jurisdictions and ambiguously drafted provisions exacerbate this issue. Laws such as the Rajasthan Noise Control Act of 1963, with its vague references to "public nuisance," allow for arbitrary enforcement, particularly during protests, festivals, or public gatherings. Marginalised communities and non-mainstream cultural expressions are disproportionately affected, undermining fundamental rights like freedom of expression and dissent. While the Act identifies broad prohibitions, it fails to link enforcement patterns to systematically silencing cultural and civic voices. Addressing these gaps requires precise legislative language, such as quantifiable decibel thresholds, context-sensitive exemptions for protests or cultural events, and graded penalties, alongside establishing community-led monitoring committees at the municipal level. Such measures democratise enforcement, affirm citizens as partners in governance, and reframe public expression as a constitutional right rather than a punishable nuisance.

Procedural complexity and the absence of sunset clauses further compound overcriminalisation. Many laws lack automatic review mechanisms, leading to redundant enforcement and legal confusion. For example, the Agricultural Produce Markets Act of 1961 entrenches a licence raj, creating artificial monopolies and limiting farmer agency. Similarly, the Cinemas (Regulation) Act of 1952 imposes exorbitant fines for administrative lapses related to safety or scheduling, effectively serving as an outdated censorship tool. These provisions deter small-scale theatre groups, independent filmmakers, and other innovators, producing a chilling effect on creative expression and entrepreneurial experimentation.

These challenges reveal that while Rajasthan has made strides in regulatory reform and trust-based governance, the legacy of punitive, ambiguous, and overly complex legislation continues to hinder economic and social participation. Reforming these frameworks is essential not only to ease business operations but also to protect democratic freedoms, stimulate innovation, and ensure that enforcement is proportional, transparent, and context-sensitive.

4. Why were these laws chosen for review?

The selection of legislation for review was guided by a rigorous Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), incorporating factors such as enforcement frequency, severity of penalties, procedural complexity, clarity of drafting, and the presence or absence of review mechanisms. Through this methodical process, twenty statutes spanning diverse sectors were identified as priorities for reform.

These laws were chosen not only because of their legal and administrative implications but also for their broader social and economic impact. Regulatory changes in these areas can enhance productivity and innovation across agriculture, trade, tourism, cultural production, and urban development—sectors that form the backbone of Rajasthan's economy. At the same time, many of these statutes disproportionately affect underprivileged communities, including street vendors, local fishermen, tribal artisans, and informal workers. These groups play a critical role in sustaining the state's economy and social cohesion.

By targeting laws that impose heavy penalties, create procedural bottlenecks, or are ambiguously drafted, the review aims to reduce undue burdens on citizens and businesses alike. The goal is to ensure that compliance is encouraged through support and guidance rather than fear, fostering a regulatory environment that is fair, inclusive, and conducive to both economic growth and social equity.

5. Developments observed through positive reinforcement

In exploring pathways toward a more trust-oriented regulatory framework, it was observed that many of Rajasthan's statutes, though originally designed to ensure compliance and fairness, now function as instruments of disproportionate control, often destabilising small businesses, marginalised communities, and creative sectors. For instance, the Rajasthan Excise Act of 1956 imposes severe penalties for minor administrative oversights, such as selling spirits at an unapproved rate or failing to display scanned rate cards. By introducing digitised compliance tools co-developed with local chambers of commerce, like automated SMS alerts for licence renewal, and distinguishing between inadvertent errors and fraudulent behaviour, the Act could foster a regulatory relationship grounded in trust rather than suspicion. This shift promises reduced harassment, smoother business operations, and strengthened procedural fairness.

Similarly, the Rajasthan Agricultural Produce Markets Act of 1961, which was intended to ensure fair trade, has increasingly entrenched intermediaries by requiring all traders to obtain market yard licences. This requirement effectively excludes Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and small farmers from direct participation. A transition to e-licensing for collectives, converting fines into compliance costs, and creating exemptions for platforms that enable cooperative selling could reposition farmers as legitimate market actors. Such reforms will likely promote inclusivity, equitable trade, and greater economic participation.

Environmental and cultural regulations also illustrate the potential of trust-based reforms. The Rajasthan Noise Control Act of 1963, with its vague references to "public nuisance," has frequently been used to target protests, working-class neighbourhoods, and marginalised cultural expressions. Implementing graded warnings, real-time decibel monitoring, and public dashboards for community oversight can transform enforcement into an evidence-based and rights-protective system. Likewise, the Rajasthan Fisheries Act of 1953, by criminalising customary fishing practices, disproportionately penalises indigenous and seasonal fishers. Mobile licensing booths, self-declaration permits, and community-led grievance mechanisms can reposition these fishers as stewards of ecosystems rather than violators of law.

In the cultural and educational spheres, the Rajasthan Cinemas (Regulation) Act of 1952 and the Rajasthan School Fee Regulation Act of 2016 demonstrate similar misalignments. Heavy penalties for administrative lapses or opaque fee disclosures discourage small theatre operators and create rigid compliance pressures for schools. Digitised compliance dashboards, fast-track registration, "Trust-Certified" statuses, and district-level parent-teacher councils can transform oversight from punitive to collaborative, promoting accessibility, transparency, and mutual accountability.

Economic development and infrastructure laws reveal comparable lessons. The Rajasthan Special Investment Region Act of 2016, with its top-down project clearance mechanisms, often bypasses local stakeholders, generating resistance and delays. Mandatory pre-clearance social audits, ESG-aligned fast-track procedures, and civil society

representation on district investment boards can cultivate trust between communities, investors, and regulators. Similarly, the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988 and the MSME Facilitation Act of 2019 can benefit from graded enforcement, behavioural nudges, self-certification, and community engagement, thereby embedding compliance through support rather than fear.

Even legal procedural frameworks, such as the Rajasthan Stamp Act of 1998, illustrate the value of positive reinforcement. Blanket penalties for valuation discrepancies or delayed filings intimidate ordinary citizens and complicate formal legal processes. Slab-based incentives, advisory centres in local languages, and co-managed facilitation initiatives can recast the state as a facilitator of legal trust rather than a bureaucratic hurdle, enhancing participation, reducing litigation, and improving equitable access to justice.

Across these diverse statutes, the common thread is clear: regulatory frameworks can achieve compliance more effectively through trust, transparency, and collaboration rather than fear and punishment. By embedding positive reinforcement, Rajasthan's legal ecosystem can shift from a punitive paradigm to one that empowers citizens, supports innovation, and fosters a more inclusive and equitable social order.

6. Inter-state comparative evaluation

A comparative look at colonial-era legacies and their modern adaptations reveals instructive contrasts between Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in excise governance. The Rajasthan Excise Act of 1956 and the United Provinces Excise Act of 1910 stem from a tradition of comprehensive government control over the manufacture, distribution, and sale of intoxicating substances. Yet, their trajectories of modernisation and procedural justice differ markedly.

Rajasthan's framework has undergone significant updates, most notably the 2025 amendments, which introduced revised excise duty structures, model-shop plans, and digital licensing systems. These innovations enhance transparency, facilitate corporate compliance, and streamline administrative processes. However, despite these technical advancements, the Act continues to vest broad discretionary powers in authorities, which, if unchecked, could allow for arbitrary enforcement. In contrast, the Uttar Pradesh Excise Act maintains a more static administrative design but excels in procedural safeguards, particularly in matters of license cancellation. Its emphasis on due process ensures that enforcement actions are grounded in evidence rather than suspicion, offering stronger protections against capricious administrative overreach.

The juxtaposition of these two approaches illuminates the trade-offs inherent in excise regulation. Rajasthan demonstrates the value of digital infrastructure and operational efficiency, while Uttar Pradesh exemplifies the importance of procedural fairness and rights-based oversight. Together, they suggest a blueprint for a robust reform model: one that leverages Rajasthan's technological and administrative innovations while embedding Uttar Pradesh's commitment to due process. Such a synthesis could create a state excise regime that is simultaneously efficient, transparent, and accountable, aligning regulatory enforcement with principles of fairness, predictability, and citizen trust.

7. The way forward

Rajasthan's decriminalisation program demonstrates a transition from punitive control to incentive-driven compliance by reinventing regulatory governance through the prism of positive reinforcement. The state may create confidence in a variety of areas, including excise and agriculture, education, and urban planning, by recognising excellent behaviour through digital badges, fast-track approvals, compliance-linked cash incentives, and public recognition systems. Whether encouraging safe driving under the Motor Vehicles Act, providing "Gold Vendor" status in excise, or promoting fee-transparent schools, these measures aim to empower stakeholders, decrease administrative burden, and increase voluntary compliance. Such methods humanise governance and strengthen citizen-state trust, ensuring that laws serve as weapons of facilitation rather than terror.

“Ease of doing business for vendors and the role of decriminalisation in enabling their livelihoods.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Andhra Pradesh team, illustrated by Anasuya Amsa Avadhanam, Chetna Anjali and Chetna Rani.

Navigating Regulatory Complexity: Andhra Pradesh's Journey Toward Transparent and Decentralised Industrial Policy

Anasuya Amsa Avadhanam, Chetna Anjali and Chetna Rani

1. State Overview

Andhra Pradesh is India's eighth-largest state economy, with a Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of ₹14,49,501 crore and a year-on-year growth rate of 10.44% for FY25. Strong sectoral foundations, including agro-processing, multimodal logistics, diversified manufacturing, and a robust IT services sector, support the state's economic growth.

According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) 2024 Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP), Andhra Pradesh achieved the top national ranking for *Ease of Doing Business*. This success is primarily due to an integrated single-window clearance system, which has reduced typical industrial approval timelines from several weeks to a few hours. For instance, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) received formal industrial approval in only 90 minutes. This example highlights an administrative philosophy where regulatory discretion leans towards granting permission, significantly minimizing bureaucratic delays.

Digital infrastructure serves as the foundation for this transformation. An integrated e-governance system allows for real-time approvals, audit trails, and self-certification, reducing the need for discretionary interventions. Between October 2019 and December 2024, these protocols resulted in ₹9,397 crore in inbound foreign direct investment (FDI). However, despite these advancements, reforms tend to be overly centralised. For example, Maharashtra's district-level Business Reform Action Plan (DIBRAP) allows for more local customisation and responsiveness, whereas Andhra Pradesh's model is more limited.

Additionally, lingering colonial-era statutes create regulatory friction and constitutional ambiguities. One example is the Andhra Pradesh Land Encroachment Act of 1905, which permits mass evictions without the procedural safeguards required post-independence. The Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act of 1986 grants the executive broadly defined detention powers, which can disrupt legitimate business operations due to excessive regulatory control. While merchandise exports reached ₹1,59,242 crore in FY25, the lack of coherent statutory alignment with principles of limited government poses a long-term threat to competitiveness and predictability.

2. Selected Laws for Reform

The comprehensive review of 80 state statutes across domains such as administrative governance, trade facilitation, agriculture, and industrial regulation employed a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework to identify laws most needing reform. The assessment prioritised proportionality of sanctions, protection of individual rights, harm minimisation, and constitutional safeguards, while also considering misuse frequency, redundancy, and distributive impact. This analytical process distilled the list to 20 statutory instruments that showed the highest potential for decriminalisation, reflecting a shift from punitive enforcement to restorative, participatory, and rights-oriented governance.

The selected laws span a diverse regulatory spectrum, from land and housing disputes (e.g., Andhra Pradesh Land Encroachment Act, 1905; Andhra Pradesh Public Premises Eviction Act, 1968) to commercial and industrial oversight (e.g., Andhra Pradesh Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017; Andhra Pradesh Industrial Corridor Development Act). Common issues identified include over-criminalising technical or administrative lapses, vague or outdated legal provisions enabling executive overreach, and punitive responses to socio-economic vulnerabilities such as poverty, indebtedness, and small-scale non-compliance. Proposed reforms emphasise replacing criminal sanctions with civil adjudication, mandating judicial oversight, decentralising enforcement to district-level bodies, and embedding mediation, rehabilitation, and technical support into the regulatory process.

These reforms aim to rebalance state-citizen relations by enhancing procedural fairness, predictability, and inclusivity in governance. By removing the threat of criminal prosecution for minor infractions, laws could foster voluntary compliance, strengthen trust in public institutions, and align with international human rights and labour standards. Sector-specific outcomes include more secure land tenure, fairer labour dispute resolution, improved market access for farmers, and greater resilience in local economies. The proposed transition to restorative, cooperative, and transparent frameworks is expected to reduce regulatory friction, promote economic participation, and uphold constitutional values.

3. Inter-State Comparison

3.1 Single Window Clearance System:

In 2002, the Andhra Pradesh government enacted the Single Window Clearance System Bill to create a more investor-friendly environment in the country and streamline the process of obtaining licenses, clearances, and certificates necessary for establishing industrial enterprises. The Act specifies statutory time limits for clearances under Sections 14 and 15; If a decision is not made within the designated time frame, the clearances are automatically considered approved. Additionally, the provisions within the Act promote accountability for undesirable or non-economical proposals. For instance, Sections 14(3) and 14(4) stipulate that the timeline for deemed approval only begins after all required information has been received. In the past three months (as of March 2025), the state has attracted over Rs 9,700 crore in investments within the manufacturing sector, particularly in electronics and consumer durables (Gupta & Mehta, 2025).

Compared to Uttar Pradesh's Nivesh Mitra Portal, which serves functions similar to the Single Window Clearance Act, Andhra Pradesh has a stronger statutory foundation due to its standalone legislative act. In contrast, Uttar Pradesh's Nivesh Mitra Portal operates within an administrative framework. Both states manage the Combined Application Form (CAF) through their single clearance window portals; however, Uttar Pradesh employs a more advanced system featuring complete digitisation of the CAF, real-time SMS updates, digital payments, and online tracking. Assam has a comparable system through its *Ease of Doing Business* Act, 2016. However, this Act lacks legislative provisions for deemed approvals, as seen in Andhra Pradesh's legislation, and does not have legally mandated time-bound clearances.

To maintain its competitive advantage, Andhra Pradesh can implement practices that engage in district-based decentralised reforms, taking inspiration from states like Maharashtra. The District Reform Action Plan (DIBRAP) used by Maharashtra fosters greater accountability by assigning specific performance indicators to district collectors and local nodal officers, who are evaluated based on their timeliness and the quality of service delivery to businesses. By institutionalising district-level single window authorities, Andhra Pradesh could enhance localised clearance processes for MSMEs, especially in emerging cities where industrial growth is increasingly encouraged.

3.2 Shadow Laws

While Andhra Pradesh has made notable progress in improving its business environment, several statutes continue to impose latent compliance burdens and procedural complexities. These "shadow laws" are often embedded in older regulatory frameworks or drafted without sufficient proportionality and clarity, creating legal uncertainty and enforcement challenges. A comparative review with similar legislation in other states reveals how Andhra Pradesh's approach sometimes deviates from best practices and constitutional safeguards.

For instance, the Andhra Pradesh Liquor Trade Regulation Act, 1993, which regulates the alcoholic beverages supply chain (from wholesale distribution to retail sale) and grants the Andhra Pradesh Beverages Corporation

Limited (APBCL) an exclusive wholesale monopoly, contains a provision under Section 3(1) empowering the state to retrospectively cancel licenses. This power undermines the legitimacy of prior authorisations and raises serious concerns about natural justice and procedural fairness. In contrast, states such as Assam (Assam Excise Act, 2000, Sections 29(1) and 31(3)), Rajasthan (Rajasthan Excise Act, 1950, Section 35), and Uttar Pradesh (UP Excise Act, 1910, Sections 34(3) and 35(2)) permit only prospective license cancellations, coupled with due notice and, in many cases, partial refunds or compensation when the licensee is not at fault. Delhi's Excise Act, 2009, adopts a similar approach under Section 16, providing for fee reimbursement upon notice, while Maharashtra's Prohibition Act, 1949, under Section 54 follows a prospective model, though Section 56 explicitly disallows compensation. Andhra Pradesh remains the only state with the unilateral authority to retroactively invalidate licenses, an approach misaligned with constitutional principles of predictability and procedural fairness.

In the realm of taxation, while the Goods and Services Tax Act has brought nationwide uniformity and transparency in tax administration, the enforcement provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, remain excessively broad. Section 122(1) lists a wide range of offences without distinguishing clerical errors from deliberate fraud, creating compliance anxiety for businesses. By contrast, although Uttar Pradesh's GST legislation contains similar provisions, Uttar Pradesh courts have adopted a more progressive interpretive approach, narrowly construing the scope of penal action and distinguishing between intent and mistake. Assam's GST framework incorporates judicial review mechanisms that curb administrative overreach. Andhra Pradesh's current framework lacks such interpretive safeguards, resulting in a punitive environment that risks undermining voluntary compliance.

Similarly, Andhra Pradesh's Milk Procurement (Protection of Farmers) and Enforcement of Safety of Milk Standards Act, 2023, designed to regulate milk procurement, enforce safety standards, and protect farmers and consumers, contains overlapping provisions across Section 16 (procurement centers), Section 17 (chilling/cooling centers), Section 18 (processing/dairy plants), and Section 27 (general use). Each section penalises the use of non-standard milk analysers, yet the Act fails to define what constitutes a "standard" analyser. This duplication raises the risk of double jeopardy and inconsistent enforcement. In comparison, the Uttar Pradesh Milk Act, 1976, imposes only civil fines for general contraventions and does not mandate machinery standards, avoiding criminalisation of procedural lapses but potentially compromising procurement transparency and quality control. Andhra Pradesh's stricter framework, while protective in intent, suffers from regulatory vagueness, whereas Uttar Pradesh's model lacks the precision to ensure uniform quality standards. A balanced approach, defining technical requirements while avoiding over-criminalisation, could help both states ensure fairness, quality, and proportionate enforcement in the dairy sector.

4. Industrial Policy

India's industrial policy landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation since the liberalisation reforms of the 1990s. States have increasingly focused on enhancing their business environments to attract both domestic and foreign investment. National initiatives such as Make in India, Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, and Viksit Bharat have reinforced the drive towards self-sufficiency, encouraging states to adopt policies that combine infrastructure-led growth with strategic sectoral development.

Under its Industrial Policy (2020–23), Andhra Pradesh declared multiple Special Economic Zone (SEZ) corridors, aligning with the broader national trend of investment clustering and city-based industrial planning. This mirrors Uttar Pradesh's expansion of sectoral clusters to bolster infrastructure-driven growth. Andhra Pradesh, however, distinguishes itself by emphasising industrial infrastructure, particularly via the Visakhapatnam–Chennai Industrial Corridor. It is supported by a comprehensive legal and policy framework that promotes an investment-friendly climate and facilitates large-scale industrial and infrastructure development.

Yet, beyond government-led initiatives lies significant untapped potential to harness private sector and community-driven solutions. Reducing over-reliance on state machinery could encourage more resilient, locally embedded innovation. For instance, industry associations could actively provide compliance training for SMEs, helping them navigate regulatory obligations without continuous government intervention. Likewise, local NGOs and academic institutions could develop accessible legal explainers, handbooks, and practical toolkits for businesses, fostering grassroots awareness of legal requirements and encouraging voluntary compliance. Such collaborative models complement state policy, promote indigenous innovation, and strengthen the overall ease of doing business.

“The Free Hand: from Overregulation to Opportunity.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Delhi team, illustrated by Ankit Shubham and Rimmon Dass.

Empowering Enterprises: Building a Progressive Business Climate through Decriminalisation in Delhi

Ankit Shubham and Rimmon Dass

1. State Overview

Delhi's economy is predominantly service-driven, with robust growth in trade, education, hospitality, healthcare, logistics, and light manufacturing. Its strong infrastructure and connectivity make it highly favourable for emerging businesses. The Delhi Metro, spanning over 400 km, along with an international airport, dedicated freight corridors, and key highways (NH-44, NH-48), provides world-class transport facilities. High internet penetration, advanced e-governance systems, and startup hubs such as T-Hub Delhi further strengthen its digital ecosystem, positioning the capital as a potential hub for sustained economic growth.

Despite its small geographical size, Delhi contributes approximately 3.68% to India's GDP (2024, CEIC data). In FY25 (up to February 2025), merchandise exports reached ₹83,019 crore (US$9.72 billion), led by engineering goods, electronics, readymade garments, rice, gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and organic and inorganic chemicals (IBEF, 2025). The state boasts the largest share of India's skilled workforce, with 30% of workers qualified in professional fields such as engineering, medicine, law, and consultancy, making it a prime location for knowledge-based sectors like IT/ITeS, design, R&D, and financial services. Between October 2019 and December 2024, Delhi attracted cumulative FDI inflows of ₹2,81,409 crore (US$36.16 billion), according to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

2. Ease of Doing Business Reforms

Delhi's journey toward trust-oriented governance and business facilitation accelerated from 2018 onwards, driven by national mandates, international scrutiny, and local economic imperatives. India's 142nd rank in the World Bank's Doing Business Report 2014 prompted nationwide Business Reform Action Plans (BRAPs) from 2015, while direct World Bank assessments of Delhi and Mumbai in 2018 heightened the urgency for capital-specific reforms. The pre-reform regulatory landscape was marked by overlapping departmental roles, excessive approvals, slow file movement, high transaction costs, and the absence of a single-window digital system for registrations, renewals, and permits. Investors often redirected to Noida, Gurgaon, and other states offering simpler processes. Court rulings and audits (CAG, MoEF, etc.) highlighted arbitrary licensing, opaque inspections, and ad hoc environmental approvals, underscoring the need for transparency, digitisation, and trust-based governance.

The initial reforms focused on construction permits and business startup procedures, consolidating company incorporation forms (SPICe) to integrate PAN, TAN, and DIN, simplifying or removing inspections under the Shops and Establishments Act, and leveraging the Indian Customs Single Window Project and the e-Sanchit system to reduce documentation burdens for traders. By 2023, Delhi had implemented 70 reforms across 16 departments, emphasising complete digitalisation and faster turnaround times. Notable measures included online land deed registration, a

unified trade license application, auto-renewal of factory licenses, and public dashboards for tracking entitlements and schemes.

More recent reforms have focused on deregulation and deepening the single-window system. The Union Government and Delhi Lieutenant Governor have streamlined multiple license requirements—integrating health, trade, and factory approvals for GST- or FSSAI-registered businesses, linking approvals across GST, fire safety, ESIC, and DPCC. A decisive shift occurred in June 2025, when the Delhi Police relinquished licensing powers over hotels, eateries, auditoriums, and amusement parlours to municipal bodies (MCD, NDMC, and Cantonment Board), reducing duplication and delays. The MCD abolished separate factory licenses in industrial areas, recognising Udyam registration or GNCTD allotment letters as valid, and linking licensing compliance to property tax records, particularly benefiting SMEs. From August 2025, Consent to Operate (CTO) applications for "green category" industries will be deemed approved within 20 days if unprocessed, cutting the previous 120-day waiting period and signalling a decisive move toward investor-friendly, time-bound governance.

3. Single Window System

One of Delhi's most transformative reforms has been the introduction of the Single Window System (SWS – NCT Delhi). Managed by the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, this centralised digital platform consolidates applications for business clearances and statutory approvals into a single, integrated interface. Through the SWS, businesses can submit applications, upload documents, make payments, and obtain multiple regulatory approvals—including trade licenses, DPCC consents, shop and establishment registration, and electricity and water connections—without navigating multiple agencies independently.

The platform currently integrates 59 services across 13 departments and is linked to the National Single Window System, enabling seamless coordination between state and central-level approvals. Its core objective is to reduce red tape and deliver time-bound online clearances for business and industrial licenses under the Public Service Guarantee Act. Beyond efficiency, the SWS promotes rule-of-law governance by providing equitable, transparent, and predictable access to approvals for all businesses. Minimising discretion in the approval process reduces opportunities for arbitrary enforcement, strengthening trust in Delhi's regulatory framework. Features like real-time status tracking, SMS/email notifications, and an integrated grievance redressal mechanism further enhance transparency, accountability, and fairness.

4. Inter-State Comparison

Delhi's *Ease of Doing Business* reforms can be effectively benchmarked against several high-performing states, including Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh's Nivesh Mitra portal processes nearly 1.3 million NOC applications annually, achieving a 97.22 per cent disposal rate and delivering rapid, predictable services to MSMEs across hubs such as Noida, Lucknow, and Agra. Andhra Pradesh's Single Desk Portal maintains 98–99 per cent approval rates within prescribed service-level agreements, offering self-certification, automatic approvals, and streamlined grievance tracking, complemented by targeted infrastructure and subsidy support for micro and small enterprises.

Assam provides a notable model of decentralisation and regional inclusivity. Expanding from just 15 services in 2016 to over 200 by 2022, its portal has achieved approximately 99 per cent delivery rates even in remote districts. This localised approach has reduced regulatory burdens for small firms far from state capitals and enhanced trust in governance. Delhi could draw from this example to develop more decentralised mechanisms that cater to its diverse business base. Maharashtra's MAITRI portal integrates online applications, e-payments, risk-based computerised inspections, auto-renewals, and sector-specific deregulation—particularly in tourism, healthcare, and retail—achieving nearly 99 per cent BRAP implementation. Rajasthan, ranked eighth in BRAP 2019, legislated time-bound service delivery, automated labour registrations, and made public inspection checklists mandatory, significantly cutting compliance time for SMEs.

In contrast, Delhi has historically lagged in the scale and speed of reform. During the BRAP 2017–19 cycle, Delhi scored only 31.7 per cent, placing 23rd, while Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan all exceeded 90 per cent implementation. Assam's rapid improvement from 14.8 per cent in 2015 to 84.8 per cent in 2019 earned it "Recognized for Reforms" status in 2022. As of 2024, Uttar Pradesh had achieved full implementation of all DPIIT-

mandated reforms, while Andhra Pradesh continued to sustain near-perfect SLA compliance through its Single Desk Portal.

5. Implementation challenges

Despite notable reforms, Delhi continues to lag in implementation due to its complex administrative structure. The division of responsibilities among the Delhi Government (state functions), multiple municipal bodies (licensing, sanitation, zoning), the Lieutenant Governor's office (land, police, public order), and several central agencies (DDA, MoUD, CPWD, etc.) creates overlapping jurisdictions, slows approvals, and weakens accountability.

Key reforms such as inspection rationalisation, self-certification, unified return filings, and frequent grievance redressal remain partially adopted or stalled. Implementation delays are further compounded by limited channels for stakeholder feedback, highlighting the critical need for freedom of expression and dissent to ensure reforms meet actual business needs. Trust-based governance demands open dialogue to effectively identify and address regulatory gaps.

In contrast, states like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra have fully implemented most of the 350+ mandated reforms, yielding measurable improvements in small business growth and investor confidence. While Delhi's Single Window System currently integrates about 59 services across 13 departments, this falls short of the scale seen in Uttar Pradesh's Nivesh Mitra or Andhra Pradesh's Single Desk portals. Additionally, user uptake is low due to limited awareness among small traders and entrepreneurs, compounded by poor backend integration with key agencies like DPCC, DDA, Delhi Fire Services, and MCD.

Unlike Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, Delhi has not introduced strong fiscal incentives, such as capital subsidies, stamp duty exemptions, SGST reimbursements, or preferential MSME procurement, that could stimulate business growth. Instead, Delhi's reforms have primarily focused on easing compliance burdens (e.g., license simplification) rather than adopting a development-oriented approach involving funding, infrastructure, or cluster-based skilling. This limits the reforms' transformative potential.

Moreover, Delhi's predominantly service-oriented economy means reform impacts are primarily confined to retail, hospitality, and trade sectors, where informal practices and discretionary inspections persist. Delhi's grievance redressal mechanisms remain fragmented, non-digitised, slow, and opaque, unlike the efficient 90–98% resolution rates reported by Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

To meaningfully transform its business landscape, Delhi must move beyond piecemeal departmental fixes toward a holistic, whole-of-government business facilitation strategy. This should include shared databases, binding service-level agreements (SLAs), a single-point grievance redressal system, and MSME-centric development planning to build a truly supportive regulatory ecosystem.

6. Legal framework analysis

Existing legal provisions significantly undermine Delhi's *Ease of Doing Business* (EoDB) agenda. Using the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework, 20 key laws were identified based on sanction severity, enforcement frequency, compliance burden, economic impact, clarity of drafting and language, overlap and duplication, procedural complexity, and the absence of sunset or review clauses. This framework prioritises laws that negatively affect individual liberty and transparency, aligning with trust-based governance principles to highlight reforms aimed at reducing regulatory overreach and promoting equitable enforcement.

The 20 laws identified include critical statutes such as the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (1957), Delhi Fire Safety Act (1986) and its Rules (2010), Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (1994), Delhi Development Act (1957), Delhi Police Act (1978), Delhi Goods and Services Tax Act (2017), and several others regulating areas like environmental protection, licensing, taxation, and urban planning.

These laws impact stakeholders in several adverse ways, necessitating urgent reform. For example, the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 requires multiple mandatory licenses for trade, health, and factory, which often overlap with registrations under GST, FSSAI, or other trade laws. Despite recent proposals to exempt GST-registered businesses, inconsistent enforcement results in raids and penalties. The 2006 sealing drive exemplifies this overreach, where

traders compliant with VAT and rent obligations were penalised for zoning violations. Reforming this Act to allow self-certification for GST-registered businesses would respect individual agency and reduce arbitrary enforcement, empowering small traders while maintaining compliance standards.

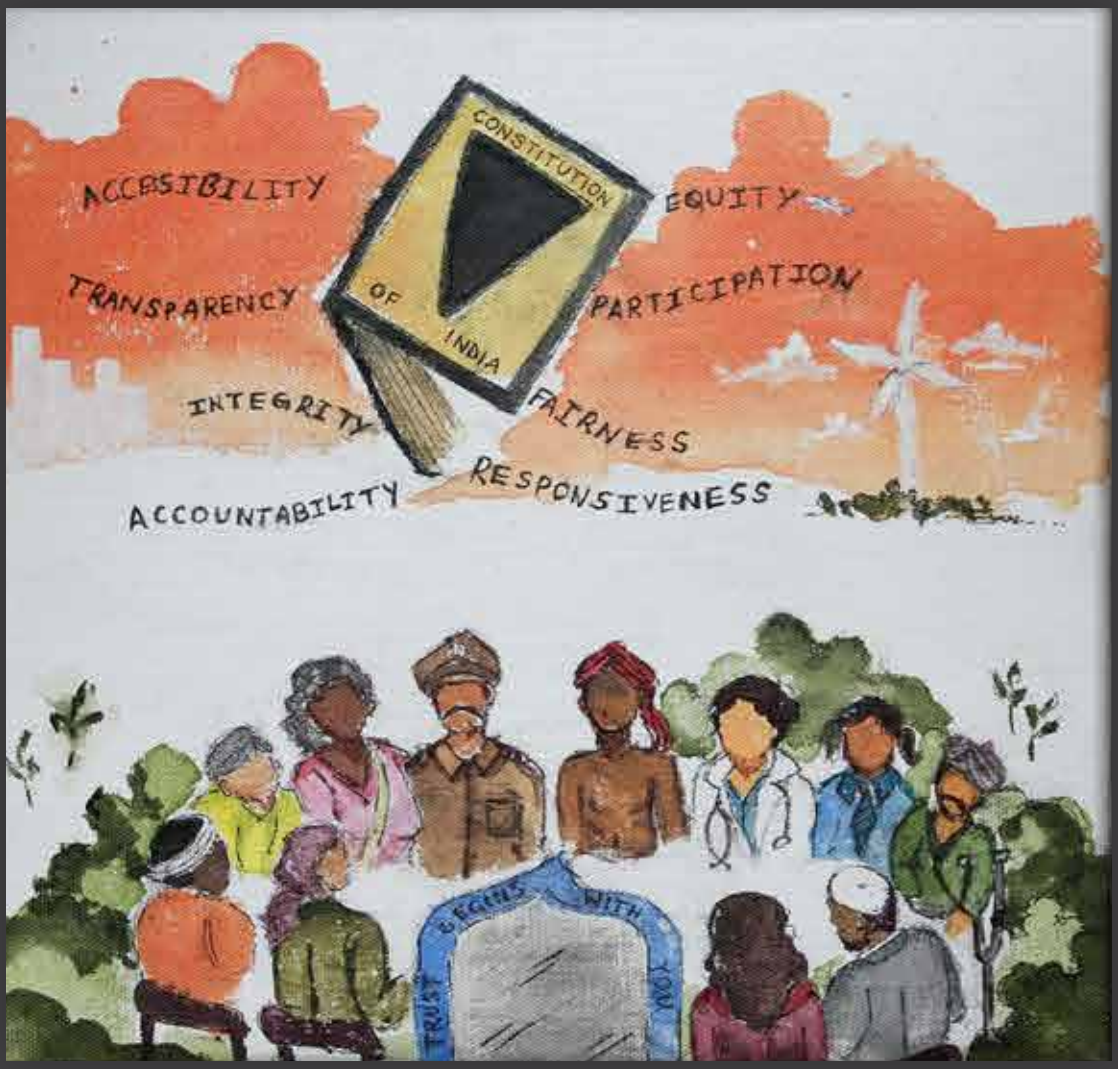
The Delhi Fire Safety Act, 1986, alongside its 2010 Rules, enforces essential fire safety norms but has been criticised for over-enforcement. After the Mundka factory fire tragedy, the Delhi Police's strict monitoring has threatened small stitching units with arrests for minor infractions. Many small businesses, operating informally for years without a formal fire NOC, face penalties or closure. Introducing clear, time-bound inspection schedules under this Act would enhance predictability and reduce uncertainty for small enterprises, fostering trust through consistent and transparent enforcement.

The Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, also presents challenges. Its provisions mandate strict permissions for pruning, but the authority responsible for oversight has been largely ineffective, meeting only ten times in 28 years. Despite oversight mechanisms, over 12,000 trees were felled in 30 months, prompting Supreme Court scrutiny. Experts observe that the Act is often misused to facilitate rather than prevent tree cutting, creating uncertainty for property owners seeking urban renovation or infrastructure development. This unpredictability undermines confidence in the regulatory framework.

Other environmental and land-related laws, including the Delhi Development Act (1957) and the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act (2007), restrict commercial land use through rigid zoning rules. Small traders frequently operate out of residential zones and face sealing or penalties despite valid municipal or GST registrations. Similarly, laws such as the Delhi Plastic Bags & Garbage Control Act (2008), Delhi Jal Board Act (1998), Common Effluents Treatment Plants Act (2000), and the Electricity Reforms Act (2000) impose harsh penalties for procedural lapses—often regardless of intent. These laws expose small businesses to fines for minor infractions related to waste disposal, effluent discharge, or electricity usage, further increasing compliance burdens.

7. Conclusion

While the laws identified are often well-intended, their overlapping provisions, ambiguous enforcement, and excessive penalties create regulatory uncertainty and impose disproportionate burdens on businesses. Addressing these issues through targeted reforms, simplifying procedures, clarifying roles, introducing self-certification, and ensuring proportional enforcement would significantly advance Delhi's *Ease of Doing Business* objectives and foster a more predictable, equitable regulatory environment. By reforming these laws to prioritise liberty, transparency, and decentralised solutions, Delhi can foster a trust-based governance model that empowers entrepreneurs and positions the capital as a global business hub. These changes will reduce regulatory burdens while upholding accountability and fairness. These reforms align with the ten principles of trust-based governance, paving the path for a more business-ready Delhi.



“Public consultation as the cornerstone of trust in governance.”

This illustration was created during a creative activity in the Researching Reality program by the Assam team, illustrated by Animesh Sabat, Lavanya Mitra, Manan Singh and Shubhangi Yadav.

Towards Ease of Doing Business: Assam's Legacy of Repeal and Reform

Animesh Sabat, Lavanya Mitra, Manan Singh and Shubhangi Yadav

1. State Overview

Assam, India's largest tea-producing state, anchors a $69 billion economy within the North-East region, with an ambitious target to reach $143 billion[1] by 2030. Demonstrating robust economic momentum, the state has maintained an impressive annual growth rate between 15% and 19%[2]. This consistent progress is also reflected in Assam's significant strides in the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) Ranking. Having been ranked 22nd in 2015, Assam notably ascended to 17th in 2017, and after a brief dip in 2019, it rebounded to secure the 1st position in the Aspirers Category in 2020. In the most recent 2024 ranking, Assam has been recognised for its reforms, achieving a commendable 9th place. This upward trajectory unequivocally underscores Assam's commitment to simplifying its business environment and fostering economic growth.

Beyond its dominant tea industry, Assam's economy is diversely bolstered by several other flourishing sectors. Agriculture has seen substantial advancement, with the state now housing nearly 60% of India's extensive bamboo reserves and standing as the 2nd and 4th largest producer of jute and rubber, respectively. The state is also a major producer of petroleum, excelling in overall oil and natural gas production[3], with sericulture and silk production being integral contributors to its economic landscape. Furthermore, Assam is proactively cultivating growth in emerging industries such as Information Technology and Startups, Semiconductors, renewable and bioenergy, fragrances, and agro-processing, highlighted by strategic investments like the Guwahati IT Park and the establishment of Tata's Jagiroad OSAT facility.

2. Inter-State Comparison: Navigating the Regulatory Landscape

Assam currently stands at a pivotal juncture in its regulatory reform journey to balance superficial administrative streamlining with the deeper imperative of statutory rationalization. While the state has established a robust digital service delivery framework and undertaken legislative repeal initiatives, its reform trajectory remains fragmented, mainly and predominantly executive. As Assam aims to boost SME participation, currently contributing 33.33% to its Gross Value Added (GVA), the immediate challenge lies in shifting from mere operational compliance to achieving comprehensive legislative coherence.

2.1 The Single Window System

Assam's commitment to *Ease of Doing Business* is evident in its Single Window system, underpinned by the Assam *Ease of Doing Business* Act, 2016. This platform is functionally robust, offering over 240 services across more than 40 departments, boasting an impressive 98.43% disposal rate for applications, with 2.61 million out of 2.66 million applications processed as of July 2025. However, the system currently lacks the critical legal certainty that statutory features such as deemed approvals, penalties for delays, and override provisions would provide. This contrasts Assam

with states like Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, which have institutionalised their single window mechanisms with robust statutory backing, mandating time-bound clearances and enabling deemed approvals. Through its MAITRI Act, even Maharashtra has strengthened enforceability by legally mandating adherence to timelines. Moreover, unlike Maharashtra's District-level Business Reform Action Plan (DIBRAP) initiative, Assam has yet to embark on similar district-level decentralisation of reforms. Assam could strategically amend its EoDB Act to mandate turnaround timelines, automate backend processes, and integrate local grievance redressal mechanisms to fortify its single window efficacy. Furthermore, complementary schemes like Biponi, ODOP, and the Assam Startup Policy could be legally embedded within a rights-based ecosystem, enhancing the system's enforceability and accountability.

2.2 Archaic Laws and the Imperative for Systemic Reform

While Assam has demonstrated an intent to shed obsolete legislation, particularly through the Assam Repealing Acts in 2020, 2022, and 2024, the state's legal clean-up has been characterised as episodic rather than systemic. This fragmented approach is underscored by the limitations of the Assam State Law Commission, which, despite its early constitution in 1959 and reconstitution in 2009, remains understaffed, administratively dependent, and lacks the independent research and drafting capacity to deliver regular audit reports.

This situation contrasts with states like Maharashtra and Rajasthan, which have adopted more comprehensive and consistent legislative clean-up trajectories. For example, Maharashtra's Law Commission actively identifies laws for repeal and embeds legal audits into its governance. Assam's progress, while notable in passing seven additional repealing bills in 2022 to scrap 48 obsolete laws, still necessitates a restructuring of its Law Commission into a full-time, independent body to facilitate periodic review of statutes based on evolving judicial standards, constitutional values, and economic impact.

Beyond outright repeal, Assam grapples with "shadow laws" or outdated legal structures that undermine modern governance. Examples include the Fire Safety Act, which operates under an old framework, and the regulations for Fisheries, which are governed by detailed rules from 1953 that lack the robustness of a whole Act. Other instances, such as Cold Storage (non-statutory 1989 order), Plastic Prohibition (notifications only, no penal provisions), and Milk (no dedicated legislation), further highlight this legislative vacuum.

2.3 Readability and Its Economic Impact

A critical challenge identified through a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) of 33 laws in Assam is their poor readability, yielding a composite score of 0.8246. The analysis reveals that nearly 40% (39.39%) of Assam's laws fall into the "very difficult" category, with only a quarter (24.24%) classified as "easy to read". This places Assam behind states like Andhra Pradesh, known for its plain language standards, and Maharashtra, which boasts a better average readability score. Compared to UP, which scored 3.42 (where higher indicates poorer clarity), Assam's 2.91 average Flesch Reading Index score suggests a relatively clearer legislative text. However, the overall complexity of legal language in Assam increases dependence on intermediaries and significantly reduces voluntary compliance, particularly among MSMEs, constituting 33.33% of the state's GVA. To mitigate this, Assam must adopt a plain language drafting protocol under the supervision of a strengthened Law Commission and publish explainers in local languages to ensure broader accessibility and understanding.

3. International Best Practices

Our research involved a study of international best practices from countries such as the U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands. These examples offer valuable insights for potential reforms in Assam, aimed at building greater trust in governance and enabling ease of doing business. The steps taken by these governments highlight effective strategies that can serve as inspiration for addressing existing gaps in laws and fostering an environment conducive to business in Assam.

A significant best practice identified globally is the emphasis on better readability in legal and official communications. The US, for instance, enacted the Plain Writing Act in 2010, which mandates all federal agencies to use language that the public can easily understand and utilise. Similarly, the United Kingdom has its Office of Parliamentary Counsel's Clearer Laws Project, dedicated to making laws more accessible. Canada has also introduced the 'Laws in Plain Language' initiative, simplifying legal content to ensure greater public comprehension.

Another key area of international best practice involves using alternative penalties and removing strict criminal sanctions for minor offences. In the U.S.A., Deferred Prosecution Agreements (DPAs) allow a business entity to avoid trial if it agrees to measures such as community service, internal reforms, payment of fines, remedial training, or internal monitoring. The Netherlands provides another example, where businesses that commit minor offences may be required to organise educational events, participate in ethics training, or engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Furthermore, in the U.K. and Scotland, business entities found guilty of minor offences may be mandated to deliver 'Community Payback Orders'. These approaches offer more flexible and proportionate responses than traditional punitive measures.

Categorising penalties with clarity is a crucial international practice that enhances legal clarity and fairness. Australia, for example, passed the Corporations Act 2001, which explicitly separates civil and criminal penalties. In a similar vein, the U.S. utilises the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which categorise offences into 43 levels, thereby distinguishing between administrative failures and more serious criminal offences. This clear distinction helps prevent the generalisation of penalties and reduces the burden of disproportionate punishment.

4. Cultivating a Trust-Based Regulatory Ecosystem: Recommendations moving forward

Assam's ongoing journey towards becoming a business-friendly state necessitates a paradigm shift in its regulatory philosophy, moving from a model rooted in coercive control to one that fosters facilitation, capacity-building, and inclusive economic participation. The state's role should increasingly be that of a facilitator rather than a punitive enforcer. This shift involves embracing positive reinforcement and empowering business communities to self-regulate within an incentive-based compliance framework.

Assam must pivot towards a more nuanced, trust-based, decentralised regulatory philosophy at this stage. Drawing inspiration from the broader vision, which emphasises capacity-building and inclusive economic participation, Assam can transform its regulatory landscape through several key interconnected reforms:

4.1 Empowering Local Institutions and Community-Led Solutions:

Instead of relying solely on state penalties, Assam can decentralise activities and involve community-based redressal mechanisms. For instance, a Land Dispute Resolution Committee (LDRC) can facilitate mediation and direct compensation for boundary mark issues in land and revenue disputes, with the Deputy Commissioner's involvement only as a last resort. Similarly, the management of grazing grounds can be vested in the LDRC, with collected sums retained for local maintenance. For road development and transport, Local Road Users' Guilds (RUG) can manage and resolve disputes over unauthorised occupations through "Community Rectification Notices" or civil claims for damages, replacing punitive penalties and fines. Similarly, in irrigation, a Water Users' Guild (WUG) can create and enforce local codes of conduct, with the state's role limited to enforcing the WUG's arbitration decisions as civil decrees.

4.2 Fostering Voluntary Compliance and Market-Based Incentives:

This paradigm shift reduces the chilling effect of litigation and the fear of conviction. For sectors like fish seed production and tourism, mandatory government licensing and penalties can be replaced with voluntary, multi-level certification systems run by private, peer-led organisations such as an Assam Fish Seed Quality Council (AFSQC) or a Tourism Standards Guild (TSG). These bodies would handle complaints through peer review and consumer feedback, replacing punitive measures with market-based reputation systems. Similarly, for land holdings, penalties for non-submission of returns can be removed, and a private non-profit like the Assam Land Stewardship Trust (ALST) can verify returns, creating a market-based incentive where landholdings can only be transacted if certified by a private auditor.

In warehousing, a private Assam Warehouse Standards Board (AWSB) can manage a voluntary certification and public rating system, and a third-party escrow service can ensure insurance verification, replacing penalties with market and private solutions. For cinemas, incentives like Formalised Business Credit can be offered for adherence to standards, alongside a Seal of Excellence for high performers, leveraging positive reinforcement and public recognition over penalties. For heritage protection, a Heritage Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program can transform preservation into a financial asset, incentivising owners rather than punishing them.

4.3 Shifting from Criminalisation to Compliance-First and Restorative Justice:

Many existing laws criminalise minor breaches, such as the Assam Excise Act, 2000, and the Assam Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017. The recommendations advocate decriminalising unlawful possession, non-fraudulent errors, and procedural lapses, replacing imprisonment with civil penalties, warnings, or Compliance Rectification Notices that allow a window for self-correction. For example, the Assam Money Lenders' Act, 1934, can issue a Provisional Registration for operating without a certificate, granting a grace period to formalise. Restorative measures are also key: offenders under the Assam Money Lenders' Act could fund Financial Literacy and Fair Lending Practices Camps, and water wastage could lead to contributions to a Community Canal Desilting and Maintenance Initiative.

In sericulture, a Quality Improvement Workshop can replace imprisonment for a first offence. Another critical recommendation was concerning the Assam Tourism (Development & Registration) Act, 2024, which should decriminalise begging and adopt a rehabilitative approach, guiding individuals to social welfare departments, with government intervention limited to genuine public nuisance and adhering to due process. This stands in contrast to approaches seen in states like Uttar Pradesh, where the Prohibition of Beggary Act criminalises homelessness and poverty.

4.4 Restoring the Presumption of Innocence and Clarifying Liability:

Several Acts assume criminal intent or shift the burden of proof to the accused. Reforms propose reversing the burden of proof to the prosecuting authority, ensuring individuals are charged based on existing evidence and that company leaders are held liable only if the offence occurred with their consent, connivance, or neglect.

4.5 Improving Readability and Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms:

Plain language drafting protocols are crucial to improve the accessibility and clarity of laws, directly benefiting SME growth by lowering interpretation errors, compliance burdens, and litigation costs. Publishing explainers in local languages will further ensure broader awareness. Furthermore, Assam must restructure its State Law Commission into a full-time, independent body with legislative drafting and audit capacity, similar to Maharashtra's active State Law Commission. This would ensure periodic review of statutes based on evolving judicial standards and economic impact, moving beyond episodic clean-ups. Additionally, institutionalising the Single Window System with statutory backing for time-bound clearances and deemed approvals, as seen in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, would provide greater legal certainty and enforceability.

Assam can solidify its position as an unequivocal business-friendly state by imbuing the principle of minimum government and trust-based governance into the heart of law-making. This pivot from a fear-based, punitive system to one grounded in fairness, collaboration, and performance will not only enhance its business environment but also realise its ambitious economic goals, fostering a participatory, inclusive, and growth-oriented legal system that ultimately ensures equity and prosperity for its citizens.

House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several St
have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.
hall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen
hen elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.
es and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according
ll be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, an
of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congr
bsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall no
each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New H
e, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jerse
Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.
cies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill s
Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.
Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for s
one Vote.
ly after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into t
first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Y
on of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or o
ture of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, wh

shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United S
n Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.
dent of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.
shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall e
ed States.
shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmat
e Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members p
Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjo
the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment

Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each Sta
eof may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.
s shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unle
Day.
House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each
ings; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of ab
nder such Penalties as each House may provide.
may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence

shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in thei
s and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those present, be entered on
se, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor
he two Houses shall be sitting.
enators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid
They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their A
tive Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall

er Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Author
en created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person holding any Offi
mber of either House during his Continuance in Office.

for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Am
which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the

Methodology

1. Introduction

This section captures the comprehensive research journey undertaken as part of the Key Analytical Profiles. The primary objective was to evaluate central and state-level economic laws through a decriminalization lens to identify burdensome, outdated, or overcriminalized provisions that impede business activity, particularly for MSMEs, traders, and startups. Grounded in the Jan Vishwas (Public Trust) philosophy, the exercise was not limited to analysis; it sought to propose tangible legal reforms that would foster a more trust-based and business-friendly regulatory environment.

For this initiative, the cohort focused on six key states: Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, alongside a central team dedicated to analysing Union-level laws. Together, these teams investigated a broad spectrum of sectors, including healthcare, excise, municipal governance, taxation, agriculture, agro-processing, industrial operations, manufacturing, and trade. Additional areas of focus, such as tourism, finance, education, textiles, real estate/urbanisation, and infrastructure, were addressed where relevant, often reflecting individual states' specific industrial and regulatory contexts. This breadth of coverage enabled a nuanced understanding of regulatory challenges across diverse administrative settings and key sectors.

This report details our multi-phase methodology, from the initial harvest of legal statutes to the analytical scoring of their provisions, followed by rigorous validation through stakeholder engagement. It offers a transparent account of the evolving approach, the analytical tools developed, the principal challenges encountered, and the outputs produced.

2. Phase I: Statute Harvesting and Penal Provision Extraction

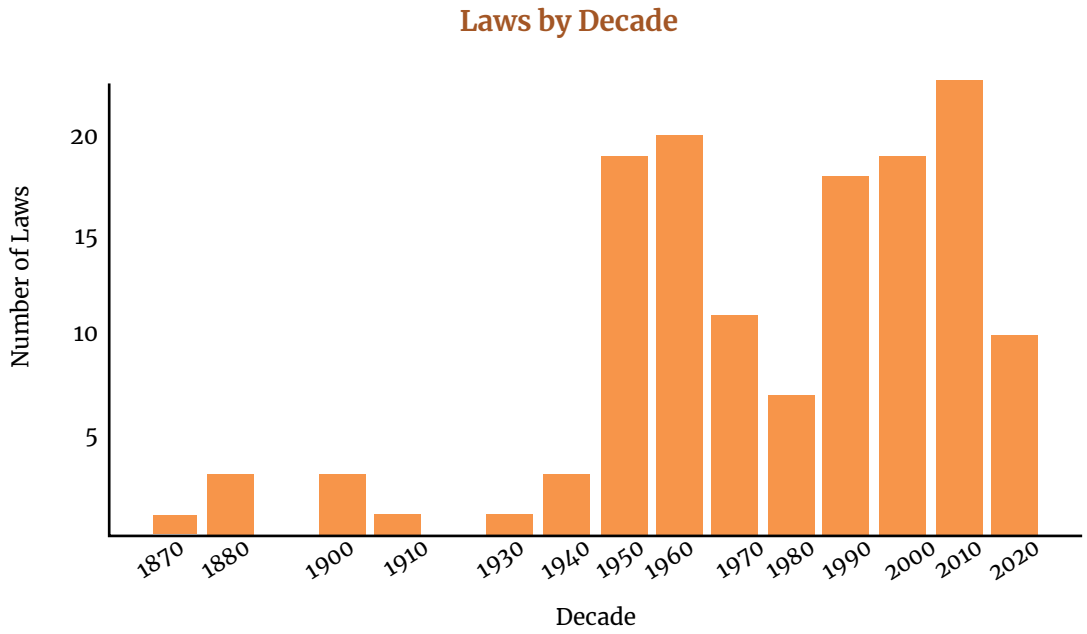
The objective of this foundational phase was to create a clean, comprehensive, and verified repository of business-relevant laws and to extract all provisions that imposed criminal sanctions.

2.1 Source Identification and Law Harvesting

The process began with the creation of a robust repository of statutes. Rather than relying on a single reference point, we adopted a triangulated sourcing strategy, pulling information from various official and authoritative sources, to ensure accuracy and completeness. Core sources included government portals like India Code, state-specific law departments, and legislative assembly archives. These were complemented by statutory databases such as PRS Legislative Research, Manupatra, as well as legal-tech platforms including CaseMine, SCC Online.

We consulted policy reports, government notifications, and credible news sources to provide context and ensure no critical instruments were overlooked—this combination of primary and secondary references allowed for both breadth and depth in coverage.

To minimise the risk of omission, teams employed a multi-pronged approach. In some cases, a chronological division of labour was used, where laws were reviewed according to the date of enactment. In others, a complete alphabetical sweep of all applicable acts ensured systematic coverage. The emphasis remained on state-specific and local laws that imposed direct compliance obligations on enterprises, with particular attention to those most likely to impact business operations and investment.



Laws by Decade

Decade	1870	1880	1900	1910	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Count	1	3	3	1	1	3	19	20	11	7	18	19	24	10
Percent	0.7	2.1	2.1	0.7	0.7	2.1	13.6	14.3	7.9	5	12.9	13.6	17.1	7.1

2.2 Shortlisting and Penal Clause Extraction

Identifying penal provisions followed a careful, two-step process to ensure both precision and completeness.

The first step involved Keyword-Based Scanning of the harvested statutes. Initially, we searched for conventional legal triggers such as "imprisonment," "penalised," "fine," and "seizure." However, we quickly learned that many penal consequences are couched in more indirect or ambiguous language. To address this, the search parameters were expanded to include broader terms such as "unauthorised" and "unlawful," which, albeit vaguely worded, often signalled the presence of punitive consequences.

The second step was the application of a Dual-Review Protocol. Every provision flagged during the initial scan was manually examined and reviewed by at least two team members. This layer of human oversight was a critical quality control measure to confirm the presence of genuine criminal sanctions and to distinguish them from purely civil or administrative penalties.

All confirmed penal clauses were then systematically catalogued in a central master sheet. This record included the statute title, relevant section number, the nature of the compliance requirement, a description of the penalty, and preliminary observations on potential overcriminalisation or ambiguity in drafting. This structured approach ensured that the dataset was both accurate and analytically robust, forming a reliable foundation for subsequent study phases.

2.3 Repeal Verification and Legal Status Audit

A detailed legal status audit was conducted to ensure that the analysis focused exclusively on relevant and currently enforceable law. This process began with verifying the notification status of all identified statutes and amendments, ensuring that only provisions with legal force were retained.

Particular attention was given to identifying provisions that, while not "formally repealed", had been "functionally displaced" by broader policy shifts. For example, specific municipal tax provisions have effectively lost their relevance following the enactment of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). We avoided misdirecting analytical resources towards obsolete regulatory requirements by flagging such provisions.

For the purposes of our study, priority was given to statutes and sections that were either actively enforced or had undergone amendments within the past decade. This approach ensured that the resulting regulatory map reflected the contemporary legal environment and captured those provisions most likely to impact present-day business operations.

2.4 Shortlisting for In-Depth Analysis

From this initial repository, each team began with a working list of approximately 80 statutes, all of which were analysed to identify and flag provisions that appeared outdated, excessive or otherwise problematic. Following this preliminary review, the list was refined to a targeted subset of 40 statutes for detailed assessment under the MCDA framework.

This shortlisting was guided by a formal qualitative assessment of each law, considering its original legislative intent, its continued relevance and effectiveness in the current economic landscape, and the scope it presented for meaningful reform. This process was designed to ensure that the statutes selected were not only significant for business operations but also offered a tangible opportunity for aligning regulatory requirements with the principles of trust-based governance and improving key *Ease of Doing Business* metrics.

2.5 Sectoral Transition and Overlap Mapping

Midway through this phase, the teams strategically pivoted from a purely chronological or alphabetical review to a sector-based mapping framework. This shift proved analytically significant, as it allowed us to understand how clusters of regulations interact and shape the operating environment for specific industries. By aligning the review with each state's economic priorities and dominant sectors, the teams could assess how laws function as living instruments in practice, rather than in isolation.

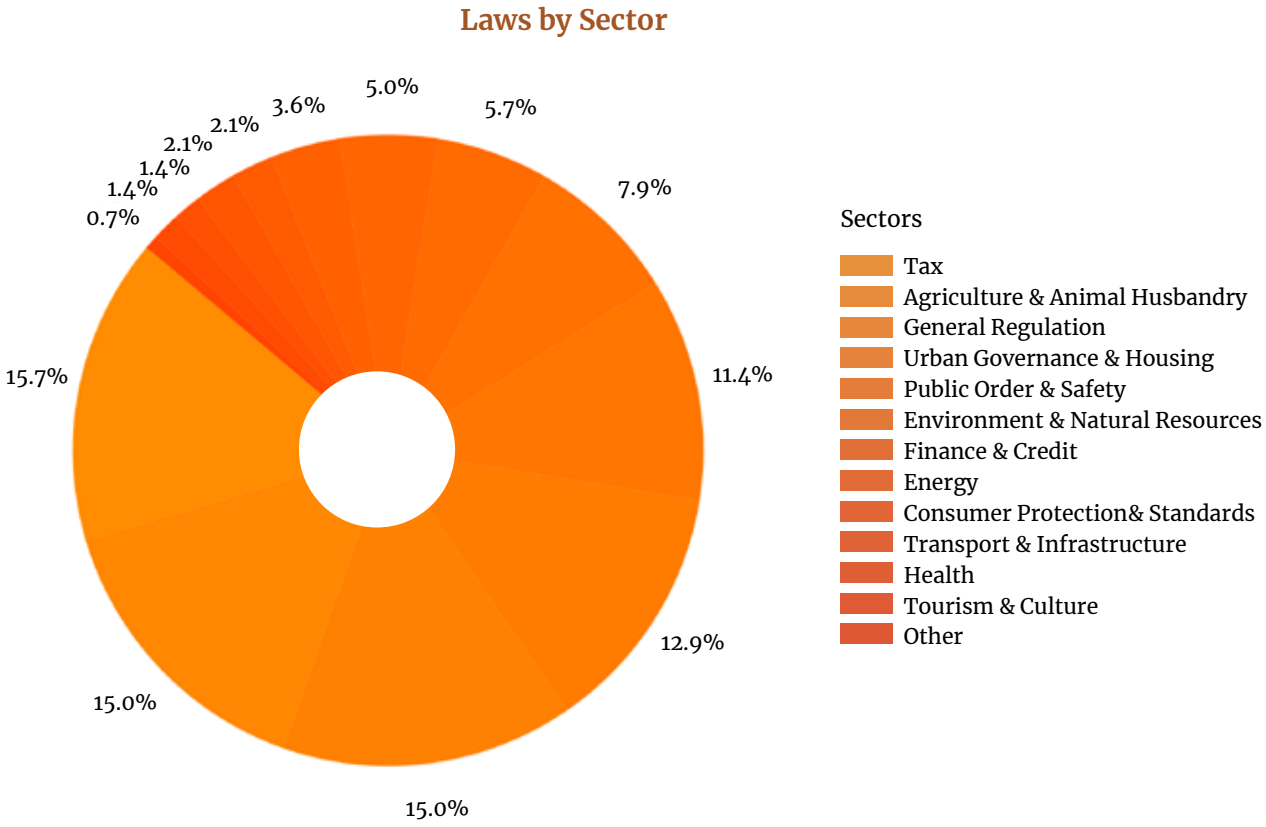
The focus areas were often state-specific. In Uttar Pradesh, attention centred on sugar, molasses, agro-processing, and traditional manufacturing. Maharashtra concentrated on real estate and fisheries, while Assam prioritised fisheries and tourism. Andhra Pradesh's review encompassed industry, land, real estate, agriculture, and environmentally sensitive sectors such as forestry.

- This sectoral lens was instrumental in uncovering deep-seated structural challenges, including:
- Fragmented licensing regimes split across multiple departments.
- Overlapping central and state statutes governing the same activity.

Broad, discretionary enforcement powers vested in officials, creating scope for regulatory uncertainty.

By the end of Phase I, the teams had assembled a cleaned and verified repository of penal provisions capturing dozens of business-relevant laws. This provided a solid foundation for subsequent, more detailed analytical stages.

Overall Sector Share:



3. Phase II: MCDA Scoring and Prioritisation

This phase aimed to shift from a largely qualitative understanding to a quantitative, data-driven prioritisation of the most burdensome legal provisions using a standardised analytical model.

3.1 The MCDA Framework: Our Analytical Core

At the heart of this stage was the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework, a structured model designed to systematically evaluate penal provisions across eight weighted criteria. This approach created a unified analytical language, enabling objective comparison of regulatory complexity, compliance burdens, and criminalisation risks across diverse statutes and jurisdictions.

The eight weighted criteria are:

1. **Economic Impact (18%):** Measures the provision's adverse effect on economic activity, mainly quantifying barriers to entry and investment drag. This was assessed by mapping each flagged provision to state investment and output data from government databases and conducting interviews with business owners and sectoral associations to gather empirical data on its effect on their operations.

2. **Sanction Severity (15%):** Assesses the direct harshness of fines and imprisonment terms. The analysis was primarily textual, based on a direct examination of the legal statute. Provisions were scored by quantifying the maximum permissible fine, the length of potential imprisonment, and the presence of collateral sanctions such as license revocation or asset forfeiture.

3. **Compliance Burden (15%):** Captures the time, cost, and frequency of compliance actions. To score this, teams gathered data directly from primary stakeholders via structured questionnaires and interviews. The goal was to determine average hours expended, out-of-pocket costs for forms or counsel, and the frequency of required interactions with regulatory authorities per compliance cycle.

4. **Enforcement Frequency (12%):** Gauges how often a law is used, through case law and inspector actions. Case Law Incidences involved desk research from legal databases, assessing reported judgments relating to flagged provisions. Inspector Usage estimated the frequency of field-level action (e.g., raids, notices) through local news outlets and primary stakeholder interviews.

5. **Drafting Clarity (10%)**: Evaluates the precision and legibility of the legal text. This involved direct textual analysis of provisions based on the use of ambiguous, obsolete terms and legal jargon. We utilised a Flesch test to screen for legal jargon per 100 words in the law for all the flagged laws. The exercise also included an expansive screening for cross-references per provision of the flagged law.

6. **Overlap & Duplication (10%):** Measures redundancy with other laws through screening for Inter-statute and Intra-statute duplications across the body of the law.

7. **Procedural Complexity (10%):** Measures the administrative intensity of compliance, including the number of steps, forms, hearings, certifications required, as well as the volume of documentation, and the average time-to-completion. Data was drawn from the statutory text and supplemented by stakeholder feedback where possible.

8. **Absence of Sunset/Review Clauses (10%):** Flagged provisions that lack mechanisms for automatic review or expiry. The methodology was a straightforward textual analysis to determine if a provision or its parent act contained a sunset clause or a mandatory review mechanism. The amendment history of the statute was also considered as a proxy for its legislative relevance.

3.2 The Scoring Process: Combining Data and On-the-Ground Insight

Each provision was scored on a 0-5 scale for each criterion, with higher scores indicating a more burdensome regulation. The scoring rubric used three anchor points - 0, 3, and 5 - whose meanings varied depending on the specific criterion. Internal calibration exercises were conducted to harmonise the interpretation and application of the scoring rules to maintain consistency across states and teams.

From the outset, it was recognised that purely textual analysis was insufficient. Laws on paper often diverge from the ground reality, so the methodology combined: desk research for statutory and judicial interpretations; expert inputs from legal practitioners; and—most importantly—field surveys and stakeholder interviews with businesses, industry bodies and compliance professionals. The stakeholder feedback loop was critical for refining the MCDA scores, ensuring they reflected not only the letter but also its practical impact.

The process of moving from individual criteria scores to a final ranking involved four key steps:

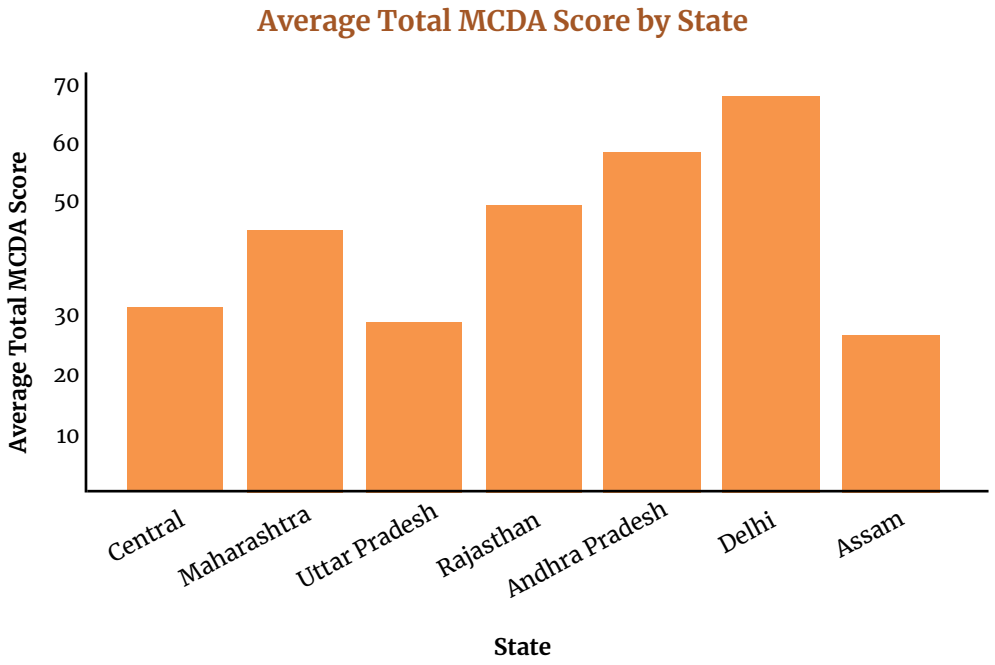
1. **Raw Scoring:** Sub-criteria were scored based on the rubric tables for each clause.

2. **Normalisation:** The sub-scores for each criterion were summed and then normalised to a 0-5 scale.

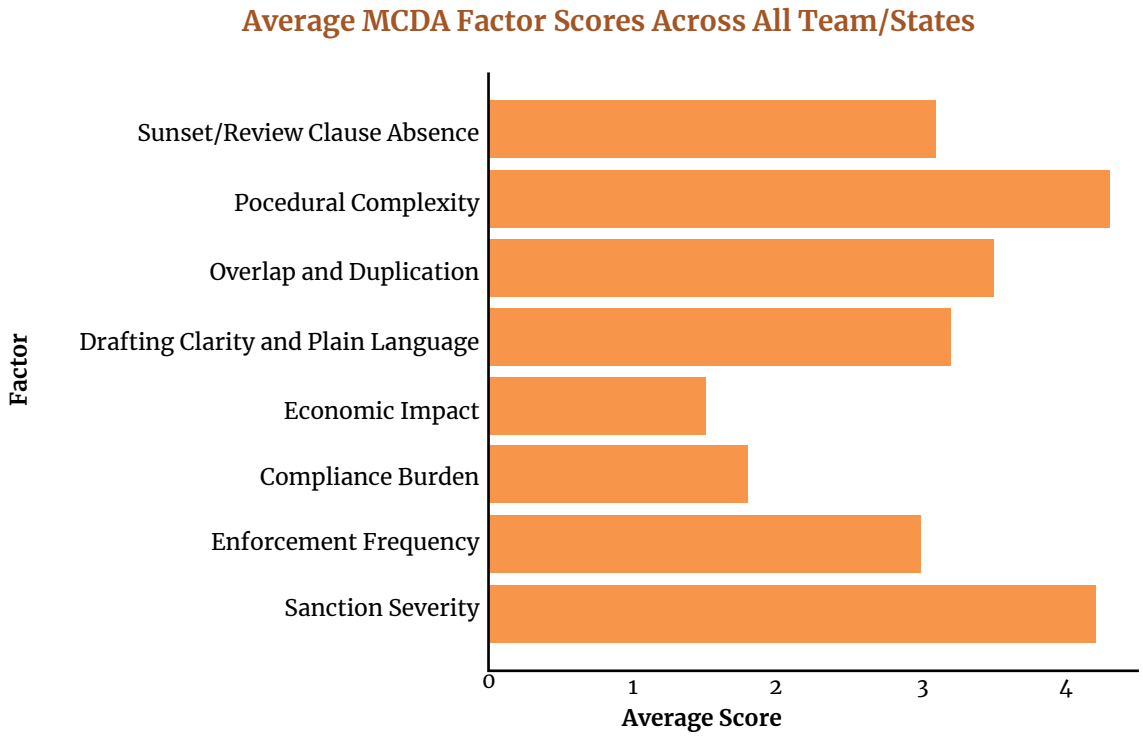
3. **Weighting and Aggregation:** The composite scoring for the compendium was measured based on the weightage given to each section. Each criterion's 0-5 score was multiplied by its designated weight, and these values were then summed to compute a Composite Index. This aggregation process provided a unified score for each provision/law, allowing for direct comparison and ranking. For example, Economic Impact received the highest weight (18%) because the overarching objective is to free up growth-dragging provisions to boost state GDP. The combined 30% weight for Sanction Severity and Compliance Burden reflects their combined effect in chilling business activity. Similarly, the four Legal-design indicators (Clarity, Overlap, Complexity, and Review Absence) are given a combined weight of 40% to emphasise that poorly drafted laws can be as harmful as onerous sanctions.

4. **Ranking and Sensitivity:** The clauses were sorted by their composite score to create a ranking. Sensitivity checks were run by varying weights by ±10% to ensure the robustness and stability of the final shortlist.

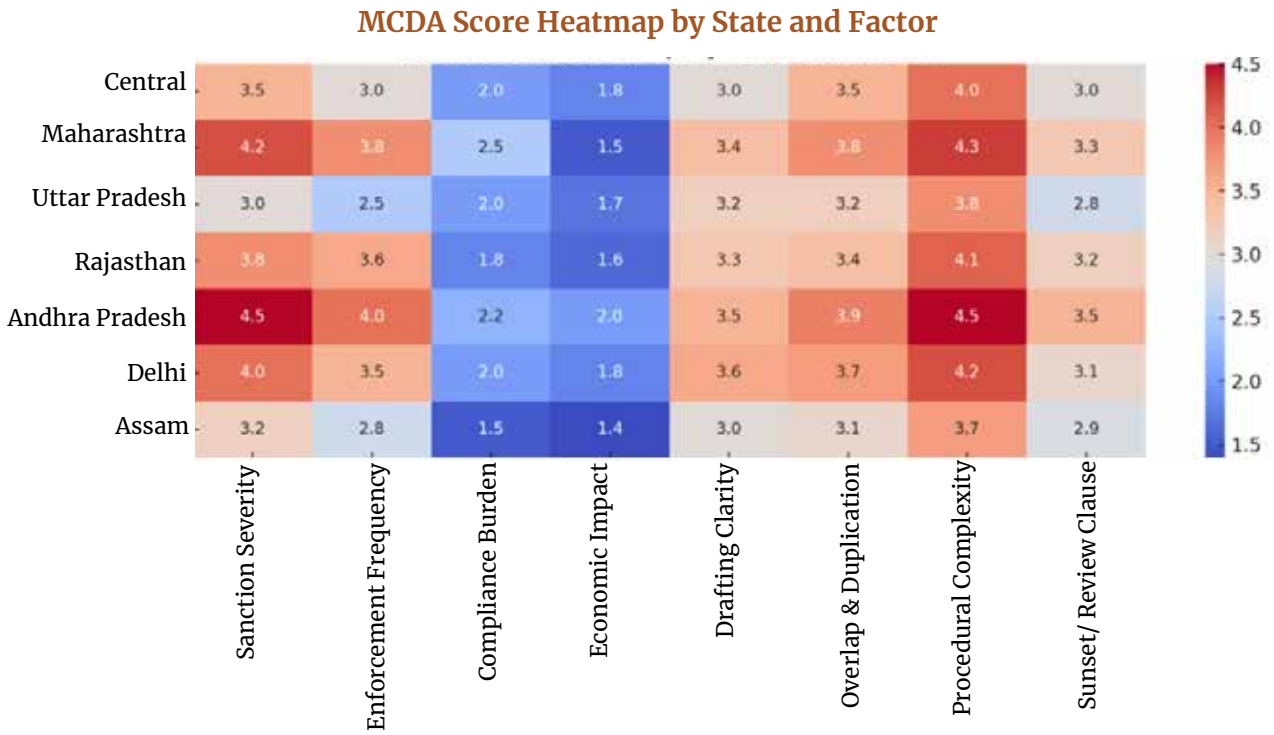
The Average Total MCDA Score shown is calculated for 20 laws per unit - Higher Means More Over-Criminalisation:



Average MCDA Factor Scores Across All States (Based on 20 Laws per Unit):



Heatmap – State vs Factor :



4. Limitations of the Research Methodology

While the MCDA framework offered a rigorous and systematic structure, the research inevitably operated within real-world constraints that influenced our data's depth, coverage, and precision. Acknowledging these limitations is essential for maintaining methodological transparency and ensuring that findings are interpreted in their proper context.

4.1 Stakeholder Data Dependency and Accessibility

Two of the highest-weighted criteria, Economic Impact (18%) and Compliance Burden (15%), were almost entirely dependent on feedback from stakeholders. However, mapping and contacting the primary stakeholders (small business owners, traders, farmers) proved exceptionally difficult. Due to a paucity of time, regional and linguistic barriers, and a general mistrust toward unfamiliar researchers, the response rates were often modest. As a result, the data underpinning these critical criteria were sometimes derived from a smaller-than-optimal sample, reducing the conclusiveness of specific findings.

4.2 Inaccessibility of Granular Judicial Data

The Enforcement Frequency (12%) criterion relied on two sub-metrics: case-law incidence and inspector usage. The analysis faced significant limitations for case-law incidence due to the inaccessibility of records from district and lower courts, where most business-related disputes are adjudicated. The absence of comprehensive, digitised records at this level meant our analysis had to rely primarily on the minimal data available from High Courts and the Supreme Court, which may not accurately reflect the actual volume or patterns of enforcement at the ground level.

4.3 Challenges in Quantifying Enforcement

Quantifying "inspector usage" was equally challenging. There is a significant lack of digitised public data on routine enforcement actions like raids or show-cause notices. Furthermore, searching local media reports for such information was often stymied by language barriers, preventing a comprehensive, nationwide analysis. The insights gathered here were therefore more qualitative and anecdotal than quantitative.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provided an invaluable, evidence-based framework for identifying and prioritising laws for reform. The challenges offer a key insight: the lack of accessible data on compliance burdens and enforcement is a problem, highlighting a need for greater transparency in our regulatory and judicial systems.

5. Visit to DPIIT – July 11, 2025

A key milestone in the project's timeline was a formal presentation to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on 11 July 2025, where all six state teams and the central cohort presented their interim findings before senior officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The presentations revealed recurring themes across jurisdictions — the persistence of archaic penal provisions, overlaps between laws, procedural delays, and disproportionate punishments for minor regulatory breaches.

To ground these patterns in lived experience, teams also shared anonymised stakeholder inputs, illustrating how these provisions operate in practice and the barriers they create for citizens and enterprises. DPIIT responded with constructive guidance, encouraging teams to advance their reform proposals towards solutions such as graded penalty frameworks, civil remedies, and statutory sunset clauses. They also aligned their recommendations with ongoing national initiatives, including the *Ease of Doing Business* programme and the Jan Vishwas reforms.

The meeting also provided a valuable forum for peer learning. Teams were able to compare methodological approaches, refine their legal analysis in light of feedback from both officials and fellow researchers, and strengthen the design of their final-phase outputs. In this sense, the session not only served as an institutional checkpoint but also as a catalyst for sharpening the project's reform agenda.

6. Phase III: Stakeholder Mapping and Survey Design

In Phase III, the research cohort adopted a structured, pan-India stakeholder mapping strategy to ensure that the voices of those most directly affected by criminalised economic provisions were systematically represented. This process covered all six participating states — Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and Assam— and central legislation.

Stakeholders were classified into two broad categories. Primary stakeholders included those most directly impacted by compliance requirements, fines, inspections, and potential criminal penalties. Secondary stakeholders comprised regulatory and enforcement officials, municipal and panchayat-level administrators, tasked with implementing or adjudicating these laws.

Each penal provision identified in the review was mapped through a matrix linking it to the relevant department, industry, and scale of enterprise. This approach allowed teams to identify the formal custodians of a law and the individuals and institutions most affected by its day-to-day enforcement. As a result, outreach strategies could be tailored to reflect local realities and institutional contexts.

Separate questionnaires were designed for each stakeholder group to validate and supplement MCDA scoring with on-the-ground insights. These tools combined structured quantitative components — such as Likert-scale questions on enforcement frequency, proportionality of penalties, and procedural burden — with open-ended qualitative prompts inviting personal anecdotes, perceptions of fairness, and suggestions for reform. Particular care was taken to ensure accessibility: questions were translated into local languages where necessary, phrased in non-technical and straightforward terms, and adapted for oral, telephonic, or electronic administration.

Once completed, the central coordination team reviewed and standardised all questionnaires to ensure methodological consistency across the cohort. This step was critical in maintaining comparability of findings while accommodating the diversity of local contexts in which the research was conducted.

7. Phase IV: Stakeholder Interviews

Following the mapping and survey design stages, teams undertook structured stakeholder interviews to gather qualitative insights and ground-test the assumptions derived from statutory analysis. Engagement strategies varied across jurisdictions but typically included telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, email outreach, and digital interactions through platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Meet.

Primary stakeholders, including street vendors, small producers, contractors, and shop owners, were primarily contacted through telephonic or in-person interactions. In many cases, snowball sampling proved essential for reaching participants in the informal sector, where official registries were incomplete or inaccessible. These conversations consistently surfaced themes of uncertainty over licensing procedures, the discretionary application of enforcement powers, and a pervasive fear of criminal sanctions for minor infractions.

Secondary stakeholders, such as municipal officers, regulatory authorities, and enforcement officials, were approached in their formal capacity, often via email questionnaires or scheduled virtual meetings. While response rates varied, their feedback illuminated the internal bottlenecks within government systems, from resource shortages and outdated procedural guidelines to fragmented inter-agency coordination.

In several states, outreach was hampered by structural and social barriers. In Delhi and Maharashtra, a general wariness towards external researchers frequently resulted in cautious or truncated responses. In Assam and Uttar Pradesh, the absence of reliable public contact information and linguistic challenges proved significant hurdles. Despite these limitations, these challenges were instructive, highlighting how restricted accessibility and opacity in the compliance ecosystem can reinforce mistrust between citizens and the state.

Notably, the information gathered through these interviews was not anecdotal embellishment but a critical corrective to desk-based assumptions. For key MCDA metrics such as enforcement frequency, economic effect, and procedural difficulty, stakeholder accounts provided empirical nuance, allowing teams to recalibrate scores in line with lived realities rather than theoretical presumptions.

8. Phase V: Drafting of the analytical and narrative pieces

Following the conclusion of stakeholder consultations and the finalisation of MCDA scores, each team prepared two complementary outputs: a state-centric case study offering contextual and thematic framing for their state's work, and an analytical piece systematically detailing their legal recommendations.

The narrative pieces serve as an entry point into each jurisdiction's regulatory landscape, offering a state-specific overview, the rationale behind selecting 20 priority laws, and thematic observations emerging from the research process. While rooted in each state's unique economic and governance profile, these narratives also situate their findings within a broader comparative lens, noting cross-jurisdictional trends such as the persistence of archaic statutes, the performance of single-window clearance systems, and the burden of duplicative compliance requirements.

The analytical pieces are presented in a structured, law-by-law format, modelled on the clarity and accessibility of the Jan Vishwas Bill's schedule. Each entry contains the name of the law, the identified provision(s) for reform, and a consolidated "recommendation and reasoning" section. Crucially, the reasoning process across all teams was anchored in the 10 Principles of Liberty — a normative framework that includes the Presumption of Liberty, Limited & Accountable Government, Rule of Law, Spontaneous Order, Respect for Individual Agency, Transparency, Decentralisation, Voluntary Exchange, Freedom of Expression, and Constitutional Restraint.

These principles served as both evaluative criteria and reform touchstones, guiding the design of recommendations that sought to remove disproportionate sanctions, reduce compliance friction, and realign the law's purpose with constitutional values and economic freedom. As a result, while each state's recommendations respond to local context, the compendium reflects a coherent and principled approach to regulatory decriminalisation.

Both outputs have been standardised in format to maintain comparability and coherence across jurisdictions, ensuring that the compendium reads not as a fragmented set of state reports, but as a unified body of work advancing a shared vision of trust-based governance.

Jurisdiction x Sector (counts):

Jurisdiction	Agriculture & Animal Husbandry	Consumer Protection & Standards	Corporate & Commercial	Energy	Environment & Natural Resources	Finance & Credit	General Regulation	Health	Other	Public Order & Safety	Tax	Tourism & Culture	Transport & Infrastructure	Urban Governance & Housing
Andhra Pradesh	6	0	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	3	3	0	0	1
Assam	5	1	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	1	3	1	0	2
Central	0	2	4	2	0	3	3	0	0	0	5	0	1	0
Delhi	2	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	0	5	2	0	0	3
Maharashtra	3	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	3	0	1	7
Rajasthan	2	0	1	0	1	0	6	0	0	2	4	1	1	2
Uttar Pradesh	3	0	0	1	5	0	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	3

9. Conclusion

While the research confronted significant data accessibility constraints, its methodological rigour provides a concrete foundation for reform. The systematic analysis of textual and structural attributes such as Drafting Clarity, Overlap, and Procedural Complexity yielded definitive, verifiable insights into the quality of legal design, independent of the empirical data gaps. This work thus serves as a foundational step toward realising the vision of 'Jan Vishwas' (Public Trust) by identifying the precise points of legal friction where trust between the state and its enterprises erodes. Ultimately, the challenges encountered are not merely limitations but a key finding: a truly trust-based system requires a transparent data ecosystem, making this research a blueprint for legislative change and a call for greater transparency in our regulatory and judicial systems.

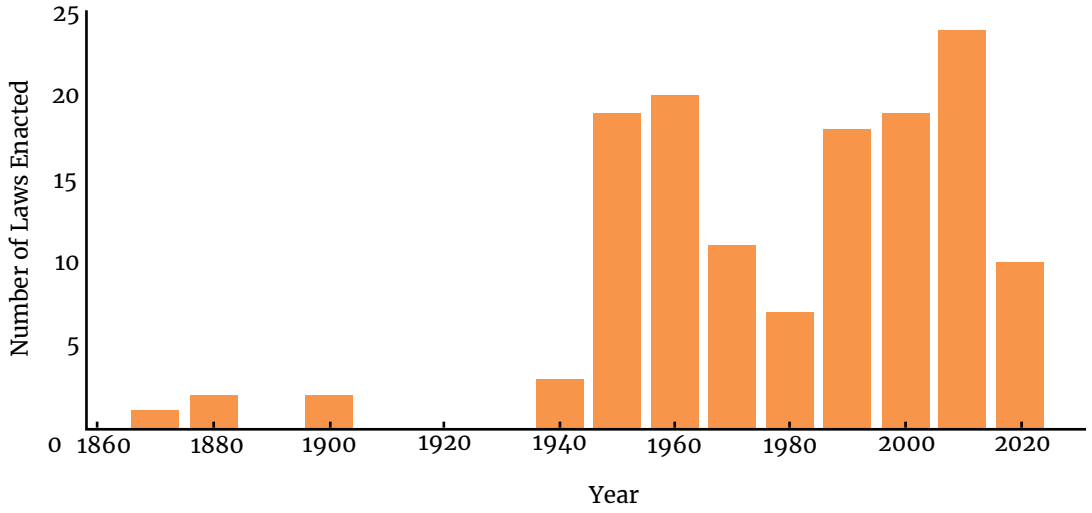
Key Analytical Profiles

Central

Central

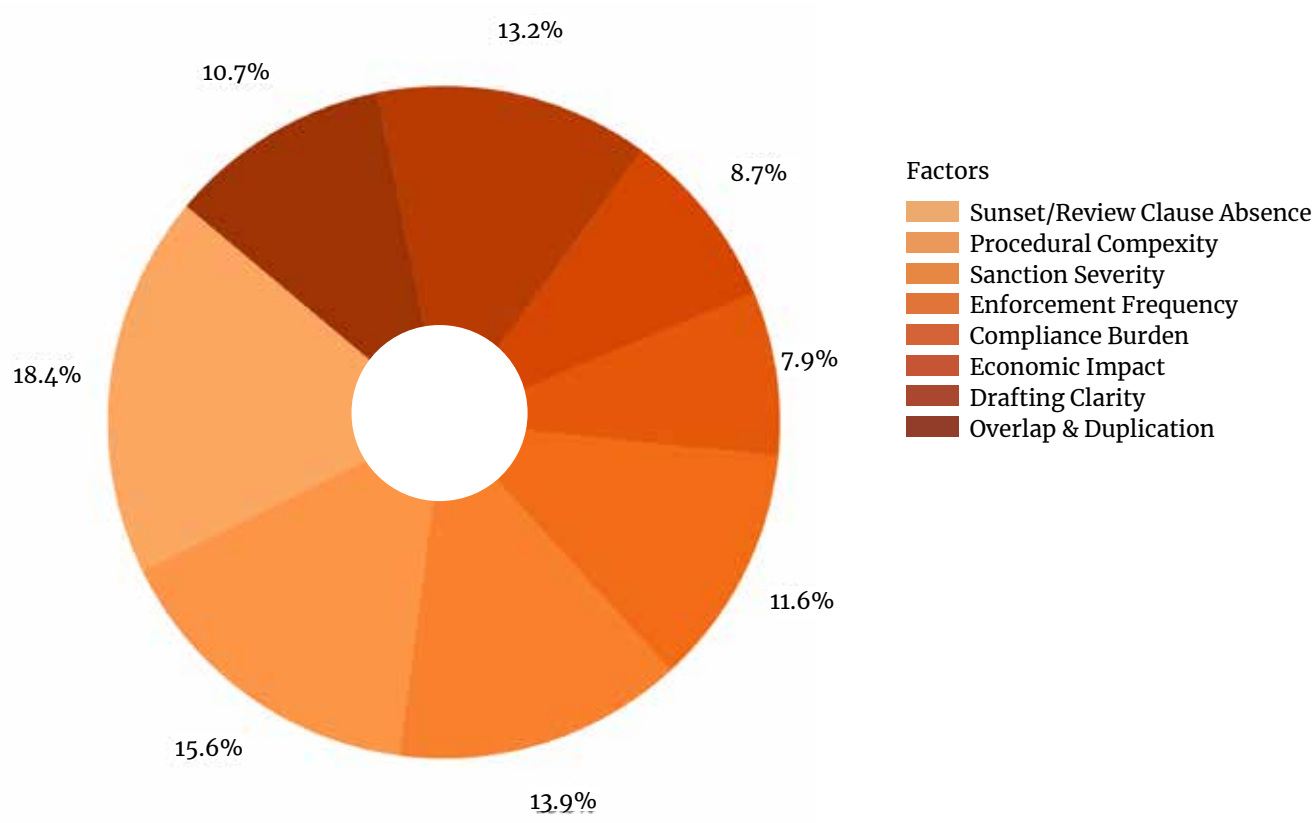
In FY 2024-25, India's real GDP grew 6.5%, making it the fastest-growing **major global major economy**. Inflation has been under control, falling to 2.82% as of May 2025, the lowest since February 2019. India's macroeconomic strength, marked by sustained growth, low inflation, rising digital and physical infrastructure, and forward-leaning fiscal policies, provides a conducive base for normative legal reform. Yet, the recurrence of geopolitical risks and trade friction highlights the importance of agile, innovation-friendly business laws. Modernisation, clarity, and adaptability in legal frameworks could reinforce investments, encourage entrepreneurship, and secure India's well-mapped economic leap.

Year-wise Distribution of Laws- Central



Sector-wise Distribution of Laws- Central

MCDA Factor Distribution- Central



Indian Contract Act, 1872

Provisions:

Section 27: Any agreement that restrains a person from carrying on a lawful trade or profession is void, except in the case of a goodwill sale.

Section 28: Declares void any clause restricting legal proceedings or extinguishing legal rights after a fixed period. Exception 3 allows banks to extinguish liability under guarantees.

Recommendations:

1. Allow businesses and individuals to freely negotiate contracts, including restrictive clauses, if agreed upon by both parties. Voluntary dispute resolution mechanisms (e.g., mediation) should handle any conflicts, with market reputation acting as a key enforcer of fair business practices.
2. Allow contracts to include time-limited clauses for extinguishing liabilities or restricting actions. These terms should be enforceable through private arbitration, with market-based enforcement and reputation mechanisms ensuring fair application. Banks can voluntarily offer agreements regarding the extinguishment of guarantees, but all contracts should be subject to market oversight rather than legal restrictions.

Reasoning:

Freedom of contract and individual autonomy are fundamental principles that encourage innovation and market flexibility. By removing state controls over restraint of trade agreements and legal liability extinguishment clauses, businesses are empowered to enter into agreements based on mutual consent, with private arbitration or market-based dispute resolution managing conflicts. This reduces unnecessary government interference, promotes contractual freedom, and ensures market actors maintain accountability through reputation and peer regulation, leading to a more efficient and dynamic market.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	2.5/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	5/5	3.33/5	16.33

Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881

Provisions:

Section 138: Criminalises dishonour of a cheque due to insufficient funds, prescribing punishment of imprisonment up to 2 years or fine up to twice the cheque amount, or both. It applies only if the drawer fails to make payment within 15 days of a statutory notice after dishonour.

Section 141: Extends liability for an offence under Section 138 to every person in charge of a company at the time of commission, including directors, unless they prove lack of knowledge or due diligence.

Section 143A: Empowers courts to order payment of interim compensation (up to 20% of cheque amount) at an early stage of proceedings, even before guilt is proven.

Recommendations:

1. Dishonour of a cheque due to insufficient funds shall be treated purely as a civil contractual breach, enforceable through private arbitration, digitally verifiable commercial credit rating mechanisms, and reputation-based enforcement in financial markets.
2. Encourage cheque-issuers to voluntarily subscribe to Private Cheque Clearing Platforms (PCCPs), which operate under pre-agreed contractual terms to digitally enforce penalties and restitution in case of default. Participation can be incentivised through benefits such as faster clearance times, lower transaction costs, preferential credit terms, and enhanced reputation scores within business networks.
3. Responsibility for cheque default by a company shall rest only on the contractual signatory and authorised representative, not on directors or officers by default. Company boards may adopt internal compliance policies and designate cheque signatories under contract. Allow companies to file a public declaration of financial signatories and risk-bearers, enforceable via contract.
4. No interim compensation should be mandated prior to adjudicating fault, as this undermines the presumption of innocence. Instead, parties may contractually agree to pre-deposits, escrow arrangements, or advance deduction clauses for disputed instruments.

Reasoning:

Treating dishonour due to insufficient funds as a civil breach, rather than a criminal offence, respects the principle that private parties should handle economic disputes through contracts and market mechanisms, not coercive state intervention. Holding only the contractual signatory accountable for cheque defaults, rather than directors or officers by default, ensures that personal accountability is clearly tied to specific actions. Allowing parties to agree on pre-deposits or escrow arrangements ensures that potential financial issues are managed privately, with minimal state interference.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	4/5	0/5	4.33/5	3.33/5	3.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	27.29

The Indian Ports Act, 1908

Provisions:

Section 4: Empowers the government to extend or withdraw the application of the Act or specific provisions to any port or part thereof.

Section 6: Allows the government to make rules for regulating ports, including safety measures, charges, and operations.

Section 8: Grants the conservator the authority to give directions for the safety and regulation of ports, which port users must comply with.

Section 15: Empowers port officials to board vessels and enter buildings within port limits for inspection and enforcement purposes.

Section 33: Authorises the government to levy port dues on vessels entering or leaving ports.

Section 34: Allows the government to vary the rates of port dues without providing a mechanism for appeal or review.

Section 35: Empowers the government to prescribe fees for pilotage and other services provided at ports.

Section 43: Requires vessels to pay all port charges before being granted clearance to leave port.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Self-Regulatory Port Authority (SRPA), comprising port operators, shipping companies and import/export businesses, who will oversee the application of regulations based on market needs and port-specific agreements. Changes to the scope of port operations can be made through industry consensus. Port operators and stakeholders (shipping companies, import/export businesses) should negotiate and set operational standards within voluntary port management agreements.
2. SRPA will be tasked with creating self-regulatory rules regarding safety, charges, and operations at ports. These rules will be designed through collaborative efforts among port owners, workers, and industry representatives. Instead of state rules, market-based standards will evolve based on peer review and industry feedback.
3. The SRPA will appoint independent safety officers and industry experts to ensure compliance with port safety regulations. Port operators will contractually engage these professionals and enforce best practices in safety and operations, removing the need for government-imposed directions.
4. The SRPA will establish voluntary compliance checks and self-inspection programs for ports and vessels, and inspections will be handled by this-party auditors or private agencies accredited by the SRPA.
5. Port dues should be negotiated and determined by market dynamics. The SRPA will facilitate transparent discussions on changes to port dues. Port operators should set fees for pilotage and other services in consultation with shipping companies. The SRPA will oversee the fairness of these agreements, ensuring market-driven pricing based on supply and demand rather than state-determined fees.

Reasoning:

The SRPA will ensure flexible regulations that adapt to the market's needs. Without bureaucratic oversight, decisions can be made quickly and efficiently, allowing the industry to respond dynamically to changes in the market environment. By allowing market forces to set port dues, pilotage fees, and other charges, businesses can negotiate prices based on competition and fair market practices, ensuring cost efficiency and fair access. By removing government restrictions, the SRPA will allow ports to innovate in service offerings, create new pricing structures, and improve operational efficiency, enhancing competition and creating a more competitive market environment.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	1/5	14

The Registration Act, 1908

Provisions:

Section 25: Allows late presentation only in cases of "urgent necessity or unavoidable accident" and imposes a discretionary fine up to 10 times the registration fee.

Section 28: Mandates property registration in the sub-district where the property is located.

Section 32A: Requires affixing passport photographs and fingerprints for registration of property documents.

Section 34(1): Mandates the physical appearance of executants for registration, with exceptions for accident or urgent necessity.

Section 82: Imposes criminal penalties up to 7 years for false statements, impersonation, and related acts-even in technical or unintentional cases.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Self-Regulatory Property Registry (SRPR), which manages late submissions through voluntary registration systems. The SRPR can implement contractual penalties for late submissions, enforced by peer review or community-based ratings rather than state-imposed fines.
2. The SRPR allows property owners to choose where to register their properties through voluntary, digital platforms. These platforms would ensure flexibility and efficiency in record-keeping, where private verification agencies authenticate documents without government interference.
3. The SRPR will facilitate digital identity verification for property registration through third-party identity platforms, using technologies like blockchain or digital signatures to ensure security and transparency.
4. Implement remote registration via digital platforms under the SRPR, where property owners can authenticate their identity and consent through digital signatures or notarised online agreements. This reduces the need for physical presence and enhances convenience.
5. The SRPR enforces civil penalties for misrepresentation or fraud, handled through private legal actions, contractual dispute resolution, or peer-reviewed reputational systems. Violations are addressed through restorative justice mechanisms such as compensation, fines, or contractual penalties, not criminal sanctions.

Reasoning:

Government control over property transactions, registration, and penalties stifles entrepreneurial freedom, contractual autonomy, and market flexibility. By replacing state mandates with a Self-Regulatory Property Registry (SRPR), property owners, buyers, and sellers can freely regulate their transactions and registration processes based on voluntary agreements and market-driven incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	3.33/5	3/5	2.67/5	22.30

Central Excise Act, 1944

Provisions:

Section 9C: In any prosecution requiring culpable mental state (mens rea), the Court shall presume such mental state, and the burden lies on the accused to prove the absence of mens rea.

Section 10: Courts may order forfeiture of goods involved in an offence, including packages, vehicles, conveyances, and implements used in manufacture and transport.

Sections 15 & 15B: Empowers police, customs, and other officers to assist Excise authorities. Section 15B imposes a daily penalty of ₹100 for non-filing of information returns, without an upper limit.

Recommendations:

1. The presumption of mens rea under Section 9C places an undue burden on the accused. Its omission restores equality of arms between the prosecution and defence.
2. The blanket forfeiture powers under Section 10 are disproportionate and risk destroying productive business assets, especially where the evasion may relate to a small portion of operations. A graded, consent-based, and restitution-oriented approach ensures proportionality, reduces adversarial enforcement, and promotes voluntary compliance. Judicial oversight alone is insufficient without independent review to check state power.
3. Lastly, the penalty under Section 15B can become exorbitant if left uncapped, especially in old or legacy cases where data retrieval may pose real difficulties. Introducing a penalty cap introduces fairness and balances deterrence with practical compliance challenges.

Reasoning:

Government control over property transactions, registration, and penalties stifles entrepreneurial freedom, contractual autonomy, and market flexibility. By replacing state mandates with a Self-Regulatory Property Registry (SRPR), property owners, buyers, and sellers can freely regulate their transactions and registration processes based on voluntary agreements and market-driven incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	5/5	5/5	4.5/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	39.23

Essential Commodities Act, 1955

Provisions:

Section 3: The Government has the authority to control production, supply, distribution, etc, of essential commodities.

Section 6A: Authorities are empowered to confiscate essential commodities stored or handled in violation of this Act.

Section 7: Penalties under the Essential Commodities Act impose imprisonment (three months to seven years) and fines for contravening orders, with repeat offenders facing longer sentences.

Recommendations:

1. Create a Private Sector Essential Commodities Council (PSECC), an independent body composed of industry experts, producers, and consumer representatives. This body will oversee the voluntary regulation of production, distribution, and supply based on market signals and demand-supply dynamics.
2. The PSECC will set industry standards, resolve disputes, provide certification to companies and monitor fair pricing through audits, market access guidelines, and consumer feedback. It will create a voluntary reporting and compliance system. Businesses violating market standards (such as hoarding or unfair pricing) will be reported to the PSECC, which will have the authority to delist violators from its registry and exclude them from market platforms.
3. PSECC can maintain a public, searchable database of certified members, audit outcomes, and resolved disputes so that consumers and market partners can make informed choices.
4. PSECC can partner with other domestic or international self-regulatory bodies to mutually recognise certifications, expanding market access for compliant members. Allow consumer groups or co-ops to join PSECC as non-voting members, providing structured feedback channels and enhancing trust in the system.
5. Fines will be issued based on reparations, with amounts determined by independent arbitration panels rather than fixed penalties. The PSECC will create a blacklist for businesses found guilty of repeated non-compliance, which could lead to exclusion from business networks and loss of credibility in the market, as reported on voluntary compliance platforms.

Reasoning:

Creating an independent body like the PSECC allows industry professionals and consumers to actively manage standards, resolve disputes, and ensure ethical conduct through contractual enforcement, peer-reviewed ratings, and civil penalties. The PSECC ensures that businesses are held accountable to market participants, not state regulators, ensuring fair practices without coercion. This decentralised model fosters economic freedom, efficiency, and innovation while allowing businesses to thrive and comply through voluntary, market-driven incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	3.33/5	0/5	0/5	3.33/5	5/5	1.67/5	27.30

Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956

Provisions:

Section 19(1): Punishes persons who organise or assist gatherings at places other than those specified in the bye-laws of a recognised stock exchange, for the purpose of making bids or offers or entering into/performance of contracts in contravention of the Act. Penalty includes criminal liability.

Section 23A: Imposes a penalty on any person who fails to furnish required information, documents, or returns to a recognised stock exchange or maintain required books of account or records with a daily penalty of Rs 1 lakh for each continuing failure.

Recommendations:

1. Replace criminal penalties with a self-regulatory framework allowing alternative trading venues to register voluntarily and disclose trading norms through market-led and peer-reviewed Self-Regulatory Organisations. These SROs would be peer-driven, where alternative trading platforms (such as stock exchanges, commodity markets, and digital trading hubs) can choose to register with an SRO, thereby adhering to industry-specific norms and ethical guidelines. The SROs will provide certifications to platforms that comply with agreed-upon trading standards such as market transparency, fair pricing, and consumer protection.
2. Replace monetary penalties for delays or compliance failures with a self-declaration window where firms voluntarily disclose any delays or violations, allowing them to rectify the issue within a grace period, subject to peer-reviewed compliance ratings instead of fines.

Reasoning:

Voluntary disclosures and corrective windows uphold transparency and accountability without coercion, allowing market participants to self-correct while maintaining investor trust through reputational incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	3.67/5	1/5	3.67/5	2.67/5	3.67/5	2.67/5	35.28

Income-tax Act, 1961

Provisions:

Section 44AB(a): Mandates tax audit for persons carrying on business if turnover exceeds ₹1 crore in a financial year.

Section 269SS & Section 271D: Prohibits acceptance of cash loans or deposits of ₹20,000 or more. Violation attracts a penalty equal to the amount of the loan/deposit under Section 271D.

Section 200(3) read with Section 271H: Failure to file TDS returns or file with incorrect information attracts a penalty between ₹10,000 and ₹1,00,000.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish mandatory tax audits for businesses exceeding ₹1 crore turnover. Encourage businesses to use private auditors or third-party certification firms to maintain credibility and access to financial services, while ensuring voluntary transparency through public financial disclosures or voluntary business ratings.
2. Remove restrictions on cash loans or deposits. Allow private loan agreements to be freely made, subject to contractual terms and market enforcement (e.g., borrower credit ratings, peer-to-peer lending platforms, or private dispute resolution). Loans can be governed by reputation and legal contracts, with penalties enforced by private arbitration or insurance.
3. Eliminate state penalties for TDS return filing errors. Create private platforms or tax consultants to help businesses file accurate returns. Penalties for mistakes should be civil and based on market mechanisms such as service fees, reputation damage, or contractual obligations. Allow businesses to self-correct without state-imposed fines, offering voluntary compliance systems that are more responsive and flexible.

Reasoning:

State-imposed tax audits, loan restrictions, and penalties for TDS non-compliance create barriers to entry, bureaucratic delays, and disincentives for economic activity. Penalties should be civil and market-enforced, with voluntary disclosures being incentivised through competition, rather than state-imposed regulations. This approach encourages efficiency, transparency, and responsibility, allowing businesses to adapt to market needs without government interference.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	5/5	1/5	1/5	5/5	1.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	31.10

The Atomic Energy Act, 1962

Provisions:

Section 6(1): The Government controls the production, distribution, and use of specified minerals and atomic energy-related materials, requiring licenses for activities.

Section 6A: The Government has the authority to confiscate goods stored or mishandled under this Act.

Section 7: Criminal penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for non-compliance with the provisions related to atomic energy materials and activities.

Section 17: Special provisions for safety, regulating radiation exposure, waste disposal, and qualifications for employees handling radioactive substances.

Section 18: Restricts disclosure of information related to atomic energy plants, methods, and processes without government authorisation.

Recommendations:

1. Establish Atomic Energy Standards and Accreditation Council (AESAC)- a voluntary, industry-led, self-regulatory body composed of nuclear facility operators, technology developers, insurers, research institutions, industry experts, safety consultants and consumer representatives. AESAC shall oversee licensing, safety standards, and research practices. Under market-driven guidelines, these bodies will accredit organisations and enforce voluntary compliance with safety and environmental regulations.
2. Participation in AESAC shall be voluntary, but accredited status will grant members access to exclusive supplier networks, preferential insurance rates, and recognition on public registries. Non-compliant members may face delisting, loss of accreditation, and reputational disclosure, creating market-driven incentives for adherence without state coercion.
3. Disputes between producers and distributors shall be resolved through binding arbitration agreements under AESCC oversight. Reputation-based enforcement, supported by compensation funds, will ensure safe handling of radioactive materials and accountability for damages.
4. Replace criminal or administrative penalties with contractual financial restitution. Violating companies shall compensate affected parties through enforcement through private insurance arrangements, penalty clauses in commercial contracts, and AESCC-accredited arbitration panels.
5. AESAC shall manage public disclosure of research, methodologies, and technical information, ensuring that NDAs and intellectual property protections are upheld. Oversight committees will verify that disclosures preserve market transparency without compromising national security.

Reasoning:

State regulation over atomic energy production, distribution, and information disclosure creates barriers to innovation, freedom of contract, and market competition. By eliminating coercive state control and replacing it with voluntary self-regulation, industry certifications, and market-driven safety and compliance, businesses can innovate, collaborate, and manage risks more efficiently. The free market can ensure safe handling, environmental responsibility, and ethical research through peer accountability, voluntary standards, and private dispute resolution, rather than state-imposed penalties and fines. This decentralised approach fosters a dynamic, responsive market where businesses are incentivised to act responsibly and comply through economic incentives rather than coercion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.5/5	5/5	1.67/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	35.63

The Customs Act, 1962

Provisions:

Section 72(B), 72(D): Mandates confiscation of warehoused goods if not removed within the permissible period or not duly accounted for.

Sections 77 & 78: Require declaration of baggage contents and determine the duty applicable on the date of declaration.

Recommendations:

1. Remove the mandate for confiscation of goods. Allow private warehousing companies to set their own storage and handling rules, with contracts that specify fees for delays, misaccounting, or damages. Disputes can be resolved through private arbitration or insurance claims.
2. Abolish the government's requirement for baggage declarations and duty calculation. Use third-party customs brokers or freelance logistics experts who provide voluntary, transparent services to calculate duties and ensure compliance, with market-driven competition ensuring efficiency and fairness.

Reasoning:

Coercive measures like confiscation and government-regulated duty calculations hinder free trade and introduce unnecessary bureaucracy. Private warehouses and customs brokers can voluntarily create transparent processes to handle storage, transportation, and customs, resolving issues without state intervention. Dispute resolution, warehousing, and logistics will be more efficient, flexible, and fair when governed by free market competition, enabling businesses and consumers to thrive.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	26.83

Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963

Provisions:

Section 6: The Central Government may, in the interest of developing India's export trade, notify commodities for mandatory quality control or inspections, specify applicable standards, and prohibit their export without certification or recognised conformity marks.

Section 7: The Central Government may establish or recognise agencies for quality control/inspection of export goods. These agencies may examine goods, certify conformity with standards or export contracts, and charge fees. They can amend/suspend certificates if fraud or deterioration is suspected. An appeal against the denial of a certificate can be made to a government-notified appellate authority, but there is no scope for judicial review, and the decision of the appellate authority is final.

Recommendations:

1. Replace section 6 with a Voluntary Export Quality Assurance Framework governed by an Industry Certification Council (ICC) composed of exporters, trade bodies, and technical experts. The Central Government may enforce but not mandate standards or export prohibitions unless backed by clear industry consensus and evidence of harm.
2. Quality control shall be through voluntary third-party certifications, blockchain-based audit platforms, or industry rating indexes.
3. Replace government-established agencies with voluntary, decentralised certification bodies governed by trade associations and accredited by an Independent Export Standards Forum (IESF). Certification should be market-driven, based on buyer requirements and transparent contract terms.
4. Disputes should be resolved through neutral commercial arbitration, not state-controlled appellate authorities. The government may act only as a facilitator for global recognition of Indian certifiers, not as a regulatory or final decision-maker.

Reasoning:

This shift limits discretionary state power, promotes industry-led self-regulation, and respects the freedom of trade. Exports naturally maintain quality to protect market access, making state mandates redundant. Allowing non-state certification fosters competition, innovation, and responsiveness to international buyers. Removing government control over appeals and inspection eliminates discretion-driven interference and enables predictable, peer-led, contract-based resolution mechanisms.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	4/5	2/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	1.67/5	32.33

The Hotel Receipts Tax Act, 1980

Provisions:

Section 3: This section mandates that the Act applies to hotels where the room charges for residential accommodation provided to any person during the previous year are ₹75 or more per day per individual.

Section 4: This section grants tax authorities, including Income Tax Officers and Inspectors, the same powers as under the Income Tax Act for the execution of their duties.

Section 15:This section imposes penalties for failure to furnish the required return of chargeable receipts.

Section 34: This section allows the Board to make rules, under the control of the Central Government, for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

Recommendations:

1. Create a Self-Regulatory Hospitality Body (SRHB) where hotels can voluntarily register based on their desire to adhere to industry standards. The SRHB would set minimum standards for transparency, tax reporting, and consumer protection. Hotels that join the SRHB would be certified for complying with these standards, ensuring fair competition and market accountability.
2. The SRHB would replace government-imposed inspections with third-party audits and peer-reviewed compliance assessments. The body would handle non-compliance through reputation penalties (e.g., delisting from preferred networks, blacklisting for investors).
3. Introduce a self-declaration system for businesses to report on their compliance. Late or incorrect filings can be handled through private arbitration or compensation mechanisms instead of punitive fines. SRHB certification would be contingent on timely and accurate reporting.
4. The SRHB would establish and enforce industry-specific standards for tax reporting, hotel receipts, and compliance. The SRHB would also be responsible for creating guidelines and certification systems that businesses voluntarily choose to follow.

Reasoning:

By transitioning to a self-regulated model overseen by an independent Self-Regulatory Hospitality Body (SRHB), businesses are incentivised to comply voluntarily with tax, reporting, and operational standards. This model removes government-imposed restrictions, placing accountability on industry participants and market forces. The self-regulating framework encourages innovation and ensures the hospitality sector thrives through voluntary compliance and reputation-based enforcement.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	1.5/5	4.33/5	1/5	2/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	33.90

Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991

Provisions:

Section 10: This section grants authorities the power to enter and inspect any premises where hazardous substances are handled to ensure compliance with the Act.

Section 11: This section empowers authorities to search and seize any property or document if they believe it is necessary to ensure compliance with the Act.

Section 12: This section authorises authorities to issue directions to owners of hazardous substances to take preventive measures or cease operations if deemed necessary.

Section 14: This section imposes penalties for failure to comply with the provisions of the Act, including fines and imprisonment.

Recommendations:

1. Create a Self-Regulatory Industry Body (SRIB) that oversees compliance with hazardous substance safety standards. Companies voluntarily join the SRIB and submit to regular audits conducted by independent, accredited auditors. Non-compliant businesses will be sanctioned through market consequences, such as losing business partnerships or access to preferred contracts.
2. Compliance issues will be addressed through private arbitration and dispute resolution platforms managed by the SRIB. The SRIB will offer mediation services for parties involved in compliance disputes and implement peer-reviewed audits to address concerns regarding handling hazardous substances.
3. The SRIB will allow businesses handling hazardous substances to voluntarily implement safety measures, with peer-reviewed compliance and best practices enforced by independent industry experts. Self-reported compliance and contractual penalties will ensure that companies take appropriate action to manage risks, with industry-backed insurance schemes providing financial protection in case of accidents.
4. Instead of government fines and imprisonment, market-driven penalties will be enforced by the SRIB. Violations of safety standards or failure to adhere to voluntary hazardous substance handling practices will lead to peer-enforced penalties such as exclusion from industry networks, loss of access to funding, or damaged reputation, ensuring businesses are accountable to their peers rather than the government.

Reasoning:

In this context, replacing state-imposed inspections, searches, and penalties with voluntary industry oversight and market-based enforcement encourages businesses to take responsibility for their operations while incentivising good practices. Dispute resolution via independent arbitrators creates a flexible and cost-effective avenue to address concerns without relying on state intervention. Instead of imposing penalties, the market will allow businesses to use industry-backed insurance schemes to manage liability related to hazardous substance handling. This gives businesses the freedom to self-insure, compensate victims, and maintain long-term operational viability while ensuring that the market enforces compliance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.5/5	4.33/5	1/5	2/5	3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	28.24

The Energy Conservation Act, 2001

Provisions:

Section 14: Central government controls production, use, and import of atomic energy-related materials, with mandatory licenses for certain activities and equipment.

Section 15: State government can enforce energy conservation codes, levy fees, and inspect energy usage compliance in designated buildings and industries.

Section 17: Designated agency authorised to inspect energy consumption, equipment, and facilities, with powers of entry and information collection for compliance verification.

Section 18: The central or State government can restrict disclosure of information related to atomic energy facilities and operations.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Private Nuclear & Energy Standards Council (PNESC) as a voluntary, industry-led body comprising facility operators, insurers, auditors, and consumer representatives.
2. PNESC may issue private safety certifications for facilities handling radioactive substances, enforced through market-based liability contracts and voluntary insurance coverage for potential damages.
3. Allow public disclosure of research and methods, protected by non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) for sensitive proprietary information, regulated by industry guidelines and peer oversight.
4. Encourage private energy conservation bodies and voluntary certification schemes for businesses to adhere to energy efficiency standards, with peer-reviewed compliance and market-driven incentives.
5. Empower private third-party auditors to inspect energy usage, with results published in market platforms for consumer awareness and market-driven consequences for non-compliance (e.g., exclusion from business networks, loss of reputation).

Reasoning:

State control and inspections on atomic energy and energy consumption enforce rigid, inefficient administrative structures that hinder innovation, market flexibility, and entrepreneurial freedom. Self-regulation via voluntary market certifications, peer-to-peer enforcement, and contractual obligations ensures safety and compliance without state intervention. By removing coercive regulations, businesses are incentivised to uphold high standards for safety, environmental responsibility, and energy efficiency through market-based mechanisms such as third-party audits, insurance coverage, and voluntary certifications.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	3/5	3.33/5	1.67/5	3.67/5	4.55/5	5/5	3.33/5	63.87

The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI)

Provisions:

Section 14(1): Empowers the secured creditor to approach the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate or District Magistrate for assistance in taking possession of secured assets. The Magistrate is bound to act on the creditor's request.

Section 18(1): An appeal to the Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal (DRAT) requires a mandatory deposit of 50% of the debt amount, reducible to 25% by the Tribunal for reasons recorded.

Section 29: Punishes any contravention or abetment under the Act with imprisonment up to one year, or fine, or both.

Recommendations:

1. Establish the Secured Transactions & Dispute Resolution Council (STDRC) - a voluntary, industry-led self-regulatory body comprising secured creditors, borrower associations, arbitrators, insurers, and market network operators. STDRC shall accredit private arbitration panels and contractual enforcement services, enabling secured creditors and borrowers to resolve disputes without state intervention.
2. STDRC shall maintain a roster of accredited arbitrators and operate standardised escrow/bond systems to secure both parties' interests.
3. STDRC shall manage a private compensation and damages fund, oversee claims processes, and facilitate market-based sanctions such as exclusion from business networks and public reputational disclosure for violators.

Reasoning:

State-mandated interventions like magistrate involvement, mandatory deposits, and criminal penalties undermine private contractual freedom and market efficiency. Disputes can be managed through arbitration, contractual agreements, and reputation-based systems that incentivise compliance without coercion. This system reduces government overreach, fosters accountability through civil remedies, and ensures businesses can resolve conflicts in a more efficient, flexible, and less punitive manner.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	3.33/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	27.83

Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006

Provisions:

Section 52(1): Imposes a penalty of up to ₹3 lakh for manufacturing, selling, or distributing any sub-standard or misbranded food article.

Section 55: Provides a penalty up to ₹2 lakh for non-compliance with directions of the Food Safety Officer.

Section 57: Prescribes a penalty of up to ₹2 lakh for non-injurious adulterants and ₹10 lakh for injurious adulterants.

Section 63: Prescribes imprisonment up to 6 months and a fine of up to ₹5 lakh for operating a food business without a license.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Self-Regulatory Food Safety Body (SRFSB), an independent regulatory body composed of food producers, industry experts, and consumer representatives. This body will set voluntary quality standards and conduct regular inspections. Certified audits and market ratings will serve as the primary enforcement mechanisms, with violators facing market sanctions such as reputation damage or contractual penalties.
2. The SRFSB will provide a framework for compliance that food businesses can voluntarily join. Non-compliant businesses will be de-listed from certification programs and peer-reviewed marketplaces, creating a reputation-based enforcement system. Instead of fines, violations can be resolved through civil remedies and compensation mechanisms.
3. The SRFSB will enforce safety standards through third-party testing and consumer protection organisations. The market will regulate adulteration by using independent food safety certifications, with businesses liable for harm through civil claims and reputation-based penalties.

Reasoning:

State-imposed penalties and mandatory licenses stifle entrepreneurial freedom, innovation, and market efficiency. A self-regulatory system, led by an independent Self-Regulatory Food Safety Body (SRFSB), provides an alternative that encourages voluntary compliance through certifications, third-party audits, and peer-driven market enforcement. Instead of punitive measures, businesses will be incentivised to meet high standards through market reputation, voluntary contracts, and consumer-driven accountability. This approach enhances flexibility, efficiency, and responsibility, driving the food industry toward greater innovation, consumer protection, and economic freedom.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	4/5	3.67/5	2/5	4.33/5	1/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	37

Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008

Provisions:

Section 6(2): If an LLP carries on business with less than two partners for over six months, the sole partner becomes personally liable for obligations incurred during that period, provided they had knowledge of such status.

Section 10(1): Failure to comply with requirements relating to designated partners attracts a penalty of ₹10,000 and ₹100 per day for continuing contravention, subject to maximums of ₹1 lakh (LLP) and ₹50,000 (each partner).

Section 35(2): For failure to file annual returns, penalties are ₹100 per day per defaulting party, with maximum caps of ₹1 lakh (LLP) and ₹50,000 (designated partner).

Recommendations:

1. : Remove automatic personal liability for the sole partner of an LLP after six months of operating with fewer than two partners. If a business operates with a single partner, the contractual agreements should define liability, not state-mandated personal accountability. Voluntary partnerships and indemnity clauses will govern business operations and protect individual interests.
2. Allow LLP governance to be enforced by private contracts, where partners agree to enforce each other's responsibilities. Non-compliance can be addressed through voluntary dispute resolution, peer-reviewed partner ratings, and contractual obligations rather than government fines.
3. Let LLPs and their partners manage compliance through private, third-party auditors and self-regulating reporting systems. Failure to file can lead to loss of access to certain business networks, marketplaces, or funding platforms unless voluntary reporting is maintained.

Reasoning:

State-imposed penalties for non-compliance in business operations, including mandatory filings and partner requirements, create unnecessary barriers to entry, stifle entrepreneurial freedom, and increase administrative burdens. Instead of criminalising minor infractions or imposing fines, market actors are incentivised to respect their obligations through civil remedies and peer-driven enforcement. This approach leads to more flexible, innovative business practices while reducing state interference and promoting economic freedom.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	1.5/5	3/5	3.33/5	3/5	0/5	3/5	0/5	21.30

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 7: Completely prohibits any organisation receiving foreign contributions from transferring them to any other person.

Section 8(1)(b): Restricts administrative expenses to 20% of foreign contributions in a financial year, unless prior approval is obtained from the Central Government.

Recommendations:

1. Allow organisations receiving foreign contributions to freely transfer funds to other entities as long as transparency is maintained. Use voluntary disclosure platforms, audits, and peer reviews to ensure accountability and proper use of funds, with market-based consequences for non-compliance.
2. Remove the cap on administrative expenses and allow organisations to determine their own spending priorities. Use donor feedback, funding platforms, and performance-based evaluations to regulate administrative efficiency and ensure effective use of funds.

Reasoning:

Government-imposed restrictions on fund transfers and administrative expenses create inefficiencies and limit the flexibility of organisations to manage resources effectively. Rather than state interference, organisations are incentivised to act responsibly through reputation systems, donor trust, and public reporting. This results in better efficiency, innovation, and reduced bureaucracy, allowing non-profit organisations to fulfil their missions without unnecessary state constraints.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	4.33/5	1.67/5	2/5	3/5	5/5	3.33/5	38.13

Companies Act, 2013

Provisions:

Section 129(7): If a company fails to comply with the provisions related financial statements, the Managing Director, Whole-time Director in charge of finance, the Chief Financial Officer, or any other person so designated by the Board, and in their absence, all the directors, shall be punishable with imprisonment up to one year, or fine ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹5,00,000, or both.

Recommendations:

1. Establish Corporate Self-Regulation and Accountability Authority (CSRAA), a non-governmental, non-profit organisation comprising a diverse range of market participants, including company executives, investors, auditors, industry experts, and consumer representatives.
2. The CSRAA will manage a voluntary, market-driven audit system, where companies undergo regular audits by peer-reviewed auditors who are members of the CSRAA. Companies can voluntarily subscribe to be part of the audit program.
3. Auditors will assess companies based on their compliance with financial reporting standards, corporate governance norms, and ethical business practices. The audit results will be published in public reports and accessible to investors, partners, and stakeholders.
4. The CSRAA will provide alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (e.g., mediation, arbitration) to settle disagreements between companies and stakeholders regarding compliance.

Reasoning:

The creation of the CSRAA fosters a self-regulating, decentralised environment where businesses are motivated to maintain ethical practices and transparency because reputation in the market becomes their most valuable asset. Investor networks, consumer behaviour, and public perception become the primary enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that companies that fail to comply with industry standards or engage in unethical behaviour face real consequences in the form of delisting, blacklisting, or loss of access to markets. This system removes the need for government oversight, allowing businesses to be accountable to each other and the marketplace, fostering efficiency, innovation, and economic freedom while ensuring that companies are motivated by long-term sustainability and ethical growth.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	1.67/5	3.67/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	2.67/5	36.54

The Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 122: Mandates registration for suppliers whose aggregate turnover exceeds ₹20 lakhs (₹10 lakhs for special category States), with penalties for non-registration.

Sections 39 & 47: Require timely return filing; late fees of ₹100 per day (maximum ₹5,000) imposed under Section 47.

Section 67(1): Empowers Joint Commissioners to authorise inspections/searches upon "reason to believe" regarding evasion.

Section 132(1)(a-h): Criminalises various tax offences, including fake invoices, wrongful ITC claims, or evasion, with punishment up to 5 years based on tax quantum

Recommendations:

1. Create a Self-Regulatory GST Body (SRGB), a market-led organisation that voluntarily certifies businesses for GST registration and compliance. Businesses can opt to join the SRGB and comply with agreed-upon tax standards without being forced to register. Non-compliance will be managed through market sanctions, such as exclusion from preferred networks or investor blacklists, rather than state penalties.
2. Eliminate late fees for non-filing of returns. SRGB will create a voluntary self-reporting system, incentivising businesses to submit timely returns through market-based rewards, such as lower operational costs, discounted financing, or increased market access. Businesses that fail to report on time face reputational penalties or market sanctions (e.g., removal from business directories).
3. The SRGB will oversee compliance through third-party auditors or certified bodies. Violations like tax evasion or non-compliance will be managed through private audits and voluntary disclosures, with peer-reviewed sanctions and dispute resolution handled through the SRGB rather than government-driven inspections. The SRGB will implement civil remedies instead of criminal penalties. Offences like fake invoices or wrongful claims will be dealt with through financial restitution, contract enforcement, or market-driven penalties (such as exclusion from business networks or access to capital).

Reasoning:

The SRGB creates a framework where businesses voluntarily adhere to tax compliance standards, incentivised by reputation and market access rather than government mandates. Rather than late fees or criminal penalties, businesses are motivated by incentives such as access to new markets, investment opportunities, and reduced operational costs for those who comply with self-regulated tax reporting. The system promotes voluntary compliance, allowing businesses to operate freely while maintaining ethical and legal tax practices. The SRGB can adapt to changes in the business environment, ensuring more efficient and flexible compliance mechanisms than state regulation.

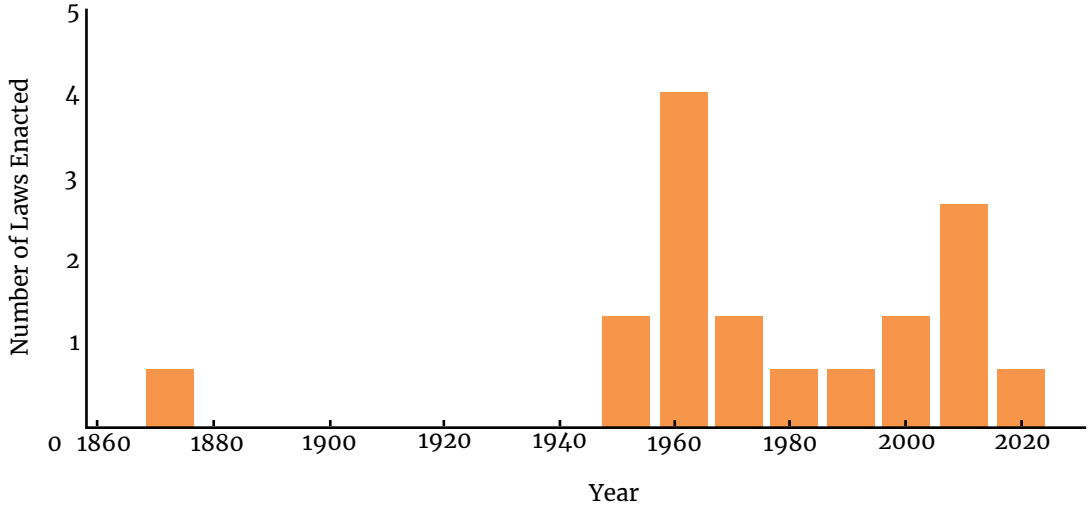
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	0/5	1/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	1.67/5	31.90

Maharashtra

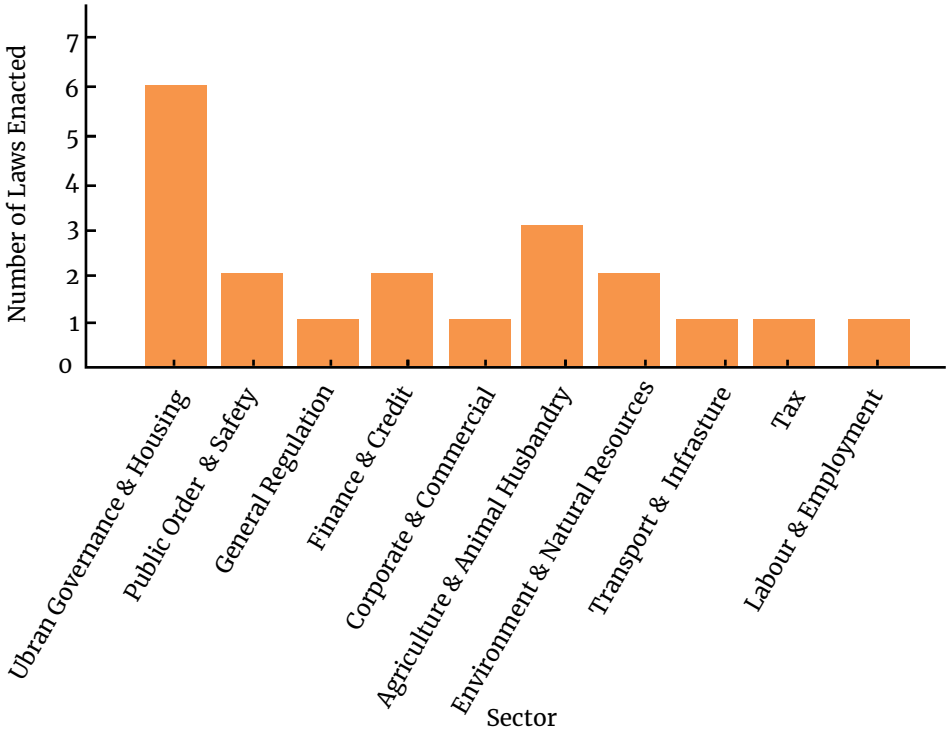
Maharashtra

Maharashtra, India's top state with an estimated GSDP of around 45.31 lakh crore rupees for 2024-2025, focuses on sectors like manufacturing, services, ports and agro processing. The state was recognised as a top performer in the BRAP with landmark reforms such as an online single window portal called Maitri for various approvals and permissions. In a similar assessment, when a ranking system existed, the state ranked in the 13th position among all states and UTs in the country. Reforming business laws, especially those governing land and infrastructure, can address regional imbalances and unlock untapped growth in underserved districts. With nearly half the population in urban areas, navigating the regulatory interplay between state and municipal bodies requires streamlined, locally sensitive legal frameworks.

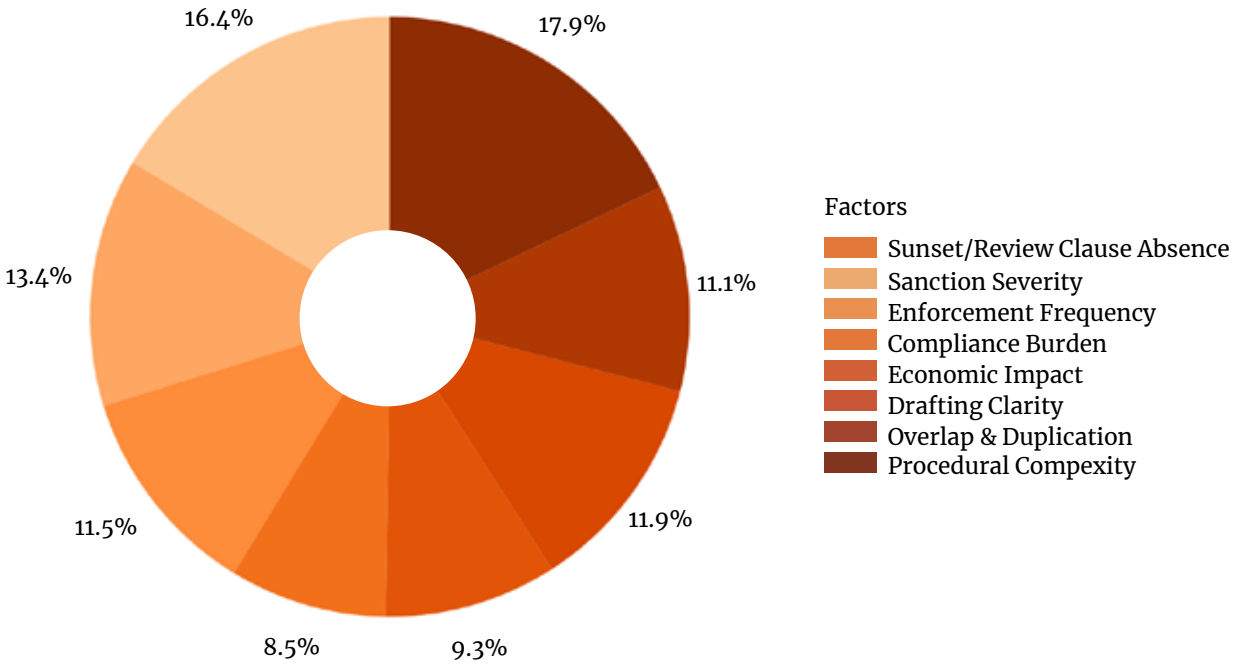
Year-wise Distribution of Laws- Maharashtra



Sector-wise Distribution of Laws- Maharashtra



MCDA Factor Distribution- Maharashtra



The Bombay Municipal Corporation Act, 1888

Provisions:

Construction and building regulations: Section 152A (Unlawful Constructions); Section 347 (Building Use Change); Section 353A (Stop-Work Orders); Section 353B (Demolition); Section 354 (Dangerous Buildings) & 378B, 378E, and 380 (Unsanitary/Obstructive Buildings)

Taxes and Financial Enforcement: Section 202 (Heavy Interest); Section 203 (Asset Seizure) & 204 (Movable Goods Seizure); Section 210 (Summary Seizure); Section 211 (Lawsuits); Section 212 (Tax as First Charge); Section 491 (Recovering Expenses); Section 492 (Tenant Liability)

Vendor and Street Regulations: Section 312 (Street Obstructions) & 313 (Depositing Goods); Sections 313A & 313B (Licensing); Section 314 (Immediate Removal); Section 404 (Unlicensed Markets)

Trade, Health, and Safety: Section 394 (Licensing for Trades) & 415 (Unwholesome Food); Section 416 (Perishables) & 417B (Food That "Appears" Bad)

Recommendations:

1. Private environmental certification agencies shall audit and verify furnaces for smoke efficiency.
2. Businesses can use third-party certifications to advertise their compliance to customers and attract market advantages.
3. Allow consumers and environmental organisations to rate and review businesses on their environmental practices, with reputational consequences for non-compliance.
4. Use voluntary certification by safety and health bodies to verify proper storage and handling of hazardous materials.
5. Introduce voluntary market rating systems, where businesses can join trusted industry-led forums that set operational standards. These standards are self-enforced through community trust and consumer ratings.
6. Let certified logistics and food safety organisations monitor the movement of goods, ensuring food safety through third-party audits and peer-reviewed certifications.
7. Allow landowners to use their property freely, but encourage private sector planners and community zoning agreements to ensure responsible development based on market demand and community approval.
8. Shift from a blanket ban on unlicensed private markets to a streamlined, voluntary registration and licensing process. Facilitate the creation of official vending zones rather than outlawing existing ones.
9. Encourage local stewardship and community land agreements that define proper water use through voluntary regulation and peer accountability.
10. Use market-based advertising platforms where businesses must comply with industry standards, regulated by certified bodies. Consumer feedback, not government penalties, would manage violations.

Reasoning:

State-mandated licenses, penalties, and seizures interfere with personal and property rights, stifling economic activity and causing inefficiencies. Under a classical liberal framework, market-driven solutions encourage voluntary compliance, transparency, and accountability. Businesses, not the state, should determine how to operate responsibly based on consumer demand and peer regulation. Replacing coercive measures with voluntary certifications, peer-based enforcement, and civil remedies ensures better quality control, fosters innovation, and upholds the principle of economic freedom without government overreach. In this environment, businesses can thrive by responding to consumer preferences and ethical standards, not state mandates.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	4.33/5	3/5	5/5	3.67/5	54.74

Maharashtra Prohibition Act, 1949

Provisions:

Section 66(1)(b): Punishes possession of liquor, including traditional brews, without a permit.

Section 65(a) & 66(1)(e): Penalises the manufacturing of liquor without a license, including traditional brewers.

Section 68: Grants sweeping powers to excise officers to arrest without warrant, enter premises, and seize property.

Section 70: Provides for confiscation of vehicles, vessels, or carts used to transport liquor, even without a trial.

Section 81: Penalises public consumption or the mere presence of alcohol in one's body.

Recommendations:

1. For Sections 66(1)(b), 65(a), and 66(1)(e), a Beverage Guild of Maharashtra (BGM) - a decentralised, self-regulatory body of producers, vendors, and consumers-may be formed. The BGM can issue Traditional Brew Certification to small-scale producers who adhere to community-agreed safety and quality standards, eliminating the need for a state license or permit. Non-compliance would result in BGM delisting, loss of certification, and public reputation alerts, not fines or imprisonment.
2. For Sections 68 and 70, the power to arrest without a warrant or confiscate property should be abolished. Instead, a BGM-appointed Arbiter's Council can adjudicate disputes regarding the transport of uncertified beverages.
3. For Section 81, a Public Conduct Charter can be adopted by local municipalities, outlining specific behaviours, such as obstruction or aggression, that constitute a public nuisance. The charter would be enforced through civil fines and community service, but the mere presence of alcohol in the body would not be a punishable offence.
4. Allow communities to set norms on safe quantities and sanitary storage, monitored by BGM auditors.
5. Permit inter-district transport of TBC-certified beverages up to a defined limit without Excise clearance. Transporters must carry a BGM-issued digital QR certificate, which is valid statewide.

Reasoning:

Licensing small or traditional beverage producers under the same regime as commercial distillers is disproportionate. Most traditional brewers operate in a low-margin, high-trust local economy. A peer-reviewed certification model preserves cultural and economic continuity without triggering criminal law, while maintaining food safety through social reputation mechanisms. Transferring resolution to a sector-specific, community-trusted forum enables fairness, reduces extortion, and preserves dignity. Micro-distributors face disproportionate legal risk for small-volume inter-district delivery, essential for sustaining demand. A digital, community-issued transport credential reduces friction, cost, and harassment while allowing traceability and consumer redress.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	0/5	5/5	4/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	85.22

Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, 1950

Provisions:

Section 66A: Alienating immovable trust property without prior approval can lead to imprisonment up to 6 months or a Rs 25,000 fine, or both.

Section 66B: Failure to comply with directives under Section 41AA leads to 3 months' imprisonment, or a Rs 20,000 fine, or both.

Section 66C: Collecting public contributions without permission can lead to jail for up to 3 months or a fine of 1.5 times the collected amount, or both.

Recommendations:

1. Beneficiary Consent Protocol: Trusts dealing with immovable property may adopt a Beneficiary Consent Protocol, co-developed with donors and named beneficiaries. Property-related decisions could be disclosed on a public digital ledger that independent civil trust councils maintain. This mediates public review but does not require prior bureaucratic approval.
2. Collective Compliance Record: Unlike unilateral compliance with administrative directives, trusts may opt into a Collective Compliance Record, where responses to suggestions under Section 41AA are transparently documented in consultation with stakeholder boards. If a trust deviates, the log captures their reasoning: peer associations, not state actors, flag recurring non-responsiveness.
3. Transparent Giving Agreement: Trusts intending to raise public funds can enrol in a Transparent Giving Agreement. In this voluntary, public-facing system, fund flows and purposes are self-declared and reviewed by independent donor panels. First-time procedural lapses (e.g., missing permission) are handled through donor notification or restitution, not legal penalties.

Reasoning:

When trusts are allowed to work directly with their donors, beneficiaries, and independent panels, regulation appears less like surveillance and more like a shared responsibility. Decisions about property, finances, or compliance aren't just signed off; they're talked through, recorded, and opened to those who are actually affected. This creates room for reasoning, disagreement, and correction, rather than rushing to criminalise minor lapses. When procedures are transparent and participation is voluntary, public trust isn't enforced; it's earned. A system like this doesn't ask for blind compliance but for good faith. That makes it not just more ethical but also more durable in practice.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	5/5	2/5	3/5	5/5	4.33/5	3/5	39.00

Maharashtra Stamp Act, 1958

Provisions:

Article 47 of Schedule I: Stamp duty ranges from ₹500 to ₹5,000 (flat rate), regardless of scale.

Article 40(b) of Schedule I: Ad valorem duty applies to all secured loan documents, even small private loans.

Section 34: Permits a penalty up to 10 times the deficient amount

Article 36 of Schedule I: Stamp duty includes a fixed plus ad valorem component, applied uniformly.

Section 31: Requires parties to approach the Collector to resolve doubts about the applicable stamp duty.

Recommendations:

1. For Article 47 of Schedule I, a Partnership Guild (PG), a voluntary association of micro-entrepreneurs, could manage a self-declaration platform for partnership deeds. The PG could allow firms with capital below ₹5 lakh to register partnership deeds for a nominal, fixed fee, thereby exempting them from the flat stamp duty.
2. For Article 40(b) of Schedule I, the law should exempt informal peer-to-peer loans up to ₹2 lakh from the ad valorem duty. A Community Finance Board (CFB), a voluntary, community-led body, could recognise these loans and allow for the use of self-registered promissory notes with a fixed, nominal duty of ₹100.
3. For Section 34, a Dispute Resolution Forum (DRF), a private, third-party arbitration body, could adjudicate cases of insufficient stamping. A 30-day self-correction window should be provided before any penalty is imposed.
4. For Article 36 of Schedule I, a Tenants and Traders Guild (TTG), a voluntary association of small-scale vendors and traders, could oversee leases. For short-term leases (under 12 months) and business premises under 300 sq. ft., a nominal stamp duty (e.g., ₹100–₹300) could be fixed, regardless of the ad valorem component.
5. For Section 31, the power to adjudicate stamp duty doubts should be decentralised. Registered local business guilds or digital self-assessment tools could issue advisory classification certificates for common document types. These certificates would be considered valid unless overridden explicitly by the Collector after a formal, complaint-driven review.

Reasoning:

A flat fee for partnership deeds unfairly penalises micro-entrepreneurs and discourages the formalisation of small firms. By introducing a graded fee structure and allowing a peer-led guild to manage a self-declaration platform, the cost is aligned with the capacity of the business, encouraging formalisation without bureaucratic friction. The current duty burden on small loans discourages borrowers and lenders from using written agreements, which can lead to disputes and a lack of transparency. The law can improve contract enforceability and transparency by exempting micro-loans from the ad valorem duty and allowing a community-based body to oversee a simplified process. The fear of severe penalties discourages the proper documentation of transactions. A capped penalty with a self-correction period, managed by a third-party body, would improve compliance and reduce litigation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	4/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	69.41

Maharashtra Co-operative Societies Act, 1960

Provisions:

Section 5: No person or entity shall use the word "co-operative" without being registered under the Act.

Section 69: Every society must get its accounts audited annually by a certified auditor, regardless of turnover.

Section 76: The Registrar or officers are empowered to inspect books, premises, or management decisions at any time.

Section 79: The Registrar has the power to call for information from any society at any time.

Section 88: The Registrar can remove or supersede a managing committee if public interest or mismanagement is perceived.

Recommendations:

1. The term 'co-operative' may be used by any group of individuals or entities that choose to associate voluntarily for mutual benefit and self-governance. To distinguish between bona fide co-operatives and others, independent cooperative federations or associations may maintain voluntary public registries, issue certifications, and assign trust ratings to genuine member-driven organisations. Certifications may be tied to member-governance criteria, not legal form. Platforms, wholesalers, and retail chains may require certification before giving "co-op" discounts or benefits.
2. For Section 69, introduce a 'Self-Audit Framework' for micro-societies with turnover below ₹10 lakh, including member-approved financial statements with clear certification language and optional peer-review through a registered 'Audit Facilitation Network' recognised by the Registrar.
3. Alternatively, a Neighbourhood Auditing Pool could be formed, where members from different micro-societies are trained to conduct simple, peer-to-peer audits on a rotational basis. This would build trust and transparency without the prohibitive cost of external auditors.
4. For Section 76, replace routine or arbitrary inspections with a consent-based, complaint-driven model. Inspections would only be triggered when a formal complaint is lodged by a member of the community or through voluntary requests for verification initiated by the society itself.
5. Prior Notice and Consent: Any inspection should require prior written notice and the consent of the co-operative's managing committee.
6. Decentralised Mediation: In complaint-triggered cases, a Co-operative Mediation Board could be established, composed of elected representatives from various co-operatives, to act as a neutral mediator. This would ensure a balanced process that respects the freedom of association.
7. Micro-entities could voluntarily file annual disclosures on a community-managed, decentralised e-platform.

Reasoning:

This tiered approach respects the desire of informal groups to self-identify as "co-operatives" without forcing them into a rigid regulatory framework. It preserves the identity of grassroots organisations and encourages voluntary collectivism. Mandating a costly audit for small self-run cooperatives places an undue financial burden on them. Unchecked power to inspect at any time creates a climate of fear and can be used for coercion. A complaint-driven, consent-based model, facilitated by a third-party body, balances the need for accountability with the fundamental principle of freedom of association.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.5/5	2.67/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	5/5	2.67/5	66.52

Maharashtra Purchase Tax on Sugarcane Act, 1962

Provisions:

Section 3: Levy of purchase tax on sugarcane for manufacturing sugar.

Section 5: A license is required to purchase sugarcane to manufacture sugar.

Section 7A & 7B: Imposes penalties and interest for failing to submit returns or pay the tax on time.

Section 12: Unpaid tax and penalties can be recovered as an arrear of land revenue.

Section 17: Vicarious liability is extended to directors and managers of companies for offences committed by the company.

Section 14: The Commissioner has the power to inspect records and accounts with or without notice.

Recommendations:

1. For Section 3, form a Sugarcane Growers' Cooperative Alliance (SGCA), a voluntary association of growers, factory owners, and local representatives. The SGCA will decide and collect any purchase tax, with funds used for infrastructure and research in the region. Participation and compliance will be voluntary, based on market reputation and mutual benefits, not government mandates.
2. For Section 5, replace the state-issued licensing mechanism with a voluntary SGCA-issued compliance certificate or reputation score for the purpose of purchasing sugarcane. Factory owners would agree to transparent and fair purchasing practices as a condition of their SGCA membership.
3. For Sections 7A & 7B, the SGCA would handle interest payments through its own arbitration board, as per the rules agreed upon by its members. A voluntary correction platform would replace a show-cause notice and penalty regime. Penalties could include a temporary suspension of voting rights within the SGCA or a public listing in a non-compliant registry, rather than fines or legal action.
4. For Section 12, the power to recover unpaid tax and penalties as an arrear of land revenue should be abolished. Instead, the SGCA would handle recovery through civil claim proceedings or contractual risk instruments.
5. For Section 17, eliminate vicarious criminal liability for company directors and managers. Instead, the SGCA's Arbiter's Council would handle corporate liability by applying reputational or contractual sanctions to those found to have acted in bad faith through a voluntary arbitration process.
6. For Section 14, the power of state-led inspections should be replaced with periodic third-party certified disclosures, reviewed by the SGCA. Factory owners would submit voluntary, transparent disclosures of their records to the SGCA, and SGCA-accredited auditors would conduct audits.

Reasoning:

Replacing a state-mandated tax with a self-imposed and self-regulated contribution system empowers the local community. This model ensures that the funds generated are directly reinvested in the community that produced them, fostering a greater sense of ownership and mutual accountability. Replacing a state-enforced license with a compliance certificate from a trade guild allows the industry to self-regulate. This removes bureaucratic friction and ensures purchasing standards are driven by market norms and community trust rather than punitive state control.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	3/5	2/5	0/5	4/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	27.82

The Maharashtra Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act, 1963

Provisions:

Section 6: Punishes any person who buys or sells farm produce in a market area without getting a license from the APMC. Offenders can face imprisonment for up to six months or pay a fine of Rs 5000.

Section 7: Makes it a crime to sell farm produce outside the official APMC market yard without approval, even if it's a small or local sale. The penalty includes imprisonment up to 6 months, or a fine which may extend to Rs 5,000, or both.

Section 31: Penalises traders who don't pay market fees, even if they haven't used APMC services. The law treats non-payment as a crime, with heavy fines and continued penalties, including a fine of up to Rs 500. If the violation continues, an additional fine of up to Rs 100 per day may be imposed for each day the default continues after conviction.

Recommendations:

1. Establish Independent Local Trade and Agricultural Guild (ILTAG), which would issue and digitally register Shubh Aarambh Voucher (Easy Start License) with proper mention of dates, incentivising new traders to start operating legally for 6 months without prior licenses. This fosters voluntary exchange and local trust and respects individual agency and liberty. Community arbitration panels within ILTAG resolve disputes using transparent voting or mediation processes.
2. ILTAG, working with farmer collectives, designates "Green Zones" outside mandis during harvest season where sales are based on mutual consent and recognition. Farmers can trade freely without intermediaries or fear of penalty. Local groups can maintain records and resolve disputes through community mechanisms and voting systems.
3. Simple Fee Payment: Let traders use an online ledger or even a mobile app to report their sales and calculate the fee they owe. Traders who pay on time get a good compliance score, which gamifies compliance. The high scores can lead to fewer inspections and faster approvals. Small traders can join groups that file returns together and get rewarded for furthering transparency.

Reasoning:

These recommendations shift regulation from a mindset of suspicion to one of trust. The idea is that when people and communities are allowed to self-organise and uphold shared rules, order and cooperation emerge naturally. Instead of rigid, top-down authorisations, consent-based and locally managed systems give businesses and farmers greater dignity and autonomy. Trust anchors compliance by relying on voluntary exchange, decentralised record-keeping, and peer accountability. This reduces red tape, avoids hidden inconsistencies, and makes the system more transparent, responsive, and better aligned with real-world needs.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	37.81

Maharashtra Ownership of Flats Act, 1963

Provisions:

Section 13(1): Criminalises civil lapses like failure to disclose project documents, including imprisonment up to 3 years.

Section 5: Imposes up to 5 years' imprisonment for failure to maintain a separate project bank account, even for minor record-keeping issues.

Section 14: Presumes company officers guilty of offences unless they prove innocence, penalty includes imprisonment.

Recommendations:

1. Establish Independent Real Estate Compliance Guild (IRECG), an independent, peer-led, self-regulatory body composed of real estate developers, homebuyers, investors, independent professionals and civic stakeholders. IREGC will manage a digital compliance registry where developers may voluntarily self-file project documents and disclose their lapses. Minor or delayed filings trigger civil surcharges and corrective deadlines, overseen by the Guild.
2. Cooperative Escrow Monitoring Network: Real estate collectives can opt into escrow transparency platforms audited by neutral financial bodies. Lapses lead to investor exit warnings and peer censure, not criminal punishment, unless fraud is proven.
3. The current presumption of guilt should be replaced with Guild-led peer review boards determining whether officers had actual complicity or gross negligence. Officers demonstrating internal compliance systems, third-party audit reliance, or documented due diligence gain safe harbour protection.

Reasoning:

The Disclosure Accountability Association facilitates engagement with homebuyer groups through voluntary, audited disclosures, where lapses invite remediation, not prosecution. The Cooperative Escrow Monitoring Network fosters financial transparency, with non-compliance leading to reputational signals rather than criminal penalties. The Officer Safe Harbour Pact allows directors to log compliance efforts, with disputes resolved through peer arbitration.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	1.50/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3.67/5	3/5	4.33/5	29.98

Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act, 1966

Provisions:

Section 52: Penalises any development without permission with imprisonment up to 3 years and/or a fine.

Section 53: Allows the Planning Authority to remove unauthorised structures with notice of just 24 hours.

Section 45: Requires prior permission for any structure, including boundary walls or sheds.

Section 148: Extends criminal liability to managers, partners, and directors for violations under the Act.

Section 49: Requires individuals to approach the State Government to propose minor land-use changes, e.g., from residential to mixed-use

Recommendations:

1. For Section 52, decriminalise all low-impact uses (plots under 500 sq. m, self-use, non-commercial structures) provided no environmental harm occurs. A self-regulatory body, such as a Community Planning Guild, could manage a voluntary regularisation window and impose a graded restoration surcharge. The penalty should be purely civil, and criminal prosecution should be reserved for cases of proven wilful defiance or demonstrable environmental harm.
2. For section 53, the Community Planning Guild could be formed to mediate disputes and propose solutions before a case is escalated to the Planning Authority. Immediate stop-work and demolition would only be permitted for imminent safety risks, such as encroachments on roads or drains. Otherwise, a 15-day objection window and a route through an independent community committee should be provided.
3. For Section 45, Exempt low-risk works, such as compound walls, single-storey tin sheds, and solar panels, from prior approval. For these exempt works, a post-facto declaration mechanism should be introduced through local bodies or a digital self-certification portal managed by a Community Planning Guild.
4. For Section 49, liability should be tied strictly to intent and material harm rather than the number of offences. Restrict vicarious liability to cases of proven complicity or gross negligence, as determined by a peer-review board of the Community Planning Guild. Repeat civil breaches may attract higher surcharges for loss of Guild membership rights.

Reasoning:

This approach replaces the state's coercive power with a system that encourages voluntary compliance and community-based solutions. A 24-hour notice period for demolition is a violation of due process and can lead to the destruction of livelihoods without recourse. By introducing a mediation window and involving a Community Planning Guild, this reform ensures that disputes are resolved at the local level through a process of mutual consent and deliberation—automatic criminal liability chills small joint ventures, cooperatives, and layout groups. Penalising only in cases of wilful defiance preserves deterrence without punishing honest oversight errors, aligning with the principle of proportional justice.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.33/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	2.33/5	1.67/5	5/5	2.67/5	20.89

Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act, 1975

Provisions:

Section 3(1): The law bans any occupation of vacant land without prior written permission, criminalising informal use.

Section 3(2): The law criminalises abetting or assisting unauthorised occupation, including receiving payment. The government can levy a daily "penal charge" and use draconian land revenue recovery methods for unpaid charges.

Section 4(1) & 4(1) (Use of Force): The law allows for summary eviction and forfeiture of property without due process, and can use force to do so.

Recommendations:

1. For Sections 3(1) and 3(2), a Vacant Land Stewardship Guild (VLSG), a self-regulatory body comprising local landowners, street vendors, and community members, should be established to oversee the informal use of land. The VLSG would facilitate voluntary, contractual arrangements for temporary land use, which could be registered through a decentralised registry for transparency.
2. For the "penal charge" provision, the law should replace arbitrary daily fines with a capped, transparent fee structure agreed upon by the VLSG. The recovery of unpaid fees would be managed through a VLSG-run arbitration board or standard civil procedures.
3. For Section 4(1), the power of summary eviction and forfeiture should be replaced with a process overseen by the VLSG that includes due notice and a clear right to appeal through a community-run dispute resolution forum. Eviction would be a last resort, pursued only after the VLSG has exhausted all attempts to offer the individual or business an alternative site or rehabilitation measures. The use of force would be strictly limited to exceptional circumstances, governed by clear protocols, and overseen by VLSG-appointed independent observers. Any seized property would be inventoried, returned, or compensated, unless deemed contraband by the VLSG's adjudication process.

Reasoning:

VLSG creates a market for temporary land use through micro-leases recorded on a transparent, decentralised registry, converting today's criminal exposure into clear, tradable rights that firms can plan, insure, and collateralise. Capped, pre-agreed user fees, rather than arbitrary penal charges and revenue-style recoveries- provide price signals without chilling investment. At the same time, VLSG arbitration offers fast, low-cost dispute resolution that keeps commerce moving and reduces court backlogs. Replacing summary eviction and forfeiture with notice, hearing, and a right to community appeal preserves the rule-of-law baseline that businesses require. By aligning incentives, owners monetise vacant land, vendors secure predictable access, and communities gain orderly, transparent stewardship. This will help transform informal use from a legal hazard into a competitive, self-regulating marketplace that expands opportunity and growth.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	61.56

Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act, 1976

Provisions:

Sections 157, 158: Offensive or dangerous trades in slum areas can be relocated by order; non-compliance is criminalised.

Sections 155, 156: Officers may enter premises, often without full consent; obstruction is penalised.

Sections 158(4), 158(5): Corporate officers are presumed guilty unless they prove ignorance or due diligence.

Section 187: Violation of any by-law under Section 186 is punishable with jail or fine.

Recommendations:

1. Collective Risk Identification and Relocation: Trader collectives in slum areas can self-identify high-risk operations like fire hazards or blocked exits and offer time-bound relocation plans through consensus and jointly decide and assist in how and when to move. Compliance is incentivised via visibility on trusted vendor registries, not penalised. This way, traders have the opportunity to earn trust and still have the agency to self-regulate, mainly because they are the primary stakeholders in case of risks.
2. Consent-centred Spatial Access Norms: Slum-based businesses may indicate a "Do Not Disturb" status, either digitally or physically, to signal that their workspace should be approached only with prior coordination. Access requests can be referred to neutral facilitators, such as arbitrators from local trade councils, who help mediate arrangements. This ensures that entry takes place only through mutual understanding, while preventing unnecessary disputes or coercive enforcement.
3. Reputation-Based Corporate Accountability: Instead of criminal presumption, local industry circles may maintain Reputation Indices based on peer feedback, which is given periodically. They could be rated on their reliability and fairness. Any breaches could invite listing, partnership limits, or exclusion from supply-chain networks, removing market access instead of immediate imprisonment.
4. Participatory Review of By-Laws: The adoption and application of by-laws may be guided by joint working groups of shopkeepers and residents, enabling shared and inclusive decision-making. Differences of opinion can be addressed through mediation rather than punitive measures. Participation remains voluntary, and collectively developed standards gain their strength from dialogue and consensus, not from imposition.

Reasoning:

These reforms restore the presumption of liberty and reject the idea that businesses, especially in informal or underdeveloped areas, must earn trust through compliance threats. Criminalising procedural or administrative errors erodes enterprise confidence and crowds out micro-entrepreneurs. Instead, peer-driven accountability, public reputational systems, and opt-in relocation schemes empower traders to co-regulate through voluntary exchange and spontaneous order. Entry, compliance, and grievance resolution are governed by consent, not coercion, protecting both dignity and enterprise viability. With these mechanisms, slum economies can thrive as zones of innovation, not zones of surveillance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	3/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	34.20

The Maharashtra Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1981

Provisions:

Section 17(9): Prohibits fishing by out-of-state vessels without prior permission. If caught, penalties can go up to Rs 6 lakh, with vessel seizure and possible police action.

Section 17(8): Bans the catching and trading of juvenile fish. Traders and fishers can be fined up to Rs 5 lakh or five times the fish's value, even if their catches were accidental.

Section 21: Any violation of licence conditions leads to a Rs 10,000 fine and Rs 500/day for continued default, no matter the severity of the action.

Section 8A: Only trained and certified operators can run motorised or mechanised boats. Unlicensed operation leads to daily fines of up to Rs 10,000.

Recommendations:

1. Safe Haven Collaboration Efforts: Coastal fishing groups near maritime boundaries could create informal "Safe Haven" arrangements, allowing boats from outside the area to refuel or seek shelter during emergencies or a threat to life due to extreme weather. These visits would be pre-discussed through simple location-sharing tools and recorded by the local representative; no armed patrols or official clearances should be involved.
2. Young Catch Protection Circles: Fishing groups can form mutual pacts to avoid catching juvenile fish during critical growth periods. According to credible researchers, these collaborative agreements might involve designated "no-net" zones during certain months. Any mistakes could be handled within the group, focusing on ecological repair and re-learning, rather than retribution.
3. Community Review: When someone breaks the rules, like fishing without proper approval or outside agreed-upon limits, a group of fellow fisherpersons would review the situation. The focus should be on whether the act was damaging. Instead of automatic fines, outcomes could include re-learning sessions, redeeming trust with others, or making the issue known within the community.
4. Apprenticeship Programs: New boat operators could learn through hands-on experience under the guidance of seasoned crew leaders in a community apprenticeship program rather than top-down certifications. Their progress would be noted in shared community records, and readiness would be affirmed by those they've worked with, not by passing a regulated test.

Reasoning:

These suggestions aim to presume Liberty and freedom of the fishers by replacing sanctions with fraternity backing, trust certificates with community-backed legitimacy, top-down control with path-dependent frameworks and furtherance of people's autonomy. Instead of relying on the state to approve every action, there is a reposition to empower fishing locals to organise themselves, settle conflicts, and care for shared resources. When rules originate from consent rather than one-sided regulations, they reflect fairness and equality under the rule of law, uphold individual choice, and emerge from phenomenological experiences. This approach ensures that ecological repair is the first priority instead of punishment and a sustainable option in the long run.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	3/5	3.67/5	5/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	39.55

Maharashtra Maritime Board Act, 1996

Provisions:

Section 35(1): Control over private maritime construction requires prior written permission from the Board. Non-compliance leads to daily penalties.

Section 24(b), (c), (e): All long-term contracts (leases/sales beyond 5 or 30 years) require prior State Government approval; otherwise, they're voidable.

Section 78: Even if the Board funds projects internally, it cannot incur capital expenditure without explicit State Government sanction

Recommendations:

1. Harbour Co-Governance Zones: Allow dock builders and private users to form Harbour Co-Governance Zones, where construction is overseen by a collective of users, developers, and marine engineers. Projects are logged in a public marine works ledger, allowing peer monitoring and transparent feedback loops instead of top-down permission.
2. Shared-Term Contract Exchange: Replace the approval barrier for long-term leases with a Shared-Term Contract Exchange, where parties can voluntarily submit agreements to a notarised public registry, co-hosted by legal firms and trade bodies. Contracts remain valid unless actively challenged through an agreed dispute resolution pathway.
3. Participatory CapEx Consortium: Enable infrastructure stakeholders to form a Participatory CapEx Consortium, where pooled capital projects are cleared by an independent escrow council of investors, user groups, and technical auditors. Mutual consent and public minutes replace state-level capital expenditure sanctions.

Reasoning:

These proposals respond to the rigid permission-based control model with structures grounded in trust, transparency, and negotiated accountability. Rather than criminalising or voiding development efforts over technical non-compliance, these models redistribute errors to those most affected users, builders, and investors. By embedding localised verification, voluntary disclosures, and multi-stakeholder decision-making, the emphasis shifts from state control to collaborative governance. This reduces institutional bottlenecks and harbours an environment of mutual reliance, care, and operational clarity in maritime and port infrastructure development.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	36.94

The Maharashtra Rent Control Act, 1999

Provisions:

Section 10(1): Bars landlords from charging rent above the "standard rent and permitted increases." Any higher amount is considered illegal, regardless of mutual agreement.

Sections 8, 16, 18: Require landlords to go to court with detailed justifications for either increasing rent or evicting tenants. Without court approval, such actions are invalid.

Sections 17(4), 18(2), 19(3), 21(2)(b): Penalise landlords with criminal punishment for delaying repairs or redevelopment, even if delays are due to funding or regulatory hurdles.

Section 15: Prohibits landlords from evicting tenants as long as the tenant continues paying the "standard rent," even if the landlord has a genuine personal or financial need to reclaim the property.

Recommendations:

1. Rent Agreement Framework: Property owners and tenant groups can co-develop locally grounded rent frameworks through collective decision-making. These agreements reflect shared norms around amenities, consent, and affordability, and are voluntarily adopted. Third-party cooperatives validate them to reinforce accountability within embedded rental relations.
2. Consent-Based Dispute Path: Landlords and tenants can pre-establish terms for resolving disagreements through neutral, community-anchored platforms instead of relying on state mechanisms. These decentralised forums operate as informal institutions, using negotiated evidence and consent-based resolution to maintain social cohesion and reduce adversarial dynamics.
3. Repair Grace Process: When delays in maintenance arise, landlords can submit a grace request to a joint tenant-owner committee. Emphasis is placed on relational intent and structural constraints rather than fault, enabling cooperative repair strategies like shared timelines or maintenance credits. This fosters reciprocity and trust within housing arrangements.
4. Mutual Exit Agreement: At tenancy initiation, both parties may agree to terms that allow landlords to reclaim possession after a mutually agreed-upon duration, provided notice and relocation ability are given. For long-term tenants, group-based negotiation and support from local housing councils can facilitate transitions, reflecting a shift from legalism to socially mediated agreements.

Reasoning:

This proposal shifts the commonly believed narrative that landlords are always the exploiters and tenants are victims. Instead, it honours both parties' agency and gives them equal respect and the benefit of the doubt under the rule of law. It also encourages voluntary exchange, which is always consensual, and creates decentralised dispute mechanisms rooted in parochial knowledge or what we can call situated knowledge. By removing the state from contracts, delays, and penalties, and shifting accountability to self-governed housing communities, trust becomes the mobiliser, not coercion. The framework sustains predictability, respects lived experience, and rebuilds rental housing as a space of opportunity rather than litigation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	1.50/5	3.67/5	5/5	3/5	1/5	3/5	4.33/5	29.98

Maharashtra Tax on the Entry of Goods into Local Areas Act, 2002

Provisions:

Section 3(1): Levies and collects tax on entering specified goods into any local area.

Section 4: Mandates registration for importers liable to pay tax under the Act.

Section 5: Empowers the state to set up check posts to stop and inspect goods vehicles.

Section 7: Punishes importers for failing to pay tax or for willfully contravening the Act, with fines and imprisonment for subsequent offences.

Section 8: Imposes a penalty of double or triple the amount of tax for importers who use false documents.

Recommendations:

1. For Section 3(1), replace the state-imposed entry tax with a Local Goods Exchange (LGE), a voluntary digital platform run by community members and local businesses. The LGE would operate on a peer-to-peer verification system, where local businesses voluntarily declare the goods they import, and other members of the LGE verify their entry. The LGE could collect a voluntary community fee from its members for the upkeep of local infrastructure, as decided by a majority vote of its members.
2. For Section 4, abolish the state-mandated registration. Instead, an LGE-issued digital certificate or a reputation score would be used to identify businesses.
3. For Section 5, a Community Logistics Guild (CLG), a voluntary association of local transporters and businesses, could be formed to manage a self-declaration platform. Members of the CLG would voluntarily declare the goods they are transporting, and this information would be made publicly available on a digital dashboard. Non-compliance would be met with reputational sanctions and potential exclusion from the CLG, not state-enforced penalties.
4. For Section 7, decriminalise tax-related offences and replace imprisonment and fines with a system of reputational sanctions and civil remedies. A Local Goods Exchange (LGE) arbitration board could adjudicate disputes and impose sanctions, such as public listing in a non-compliant registry or temporary suspension from the LGE. The state's role would be limited to enforcing the LGE's civil judgments.
5. For Section 8, abolish the state's power to impose arbitrary penalties. Instead, a Community Arbitration Board (CAB), a voluntary, third-party body, could adjudicate cases of false documentation. The CAB would have the power to order the business to compensate the community for any losses incurred, and the business's reputation score could be downgraded on a public dashboard.

Reasoning:

The state-mandated entry tax creates a bureaucratic burden on businesses and can stifle local commerce. By replacing the tax with a voluntary, community-led fee, this reform encourages local businesses to support their community's infrastructure transparently and cooperatively. Mandatory registration creates a bureaucratic hurdle for small-scale importers and can lead to corruption and rent-seeking by state officials. With a public reputation score, a self-regulatory LGE encourages accountability through community trust and market-based incentives rather than state-imposed penalties. By replacing criminal penalties with a system of reputational sanctions and civil remedies, this reform ensures that enforcement is proportional and educational. The state's power to impose arbitrary penalties can lead to corruption and rent-seeking by state officials. By replacing state-imposed penalties with a community-led arbitration board, the law protects businesses from arbitrary coercion and ensures that disputes are resolved fairly and transparently.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	5/5	3/5	3.67/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	71.15

Maharashtra Cotton Seeds Act, 2009

Provisions:

Section 10: The Government, after considering production costs, may fix the maximum sale price of all types of cotton seeds.

Section 11: Every person selling cotton seeds must apply to the Controller for a license.

Section 13: Penalises misbranding, substandard seeds, and selling above the fixed maximum price with fines and/or imprisonment up to three years.

Section 14: Extends criminal liability to company directors, managers, and partners for offences committed by the company.

Section 19: The government can forfeit cotton seeds in cases of contravention of the Act.

Recommendations:

1. For Section 10, replace state-fixed prices with a Cotton Seed Price Transparency Board (CSPTB), a voluntary, community-led platform comprising farmers, seed producers, and civil society representatives. The CSPTB would facilitate transparent price discovery by publishing real-time data on production costs, trait values, and market demand. An advisory price range would replace the price ceiling with a market-based dispute resolution mechanism for egregious overpricing.
2. For Section 11, Abolish the state-issued license. Instead, a Seed Vendor Guild (SVG), a self-regulatory body of local seed vendors, could be formed to issue compliance certificates based on peer audits and a transparent track record. A vendor's SVG certification would be linked to a publicly accessible Reputation Ledger, where customers and other vendors could provide feedback. Uncertified vendors would not face criminal penalties but risk losing business due to a lack of consumer trust.
3. For Section 13, the SVG would handle violations through a tiered system of sanctions based on peer review and arbitration. For a first-time violation, the SVG could issue a Public Advisory Notice and require the vendor to undergo mandatory compliance training. Repeat offences could result in a temporary suspension of SVG certification or a listing on a Non-Compliant Vendor Index, with no criminal prosecution or fines.
4. For Section 14, eliminate vicarious criminal liability for company directors and managers; instead, a Seed Integrity Council (SIC), a voluntary, industry-led body, could be formed to hold individuals accountable for their actions. Violations would be addressed through civil penalties, such as restitution to affected farmers, and public listings on a Reputation Watchlist managed by the SIC.
5. For Section 19, the power of the state to unilaterally forfeit private property should be abolished. Instead, a community-run Seed Dispute Resolution Forum (SDRF) could adjudicate cases of contravention. The SDRF would have the power to order the restitution of any non-compliant seeds to the farmer, but it would not have the power to seize property.

Reasoning:

State-mandated price controls can stifle innovation and create black markets. By replacing top-down price-fixing with a transparent, market-driven system, this reform empowers farmers to make informed decisions and encourages a more efficient and competitive seed market. Mandatory licensing creates a bureaucratic hurdle for small-scale vendors and can lead to corruption and rent-seeking by state officials. A self-regulatory SVG, with a public Reputation Ledger, encourages accountability through community trust and market-based incentives rather than state-imposed penalties.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	1/5	3.67/5	3/5	2.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	32.59

The Maharashtra Groundwater (Development and Management) Act, 2009

Provisions:

Section 7: All well owners must register their wells with the State Authority in both notified and non-notified areas. Failure to do so may result in a fine of up to Rs 10,000 for the first offence. Repeated violations may lead to a Rs 25,000 fine or imprisonment up to six months.

Section 8(1): Drilling a deep well (60 metres or more) for agricultural or industrial use requires prior written permission from the State Authority, regardless of the area.

Section 8(4): In notified areas, pumping groundwater from deep wells is prohibited unless done according to the approved groundwater use and crop plan.

Section 10(1): Farmers in notified areas must follow the State's crop plan. Any deviation is a cognizable offence under the Act.

Recommendations:

1. Water Commons Ledger: Well users may voluntarily enrol in a Water Commons Ledger, maintained by farmer groups, water-user associations, or cooperatives. Initial errors are addressed through reminders and opportunities for delayed self-reporting, avoiding penal or criminal framing.
2. Drought Disclosure Pact: Farmers and residents may activate a Drought Disclosure Pact via mutual certification among neighbouring members, essentially because they are the worst affected during groundwater scarcity and are least likely to get permission from the government to drill a deep well. This form of situated verification replaces state clearance, with borewell use negotiated through collective consent and community record-keeping.
3. Colour-coded Mapping of Zones: Farmers may autonomously designate aquifer zones such as red, orange, and green through participatory hydrological mapping facilitated by local cooperatives. Norms are collaboratively constructed and socially enforced. Sanctions for overuse are symbolic and reputational, privileging social accountability over legal penalties.
4. Farmer-Scientist created crop plans: Communities may co-develop locally adapted crop plans that integrate ecological sustainability, indigenous knowledge, and livelihood needs with the help of scientists and horticulturists. Community forums treat deviations dialogically, recognising agricultural decisions as forms of adaptive innovation rather than criminal transgressions.

Reasoning:

These recommendations develop participatory groundwater governance rooted in local knowledge, trust, and accountability. The Water Commons Ledger builds a culture of peer recognition and transparency, reducing the need for external enforcement. The Drought Disclosure Pact empowers farmers to respond to ecological stress through neighbour-based certification and shared documentation. Consent-based aquifer zoning, designed and monitored by the community, helps with sustainable withdrawal through socially agreed norms rather than legal coercion. The essential co-creation of crop plans with the advice of scientific and situated knowledge reframes deviation as contextual decision-making, not rule-breaking.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	3/5	3.67/5	5/5	4.33/5	37.81

Maharashtra Money-Lenders Act, 2014

Provisions:

Section 3: No person can lend money unless licensed under the Act, regardless of amount, frequency, or scale.

Section 32: Penalty for Unlicensed Lending (up to 1 Year Imprisonment + Fine), even for a single instance.

Section 7(1): Mandatory Record Maintenance in a Prescribed Format for all licensed lenders.

Section 29: Strict Interest Rate Cap + Forfeiture of Excess Recovery.

Section 11: Mandatory Display of License and Rate Boards at Premises.

Recommendations:

1. For Section 3, establishing the Community Credit Collective (CCC), a self-regulatory body of local lenders and borrowers, could oversee informal credit within a community. The CCC would allow low-value, peer-to-peer lending under a specific threshold without requiring a state license.
2. In Section 32, criminal liability should be removed for non-coercive, small-ticket, and first-time lending. Instead of criminal charges, the CCC can issue a warning and provide a grace period for the individual to seek a license, without a retrospective penalty. Criminal penalties should be reserved for deliberate, coercive, or fraudulent offences that violate community trust.
3. For Section 7(1), the CCC could manage a simplified, single-page transaction log as a sufficient record for small-scale lenders with fewer than 10 borrowers or an aggregate lending below ₹2 lakhs.
4. For Section 29, the CCC could allow flexible, market-based interest rates for uncollateralized small loans, reflecting the risk premiums in informal markets. Excess interest would be decriminalised unless coercion or misrepresentation is proven through CCC-led arbitration. Forfeiture and disqualification would only be considered for repeated or fraudulent violations.
5. Section 11, CCC could establish a Voluntary Digital Transparency Platform. Participation in this platform would be entirely optional for lenders. Instead of a mandatory fixed signage, lenders could choose to generate a unique, mobile-based QR code or a text confirmation service. A borrower could scan this QR code or send a text message to instantly receive the lender's self-declared status and interest rates.

Reasoning:

The blanket ban on unlicensed lending criminalises crucial community credit and informal capital flows. By exempting microloans from mandatory licensing, this reform respects individual agency and preserves access to survival credit for informal workers and small traders. Criminalising good-faith lending deters informal capital flows in markets where formal credit is often absent. This disproportionate punishment stigmatises essential assistance networks and erodes trust in the state. Mandating complex record-keeping for traditional lenders and micro-credit facilitators can dissuade legitimate lending and invite penalisation. Strict interest caps ignore the risk premiums in informal lending, reducing lender appetite and drying up liquidity for those who need it most. This reform allows for a more flexible and responsive credit market.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	2.33/5	1/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	42.65

Maharashtra Shops and Establishments Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 6: mandates that an employer must submit an online application for registration within 60 days of commencing business. A breach is punishable with a fine up to ₹1,00,000, and for a continuing offense, an additional fine of up to ₹2,000 per day may be levied, with a total fine not exceeding ₹2,000 per worker.

Section 6(3), 6(4): An application for renewal must be submitted online in Form 'D' at least 30 days before the expiry of the current registration. Failure to renew is punishable with a fine up to ₹1,00,000.

Section 25, 26 Rules: Rule 26, 27: Employers must maintain a Muster-Roll cum Wages Register in Form 'Q' and preserve records for at least three years. Failure to maintain records or file returns is a breach punishable with a fine of up to ₹1,00,000.

Rule 35: The name board of every establishment must be in the Marathi language (Devanagari script) and must be written first or above any other language. The font size of the Marathi script cannot be smaller than the font of any other language. A breach is punishable with a fine up to ₹1,00,000.

Section 28, 31: A Facilitator can enter any establishment and inspect the premises. Willfully obstructing a Facilitator or refusing to produce documents is punishable with a fine up to ₹2,00,000.

Recommendations:

1. For Section 6, a Local Business Guild (LBG), a voluntary association of businesses, could manage a decentralized registration system. The LBG could offer compliance certificates and a reputation score based on peer-reviewed declarations, eliminating the need for a state-mandated registration. The LBG could also issue a show cause notice to businesses with a benefit of a doubt period before a fine is levied.
2. For Section 25,26; Micro-Enterprise Guild (MEG) could provide free access to a state-backed, web-based record-keeping platform. Digitally maintained and verified records could be exempt from physical inspections, with a MEG-appointed auditor conducting peer reviews.
3. For Sections 28 and 31, a Business Transparency Collective (BTC) could manage a risk-based inspection model. The BTC could provide a digital inspection dashboard with real-time access to inspection history and scheduling, and businesses with a clean record would be subject to low-frequency inspection.

Reasoning:

The current provision, with its heavy fines, discourages voluntary compliance and can stifle small businesses. By replacing state-mandated registration with a community-led system, this reform encourages businesses to self-regulate and fosters a more cooperative environment. A community-led system that offers free digital tools and peer audits promotes transparency and accountability without the punitive overreach of the state. Voluntary, peer-led system that offers a risk-based inspection model and a digital dashboard promotes transparency, accountability, and mutual trust.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	2/5	2/5	0/5	2.33/5	1/5	3/5	4.33/5	20.86

Maharashtra Private Security Agencies Rules, 2022

Provisions:

Section 4, Rule 3: No private security agency may operate without a license obtained through the PSARA portal, following police vetting.

Rules 8, 10: All guards must undergo formal training and police verification. Agencies must maintain training records and submit them to authorities.

Rules 5, 6: Any change in directors, ownership, or address must be reported to the controlling authority within 30 days, with non-compliance mandating criminal penalties.

Rules 14, 15, 18: Agencies must maintain duty logs and guard records, and ensure guards wear prescribed uniforms and carry valid ID. Deviations can lead to prosecution.

Recommendations:

1. Modular Skill Wallets for Guards: Modular Skill Wallets can be designed as applications or portals for skill enhancement and training. These are digital portfolios where guards collect verified micro-certifications from approved trainers, NGOs, or employers. Agencies can choose from an open pool of qualified guards, and training bodies are rated by the guards themselves, ensuring the best hires meet the best hirees.
2. Live Ledger for Organisational Changes: Develop a Live Ledger where agencies can log changes in personnel, address, or ownership in real-time updates with cooperative visibility. Delays can trigger soft locks on services, such as the inability to bid for contracts and not receive immediate FIRs. All changes can be timestamped and viewed by other agencies in the network to maintain healthy competition.
3. Self-Audit Pods with Trust Credits: Agencies can form Self-Audit Pods, which are small rotating groups of operators who review each other's compliance checklists quarterly, creating check-and-balance systems and healthy competition. Clean records earn Trust Credits, which can reduce external inspection frequency. Falsification of records or avoidance may lead to credit loss and temporary platform suspension, not to immediate prosecution.

Reasoning:

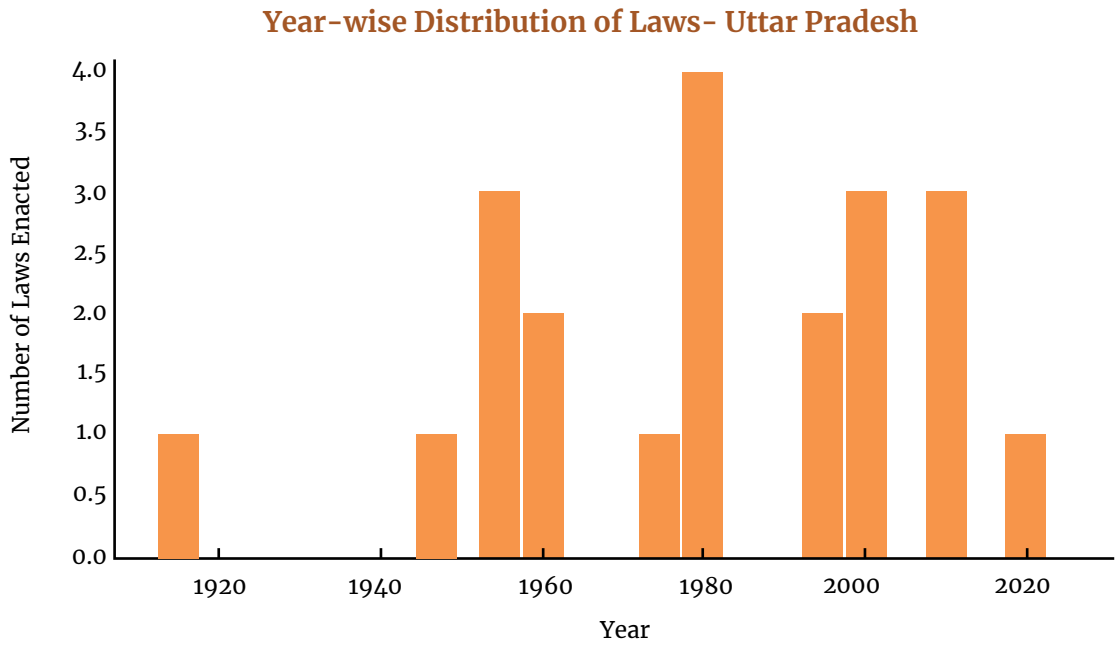
The idea of Modular Skill Wallets allows guards to gradually build up their credentials across different settings. It also gives agencies more flexibility to hire based on proven skills rather than rigid training mandates to improve credibility and efficiency. Introducing a Live Ledger encourages procedural honesty through continuous, cooperative visibility instead of coming from a place of fear or trepidation. Similarly, Self-Audit Pods help cultivate a shared culture of mutual responsibility, where agencies earn trust by supporting one another's compliance rather than anticipating external inspection, saving time and money on both ends. Taken together, these mechanisms emphasise cooperation rather than coercion, and they embed trust not just as a value, but as a practical and evolving regulatory resource.

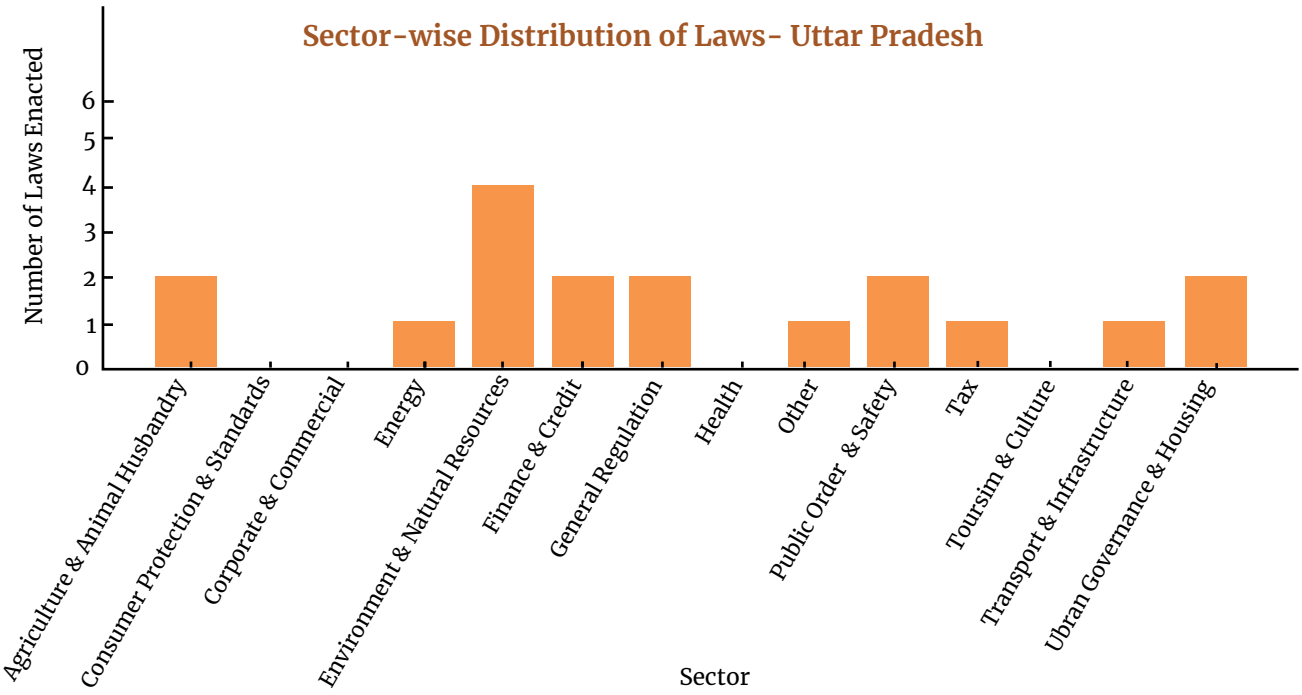
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	5/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	2/5	2/5	4.33/5	5/5	35.08

Uttar Pradesh

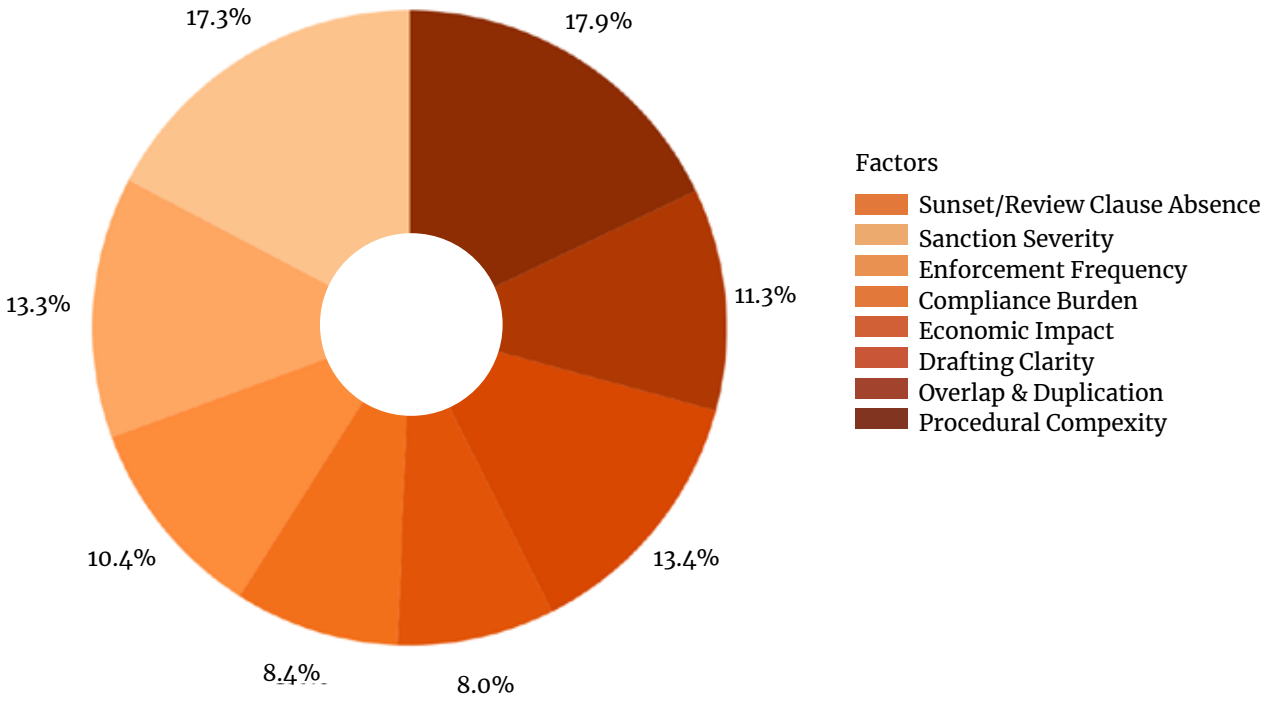
Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh is the 3rd largest economy in the country, driven by industries such as textiles, electronics, and MSMEs with high agricultural and industrial productivity. The state moved from rank 12th to 2nd per the BRAP ranking system, categorised as a top achiever per the latest assessment. The state has its own single window portal called Nivesh Mitra to streamline approvals and licensing systems. It is said to have decriminalised around 568 provisions and repealed, amended or subsumed around 907 redundant acts/rules. UP envisions becoming a 'Viksit Uttar Pradesh by 2047', aligning with the national 'Viksit Bharat' goal. The state's growing infrastructure strength and business ecosystem were lauded by the World Bank, which cited investment friendliness as a key enabler of economic transformation. UP's scale and sectoral diversity- from agro-economy to manufacturing and services- make legal reform crucial. Modernising business laws, simplifying compliance, and de-risking lagging sectors could accelerate inclusive growth, bridge rural-urban divides, and reinforce UP's vision for growth.





MCDA Factor Distribution- Uttar Pradesh



United Provinces Excise Act, 1910

Provisions:

Section 60: Criminalises a broad range of non-violent activities, like transport, storage, bottling, sale, tapping tari, and possessing hemp leaves, with punishments extending to 3 years' imprisonment and high fines, even for technical or community-based contraventions.

Section 61: Penalises licensed vendors (and their employees) for selling to persons under 21 or employing women/youth, with fines up to ₹10,000.

Section 64: Imposes mandatory fines up to ₹20,000 on licensees and employees for failing to produce licences or breaching conditions/rules.

Section 65: Criminalises chemists or dispensary owners for allowing intoxicant consumption on premises, with jail up to 6 months or fines up to ₹20,000.

Section 69-C: Holds directors/officers vicariously liable for offences committed by companies, even absent personal involvement.

Section 74-A: Authorises Excise Officers to unilaterally impose penalties up to ₹1,00,000 for licence or rule violations.

Recommendations:

1. Replace Criminal Penalties with Community Regulation (Sections 60, 64, 65): Instead of imposing penalties, imprisonment, seizures or license cancellation, offences shall be handled by self-regulatory associations via public listing in a non-compliant Registry, temporary exclusion from supply chains or cooperatives, or reputation-based sanctions like trustmark withdrawal.
2. Vendor Self-Regulation (Section 61): Replace state restrictions with trade-association-based codes governing underage sales and employment of women/youth. Violations may lead to delisting, community alerts, or trade disassociation and not fines.
3. Private Enforcement of Licence Conditions (Sections 64, 74-A): Breaches must be handled by contractually agreed associations via compliance notices, arbitration, certification suspension, and no unilateral fines by the State.
4. Corporate Accountability via Consent (Section 69-C): Eliminate vicarious criminal liability. Only persons contractually liable and found operating in bad faith through voluntary forums can face reputational or contractual sanctions.
5. Medical Premises Discipline (Section 65): Remove criminal liability for private misconduct. Allow only market-based consequences - delisting, reputational downgrade, or association censure.

Reasoning:

The idea of Modular Skill Wallets allows guards to gradually build up their credentials across different settings. It also gives agencies more flexibility to hire based on proven skills rather than rigid training mandates to improve credibility and efficiency. Introducing a Live Ledger encourages procedural honesty through continuous, cooperative visibility instead of coming from a place of fear or trepidation. Similarly, Self-Audit Pods help cultivate a shared culture of mutual responsibility, where agencies earn trust by supporting one another's compliance rather than anticipating external inspection, saving time and money on both ends. Taken together, these mechanisms emphasise cooperation rather than coercion, and they embed trust not just as a value, but as a practical and evolving regulatory resource.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	2.50/5	0/5	3/5	3.67/5	5/5	3/5	3.33/5	33.80

The United Provinces Private Forests Act, 1948

Provisions:

Section 5: Restricts any person, including landowners, from cutting, collecting, or removing forest produce or grazing cattle in notified private forest areas in violation of the Act.

Section 6: Requires individuals to obtain a felling permit from a Forest Officer even for personal use of timber from such notified areas.

Section 12: Allows landlords to apply for tree felling licences, which may be granted subject to conditions deemed fit by the Forest Officer.

Recommendations:

1. Introduce a GIS-based Forest Corridor Stewardship Forum (FCSF) where all land-use declarations must be digitally self-registered and vetted by community groups. NOCs should be issued based on eco-sensitivity scores, with public visibility of pending applications for transparency.
2. Replace manual approvals with a Digitised Consent-Based Application Interface (DCAI) that categorises applications using a rule engine (Green – approved, Orange – consult, Red – restricted). 100% compliant applicants receive fast-track access to eco-infrastructure incentives.
3. Allow landlords to declare intent for tree felling via a decentralised forest stewardship registry co-managed by local forest user associations and civil society bodies. Felling may proceed upon third-party ecological review and public disclosure, without requiring State approval.

Reasoning:

Digitally self-registering land-use through GIS platforms ensures real-time tracking and ecological mapping, helping prevent misuse without delays. Community vetting replaces opaque file-based approvals with peer accountability, while public dashboards create pressure for timely decisions. A rules-based engine reduces administrative subjectivity and enables applicants to know outcomes instantly. Categorisation by eco-sensitivity ensures differentiated, risk-based treatment, enabling fast-track clearance for green activities and reducing litigation and backlog. A rules-based engine reduces administrative subjectivity and encourages applicants to know outcomes instantly. Eco-sensitivity categorisation ensures differentiated, risk-based treatment, enabling fast-track clearance for green activities and reducing litigation and backlog.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	5/5	20.84

Uttar Pradesh Warehouse Act, 1950

Provisions:

Sections 11–30: Require warehousing standards, record-keeping, weighing facilities, receipts, etc.

Section 33: Allows state-led inspections.

Section 37: Prescribes imprisonment up to 1 year or fines for any person acting without a license or contravening rules under the Act.

Recommendations:

1. Constitute Autonomous Warehouse Regulatory Forums (AWRF) comprising warehouse operators, traders, logistics experts, and civil society observers. These forums shall develop voluntary codes and oversee compliance without coercive state control.
2. Amend Section 37 to remove imprisonment for procedural lapses like delayed records or receipt mismatches. Allow peer-reviewed actions such as correction notices, temporary delisting, or compliance training through AWRF platforms. Reserve penalties only for repeat or fraudulent violations.
3. Amend Section 33 to permit third-party audits by AWRF-accredited auditors. Publish findings on a public compliance dashboard.
4. Sections 23, 28, and 30 (accounts, weighing, receipts) allow warehousemen to self-certify compliance. AWRF-recognised auditors may do randomised verifications. Voluntary disclosures may be uploaded to a shared industry-government registry.

Reasoning:

Establishing non-state autonomous regulatory forums aligns with the principle of subsidiarity by shifting routine compliance oversight to those closest to operations. It enables industry-led forums to resolve minor violations more efficiently through voluntary compliance while limiting coercive state enforcement and authoritative discretion.

Shifting from punitive action to corrective measures ensures proportional enforcement of minor breaches. It reflects constitutional restraint and builds trust in business intent, encouraging peer-led self-regulation instead of coercive state action.

Replacing unilateral government inspection with collaborative and transparent audits limits administrative arbitrariness. It ensures limited and accountable government and promotes transparency and predictability in a self-regulatory environment. Such mechanisms encourage spontaneous order, where market players uphold norms not because of deterrence, but through shared responsibility.

Self-certification, backed by transparency and community monitoring, reduces administrative delays and fosters trust-based compliance. It encourages voluntary good conduct and presumes responsibility among businesses, rather than suspicion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	0/5	4.33/5	3/5	2/5	3/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	37.80

Jute Goods (Control) Act, 1950

Provisions:

Section 4: Empowers the Controller, under State Government oversight, to issue binding orders on jute goods producers and stockholders regarding production, pricing, and supply, overriding private contracts.

Section 5: Imposes up to 3 years' imprisonment or fine for any contravention of such orders.

Recommendations:

1. Replace binding directives with voluntary, industry-led standards developed by sectoral associations or SROs, issued as non-binding guidelines on best practices and quality benchmarks.
2. Amend Section 4(2) to limit government power to override contracts only in rare, exceptional public interest scenarios, subject to independent review and transparent justification.
3. Revise Section 5 to exclude minor or first-time breaches from criminal penalties. Minor violations may be handled through peer review, warnings, or community-building activities (e.g., jute art exhibitions or training programs). Serious or repeat offences alone may warrant penalties.

Reasoning:

In the jute industry, dominated by decentralised, small and medium enterprises and heavily reliant on local innovation, top-down state controls often stifle entrepreneurial flexibility, delay production cycles, and generate unnecessary compliance burdens. Replacing binding government directives with voluntary, industry-led standards developed by jute producer associations and cooperatives allows the sector to organically evolve best practices suited to ground realities, such as eco-friendly processing, fair trade pricing, and export-ready packaging norms.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	2.50/5	4.33/5	1/5	0/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	30.76

UP Municipal Corporation Adhiniyam, 1959

Provisions:

Section 245(1): Occupying buildings without proper drainage invites penalties.

Section 303(1–3): Penalties for not restoring public ways post-work.

Section 556(2): Punishment for providing incorrect property data.

Section 295: Penalises physical obstruction of civic spaces.

Section 331: Owners must repair/demolish dangerous buildings.

Sections 307 & 309: Requires dust management during construction.

Sections 401 & 428: Unlicensed Factories/Bakeries operating without a license are penalised.

Sections 427 & 438(1): Penal action for unauthorised private markets.

Section 439: Penalises selling food outside designated zones.

Recommendations:

1. Drainage & Dust: Civic associations may require builders to submit voluntary infrastructure compatibility statements and dust management plans; violators face suspension from private registries and cooperative utility networks.
2. Restoration & Obstruction: Road or public space misuse shall trigger community restitution via arbitration or cooperative repair pools, not state fines.
3. Dangerous Buildings: Neighbourhood welfare bodies may issue private notices; persistent non-repair may lead to civil suits or exclusion from cooperative maintenance schemes.
4. Incorrect Data: False declarations may be corrected through private verification platforms with rating penalties or demerit indexing, not criminal prosecution.
5. Unlicensed Units: Self-certifying trade guilds may vet factories/bakeries through peer audits; unvetted units risk consumer boycott or aggregator exclusion.
6. Unauthorised Markets & Food Sales: Local trader unions may define shared rules; unauthorised vendors may face delisting from private supplier platforms or cooperative market access loss, not imprisonment.

Reasoning:

Instead of relying on state penalties and licenses, urban governance can function more effectively through private contracts, civil remedies, and community-based enforcement. For example, builders and vendors can be part of neighbourhood associations, traders' guilds, or resident welfare platforms, which maintain internal codes and compliance checks. Violations-such as poor drainage, obstruction, or unsafe buildings-can be addressed through private notices, repair obligations, exclusion from shared services, or public listing in non-compliance indexes. These actions directly impact market reputation and consumer trust, offering stronger and faster deterrents than slow-moving government penalties. Similarly, peer audits, aggregator-based trust scores, and cooperative access can regulate businesses like food vendors, markets, or bakeries. This approach ensures accountability without criminalising entrepreneurs, encourages local ownership of civic issues, and replaces fear of arbitrary state action with clear, enforceable consequences built into voluntary urban frameworks.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1.67/5	4/5	0/5	2/5	1/5	4.33/5	3/5	3.33/5	26.16

The Uttar Pradesh Sheera Niyantran Adhiniyam, 1964

Provisions:

Section 11(1): Any person who contravenes any provision of this Act, or the rules, orders, or directions issued thereunder, or willfully makes a false statement or false return, shall be punishable with imprisonment up to one year or with a fine up to ₹1,00,000 or both. In case of continuing contravention, an additional daily fine up to ₹5,000 may apply post-conviction.

Recommendations:

1. Amend Section 11(1) to replace criminal penalties with a peer-monitored compliance model. All sugar mills, distilleries, and molasses traders can voluntarily register with the Molasses Trade Integrity Council (MTIC).
2. Compliance should be ensured through digital filings, subject to third-party audits, with results published annually.
3. In cases of procedural lapses, a 15-day correction window should be provided. Repeat violations should result in compliance score downgrades or temporary delisting from MTIC platforms, not criminal prosecution.
4. Positive incentives such as preferential access to ethanol blending contracts and working capital support should be granted to consistently compliant MTIC members.

Reasoning:

The current provision criminalises all contraventions, including trivial, technical, or first-time lapses, leading to disproportionate punishment. Enforcement becomes fair, effective, and transparent by introducing a self-regulatory body with self-correction, peer accountability, and positive reinforcement. This model deters bad actors while protecting honest participants from harassment, aligning with liberal principles of minimal coercion, proportional response, and trust-based market governance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	2.50/5	4.33/5	1/5	0/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	30.76

U.P. Sugar Undertakings (Acquisition) Act, 1971

Provisions:

Section 5: Authorises the Collector to forcibly seize all property, records, accounts, and documents of a scheduled sugar undertaking vested in the Corporation, using state force if necessary, without requiring prior consent, notice, or adjudication.

Section 6: Mandates compulsory disclosure of all liabilities, obligations, and employee-related instruments (e.g., pension, PF) within 60 days, failing which penal action may follow.

Section 18: Criminalises withholding or wrongfully possessing documents/property, concealing or destroying records, failing to disclose or furnishing false particulars under Section 6. Penalties include imprisonment up to 3 years, fines, and seizure orders by the court upon government sanction.

Recommendations:

1. Replace forcible state seizure with a voluntary, contract-based transfer process between the sugar undertaking and the corporation. A neutral third-party trustee or escrow agent may facilitate handover of assets and records, ensuring a period notice, mutual verification, and compensation where applicable.
2. Replace compulsory disclosures and fixed deadlines with a flexible, voluntary disclosure mechanism governed by an industry-led Transitional Disclosure Forum (TDF). Rather than penalties, compliance may be incentivised through public recognition, industry listings, or transitional support grants.
3. Decriminalise procedural lapses like delayed or mistaken disclosures. Disputes over possession or non-disclosure may be referred to voluntary arbitration boards or industry ombudsmen.

Reasoning:

Sugar undertakings, especially in Uttar Pradesh, often operate as legacy mills-frequently cooperative-owned or family-run enterprises with deep community ties, informal employment structures, and generational control of land and assets. In such a sector, a provision authorising the Collector to forcibly seize all property and documents without notice or adjudication violates foundational liberal principles of property rights and due process. These mills require structured transitions, not armed intervention. Forced takeovers discourage investment, create distrust among workers, and disrupt local economies built around mill operations. Mandatory disclosure of all liabilities and employee benefits within 60 days imposes an impractical, one-size-fits-all burden on sugar undertakings, many of which maintain partial records across locations or rely on legacy bookkeeping. Penalising such entities for clerical delays or incomplete compliance undermines trust. A liberal, peer-validated disclosure system enables gradual, transparent transfer of obligations without coercion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	4.33/5	2/5	2.67/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	31.04

The Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973

Provisions:

Section 26: Unauthorised land development or misuse of land/building attracts fines up to ₹50,000 (plus ₹2,500/day) and ₹25,000 (plus ₹1,250/day) respectively. Obstructing officials during inspection may lead to up to six months' jail or a ₹1,000 fine.

Section 26-A: Encroaching on non-private land can lead to jail for up to one year and a ₹20,000 fine; obstructing streets with materials can attract up to one month jail or ₹2,000 fine. Authorities may issue removal notices and seize/confiscate property, with protections for weaker sections.

Section 27: Unauthorised development can be ordered for removal within 15–40 days; failure allows the authority to demolish and recover costs. Appeals lie with the Chairman, and decisions are final.

Recommendations:

1. Land use violations should be resolved through voluntary arbitration, private covenants, and cooperative service denial- no state penalties or inspections involved.
2. Resident cooperatives or landowner associations may issue restoration notices or negotiate private leases; all enforcement remains non-coercive and contractual.
3. Unauthorised development must be settled via private mediation boards or civil suits; demolition measures must only be taken after a mutually agreed remedy fails and with due notice.

Reasoning:

Urban land governance thrives when based on voluntary cooperation, contractual discipline, and self-regulating communities rather than coercive enforcement. These recommendations favour market-led corrections over state intrusion, preserving property rights, decentralised negotiation, and proportional redress. This enhances predictability, trust, and legitimacy in urban development while encouraging private actors to internalise responsibility for compliance and community welfare. It decentralises enforcement to residents' groups and cooperatives and avoids criminalising informal development, fostering trust and innovation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	5/5	3/5	2.67/5	5/5	3/5	4.33/5	39.80

Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Beggary Act, 1975

Provisions:

Section 2: Defines begging broadly to include acts like singing, dancing, or minor street vending.

Section 10(5): Allows courts to detain individuals found begging in certified institutions for 1–2 years.

Section 12: Imposes extended detention (up to 5 years) or imprisonment for repeat instances of begging.

Recommendations:

1. Redefine 'Begging' to Protect Informal Livelihoods: Amend Section 2(a) to exclude non-coercive street performances and minor trade (e.g., singing, tricks, storytelling, or small sales) from the definition of begging, recognising these as informal work or cultural expression.
2. Replace Compulsory Detention with Voluntary Support: Revise Sections 10(5) and 12 to remove detention and imprisonment provisions. Instead, rights-based, voluntary access to rehabilitation schemes, including housing, healthcare, and skills training, should be provided through community organisations.

Reasoning:

Criminalising street performance or survival-based trade undermines the freedom of expression and informal economic rights. Global urban models protect such activity as part of cultural and occupational liberty. Detention for poverty-related conditions strips individuals of dignity; supportive rehabilitation fosters inclusion, treating poverty with care, not punishment.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.50/5	1.67/5	0/5	2.67/5	3/5	2/5	4.33/5	22.80

The Uttar Pradesh Electric Wire And Transformers (Prevention And Punishment Of Theft) Act, 1976

Provisions:

Section 3: This provision deals with business licenses for Aluminium or Copper dealers, license procedures, fees, and the threshold for stocking Aluminium or Copper.

Section 4: Declaration of overstated stock to the Licensing Authority.

Section 8: Inspection, search, and seizure by authorities.

Section 9: The State has the power to make rules for this Act.

Recommendations:

1. Remove the need for licenses to buy, sell, or store aluminium and copper. Let businesses freely engage in trade without bureaucratic licensing; certification by private industry bodies could ensure compliance with quality and ethical standards.
2. Eliminate bureaucratic procedures and fees for license applications. Use voluntary self-regulation, where businesses report to industry guilds or trusted third parties, ensuring transparency and self-governance without state oversight.
3. Remove the quantity-based restrictions for stocking aluminium or copper. Let market forces control stock quantities, with businesses opting into voluntary reporting for access to certain markets, financing, or insurance.
4. Abolish mandatory stock declarations to the government. Use private trade networks and marketplace transparency to maintain inventory records accessible by relevant stakeholders, ensuring compliance through peer pressure and reputation.
5. Eliminate arbitrary powers of inspection, search, and seizure by government authorities. Introduce private auditing and certification bodies to verify compliance and resolve disputes via voluntary arbitration. Allow market participants to regulate their businesses based on clear contractual agreements.
6. Abolish government rule-making for industries; let market participants and private bodies establish standards. Market-driven, industry-specific self-regulation is more adaptive, efficient, and responsive than government-imposed rules.

Reasoning:

The state-imposed licensing system, bureaucratic inspections, and penalties undermine entrepreneurial freedom and create inefficiencies in the trade of aluminium and copper. A classical liberal approach replaces these interventions with market-driven accountability through voluntary reporting, transparent supply chains, and reputational systems. Industry certifications, peer-based trade associations, and private dispute resolution forums can ensure business compliance and ethics without coercion. Market forces, guided by consumer choice, voluntary cooperation, and open competition, will naturally govern these sectors more effectively than government intervention, promoting a freer, more efficient economy.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	2.50/5	4.33/5	0/5	2.67/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	29.67

The Uttar Pradesh Promotion and Protection of Fruit Trees Act, 1985

Provisions:

Section 5(1): Prohibits, after declaration of a fruit belt, the installation or operation of any harmful establishment or initiation of any housing scheme therein, without permission from the State Government or its authorised officer.

Section 5(2): Allows continuation of such activities for one year post-declaration if they predate the declaration.

Section 10(2): Penalises obstruction of authorised officers' entry into harmful establishments or housing sites with imprisonment up to three months or a fine up to ₹1,000 or both.

Recommendations:

1. Replace criminal prohibitions with voluntary registration through a Fruit Belt Stewardship Forum (FBSF), a community-run zoning compliance platform. Developers and firms may self-declare construction or industrial intent through a digital zoning interface managed by FBSF.
2. Replace the time-limited government grace period with perpetual grandfathering rights for pre-existing establishments, protected by default unless proven through a transparent, community-led review to cause demonstrable harm to fruit cultivation.
3. Replace imprisonment with community-based compliance tools. Entry for inspection must be scheduled with prior notice. Third-party monitors or civil society verifiers may be engaged. Non-compliant entities can be labelled "Non-Cooperative" on public dashboards or temporarily delisted from trade platforms. Voluntary audits may be rewarded with eco-ratings or eligibility for agro-tourism incentives.

Reasoning:

Zoning in fruit belts aims to preserve agro-ecological integrity, but coercive penalties and opaque inspections often lead to informal negotiations or evasion. This reform introduces peer-regulated, transparent mechanisms that build reputational and market incentives for compliance. The amendment empowers communities to protect fruit belts through digital platforms and public accountability by moving from punitive inspection to cooperative zoning discipline.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	4.33/5	0/5	2/5	3/5	3.67/5	5/5	25.17

Uttar Pradesh Bricks (Regulation and Supply) Act, 1990

Provisions:

Section 3: Empowers the State to regulate the manufacture, sale, pricing, and mandatory supply of bricks, including directing kiln owners to sell to specified buyers and maintain production records for inspection.

Section 4: Imposes up to 3 years' imprisonment, fines, and property forfeiture for contraventions, including false statements in records.

Recommendations:

1. Amend Sections 3(2)(b), (c), and (e) to eliminate mandatory pricing and sales to government-designated buyers. Brick guilds and associations may adopt voluntary norms for price transparency, buyer choice, and procurement templates.
2. Amend Section 3(2)(d) to shift from mandatory government inspections to periodic, third-party certified disclosures, reviewed by local guilds or industry associations, to improve operations.
3. Amend Section 4(2) to remove jail penalties for first-time or minor record-keeping errors, replacing them with peer-led advisories or compliance workshops. Revise Section 4(1) to restrict forfeiture to deliberate or repeated violations only.
4. Kiln operators may join a voluntary eco-compliance alliance, disclosing operational data and undergoing seasonal audits. Compliant members benefit from green fuel discounts, lease fast-tracks, and entry into carbon-offset programs.

Reasoning:

Top-down controls over prices, supply, and record inspections discourage voluntary compliance and invite discretion. A trust-based, peer-regulated ecosystem encourages transparency and market responsiveness. When pricing norms and quality benchmarks emerge from within the industry, rather than being imposed externally, they are more likely to reflect practical realities and gain widespread adherence. These associations, composed of practitioners themselves, are better placed to evolve fair procurement templates, ethical sales norms, and conflict resolution processes in a decentralised and responsive manner. Decriminalising procedural lapses and restricting harsh penalties such as forfeiture aligns enforcement with the principle of proportionality, promoting legitimacy and business confidence in the regulatory framework.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	4.33/5	1/5	2.67/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	30.27

The Uttar Pradesh Electricity Reforms Act, 1999

Provisions:

Section 37: Penalises unauthorised transmission or supply of electricity, or failure to comply with lawful directions, with imprisonment up to six months or fines up to ₹5 lakh, along with daily continuing penalties of ₹20,000.

Recommendations:

1. Any person or enterprise in the transmission or supply of electricity may voluntarily affiliate with an Electricity Standards Guild (ESG) - a decentralised, self-regulatory body comprising market participants and consumers. The Guild will also serve as a grievance redressal platform, facilitating dispute resolution between the government and electricity suppliers and holding the government accountable for any lapses on its part.
2. All members must follow mutually agreed terms of service, transparency, and reliability within the ESG framework.
3. ESGs may issue Compliance Ratings, Reputation Certificates, and Public Notices of Deviation. Persistent non-compliance may lead to removal from ESG, reputational loss, and exclusion from consumer or aggregator contracts.
4. Consumer cooperatives may provide preferential listings and contracts to compliant suppliers.

Reasoning:

This approach replaces state-enforced penalties with voluntary, incentive-based self-regulation. It promotes industry governance through decentralised guilds, mirroring historical merchant law and modern platform models. Consumers gain choice and power to reward or boycott providers, strengthening trust and innovation without punitive overreach. By allowing electricity producers, distributors, and aggregators to voluntarily affiliate with ESGs-autonomous, self-regulatory platforms comprising suppliers, consumers, and civil society - oversight becomes more responsive to ground realities. ESGs encourage peer accountability, where participants commit to shared service norms (like uptime, billing clarity, and grid integration standards) and public disclosure rather than bureaucratic compliance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	22.93

The Indian Forest (Uttar Pradesh Amendment) Act, 2000

Provisions:

Section 4: No land clearing, timber removal, or forest use in protected areas without permission; all rules on tree felling, grazing, quarrying, and fire safety must be followed.

Section 5: Businesses must transport forest produce only on approved routes with valid passes, pay required fees or royalties, and comply with inspection or depot requirements. Obstructing transport routes or tampering with timber markings is prohibited, and property marks must be registered as per the rules.

Section 8: Businesses and individuals must ensure that no tools, transport equipment, or accessories are used in illegal extraction, transit, or processing of forest produce.

Section 18: Any person violating a forest rule (e.g. regarding transit, storage, cutting, licensing) must comply even if not covered by a specific offence section.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage the formation of an Eco-Conservation Guild, a voluntary self-regulatory body of forest-based businesses, gram sabhas, and NGOs. Forest activity may be geo-tagged and declared digitally to promote transparency. Communities and members who voluntarily certify "no harm zones" can signal best practices, and while clearance through digital NOC is optional, it enhances credibility. Entities with 2+ years of a clean record may be given priority access to premium timber lots or subsidised grazing rights.
2. Promote the Forest Produce Mobility Chain (FPMC) — a blockchain-based registry that participants may join to track the origin and route of timber and produce. Membership is voluntary, but participants who maintain compliance gain benefits such as fast-lane clearance, lower logistics checks, and optional carbon credit eligibility. Those who violate voluntary standards may face temporary suspension of certification, delisting from cooperative depots, or reduced visibility in transport aggregator apps.
3. Instead of confiscation, members may opt into a rectification-first framework with a 15-day window to address untagged equipment. A voluntary QR tagging system for tools/vehicles linked to forest activity fosters transparency and responsible use. Participants benefit from tool insurance discounts, priority depot access, and equipment subsidies.
4. Launch an interactive public dashboard of forest rules in Hindi and local dialects, featuring visual compliance guides. Peer review may rate violations as "Low," "Medium," or "Critical." For members choosing to participate, maintaining a 100% "Green Deviation Score" for two consecutive years secures a place on forest office honour boards, eligibility for joint forest management (JFM) projects, and access to value-addition grants.

Reasoning:

The current regime heavily relies on seizure and imprisonment, even for procedural or non-malicious violations. This often harms small forest-dependent communities and undermines trust. This reform encourages voluntary compliance and transparency without coercion by creating community-led regulatory guilds, using technology for traceability, and shifting to incentive-based systems. Tech-enabled monitoring (geo-tagging, blockchain, QR codes) paired with public dashboards creates predictable enforcement, reduces rent-seeking by field officials, and fosters market-driven conservation ethics. Replacing prison terms and confiscation with rectification periods and digital reputation systems aligns forest governance with liberal democratic principles of minimal state intrusion, procedural fairness, and community autonomy.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	4.33/5	3/5	5/5	20.83

The Uttar Pradesh Plastic and Other Non-Biodegradable Garbage (Regulation of Use and Disposal) Act, 2000

Provisions:

Section 3: Prohibits throwing or placing non-biodegradable garbage in public places, drains, or open areas except in designated receptacles or locations authorised by local authorities.

Section 8(1)-(3): Provides for imprisonment and/or fines for first and repeated violations of plastic use restrictions (Section 7), manufacturing or selling plastic products (Section 7), or for general contraventions under Section 3 or 3A. Fines range from ₹1,000 to ₹1,00,000 and jail terms up to 1 year, depending on the nature and frequency of violation.

Recommendations:

1. Enable Zero Plastic Alliance (ZPA) zones-voluntary community-led waste-free areas governed by local RWAs, vendors, schools, and urban bodies. Vendors use QR-linked Eco Vendor IDs displaying their compliance grade, while the GeoFence Clean Zone App ensures plastic-free monitoring around eco-sensitive areas. Pledges and periodic drone surveillance replace raids.
2. Community associations may maintain complaint-based monitoring systems, where disputes are referred for settlement, mediation, or restitution awards. Repeat offenders identified by community mechanisms may be denied the use of the "Green Compliance Mark" and may face social-contractual sanctions such as exclusion from community-run marketplaces until restitution is made.
3. Plastic manufacturers and transporters may register on EPR-M, a third-party digital compliance platform linking them to recyclers and offset partners. Monthly plastic use declarations are matched against AI-assisted waste recovery audits. Non-cooperative units may lose digital certification but not face criminal prosecution.

Reasoning:

The current law imposes high penalties and imprisonment even for minor infractions, which fosters fear, not compliance. Global best practices-from Taiwan's citizen honour wards to Chile's digital plastic tracking-show that behavioural change follows visibility, local pride, and cooperative accountability, not coercion. Community-driven certification, digital compliance dashboards, and real-time monitoring foster a spontaneous order that evolves from local participation rather than bureaucratic raids. Using public recognition, peer benchmarking, and eco-badging turns plastic compliance into a civic badge of honour. Trust-based, tech-enabled mechanisms are more effective and scalable than state-led punitive enforcement. This approach shifts the enforcement model from punishment to peer trust, secrecy to transparency, and fear to civic pride, incentivising businesses and communities to adopt sustainable practices by choice, not force.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	4/5	2.67/5	1/5	3/5	3.33/5	0/5	4.33/5	28.06

The Uttar Pradesh Regulation of Coaching Act, 2002

Provisions:

Section 7: Prohibits any individual from running or teaching at a coaching centre without a government certificate. Teachers cannot engage in external coaching, manage centres, or accept fees beyond their employment.

Section 8: Empowers state officers to inspect coaching centres, issue compliance reports, and mandate rectification.

Section 9: Imposes fines up to ₹1 lakh for unregistered coaching, ₹50,000 for teacher violations, and ₹10,000 for non-compliance with inspection orders.

Recommendations:

1. Replace the current licensing and penalty regime with a decentralised, voluntary compliance model managed by a Coaching Standards Council (CSC) - a peer-led, non-state body of educators, coaching centres, and student representatives.
2. Anyone may affiliate with CSC for voluntary recognition, quality standards, and public trust, eliminating the need for compulsory licences.
3. Teachers may freely coach outside their institutions with voluntary disclosure via CSC or local educator forums, provided there's no conflict of interest.
4. Revise inspection mechanisms to enable third-party audits and feedback through transparent, community-based platforms.
5. Remove fines; instead, CSC or educator networks may suggest non-coercive corrections like public advisories, temporary delisting, or free educational services for underserved students.

Reasoning:

This approach respects professional liberty and decentralises accountability through reputation and peer validation rather than state coercion. Voluntary disclosure, transparent reviews, and self-regulatory governance build trust and ensure quality without overregulation. Such reforms preserve dignity, encourage compliance, and empower students and educators through consent-based, community-driven oversight.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	2.50/5	3.67/5	1/5	2.67/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	32.27

U.P. Apartment (Promotion of Construction, Ownership and Maintenance) Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 25: Promoters who transfer land designated as common areas, or construct beyond compoundable limits, and apartment owners who violate obligations under Sections 5, 6, or prescribed byelaws, can face criminal prosecution along with penalties.

Recommendations:

1. Promoters who transfer common areas or deviate from the pre-approved plan and build unauthorised structures shall restore the property per the sanctioned plan. In case the allottees suffer substantial loss, promoters may face civil remedies initiated by allottees and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), such as specific performance and prohibition from future project registration by RWAs or industry registries until they compensate the injured party with proportionate punitive damages.
2. Disputes are to be adjudicated solely through civil litigation, arbitration, or apartment dispute forums formed by contract or cooperative rules.
3. Apartment owners violating Sections 5, 6, or byelaws shall be liable to compensate the RWA or co-owners for actual harm or be subject to community sanctions (e.g., suspension of voting rights or access to services) as per contract or association byelaws.

Reasoning:

Misconduct related to property or service obligations is contractual or regulatory in nature and should not trigger penal sanctions. A shift in accountability to apartment owners' associations and buyers reduces reliance on State coercion. This liberal approach encourages dispute resolution through agreed procedures like arbitration or civil litigation to minimise the burden on courts and avoid the chilling effect of over-deterrence on developers and owners.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	5/5	3/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	39.80

The Uttar Pradesh Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 73: For non-fraud tax shortfall, a show cause notice is issued, but no penalty applies if paid early; a 10% penalty (max ₹10,000) applies post-notice, with orders due within 3 years.

Section 74: In fraud or suppression cases, a show cause notice is mandatory with escalating penalties (15%, 25%, or 50%) depending on timing; full penalty equals the tax if unpaid, and orders must be issued within 5 years.

Section 83: To protect revenue, the Commissioner may provisionally attach assets, including those of related persons, during proceedings.

Section 122: Offences like false invoicing, tax evasion, or obstructing officers attract penalties up to the evaded tax or ₹10,000, applicable to registered persons, e-commerce operators, and abettors.

Recommendations:

1. Replace state-issued show cause and penalty regime with voluntary correction platforms governed by trade-led Tax Discrepancy Boards. Self-declared corrections within a defined period incur no penalty; unresolved disputes go to private mediation/arbitration.
2. Abolish asset attachment powers. Revenue recovery to occur via civil claim proceedings or contractual risk instruments (e.g., escrow accounts or tax compliance bonds) administered by market-based institutions.
3. Shift from punitive state fines to reputation-based deterrents managed by industry-led Compliance Councils. Non-compliant entities may face debarment from trade networks, negative ratings, or denial of aggregator access.

Reasoning:

A classical liberal tax regime prioritises voluntary compliance, restitution, and civil accountability over coercion and seizure. Replacing state-enforced penalties with peer-regulated correction boards, market-based risk tools, and contractual consequences fosters a climate of trust and efficiency. This decentralised approach enhances business autonomy, upholds property rights, and ensures proportional redress without fear of arbitrary enforcement.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	36.19

The Uttar Pradesh Ground Water (Management and Regulation) Act, 2019

Provisions:

Section 39: Criminal penalties, including imprisonment (6 months to 7 years) and fines (₹2–20 lakh) are imposed on commercial/industrial users for non-compliance with rainwater harvesting obligations, supplying groundwater below quality standards or repeated offences leading to license cancellation.

Recommendations:

1. Commercial and bulk users are encouraged to voluntarily join a Self-Regulatory Groundwater Guild that upholds extraction, recharge, and water quality standards. Non-compliance triggers reputational sanctions: public listing, decertification, market exclusion. Guilds may mandate audits, community restoration work, or voluntary compensation. Persistent violators may be labelled "Free-Riders."
2. Failure to disclose extraction data or misreporting shall result in demerits on a public Compliance Score, used by banks, vendors, and procurement bodies. Repeated offenders lose access to green finance and private quota systems.
3. Private suppliers failing market water standards shall be listed in the Transparency Ledger, risk consumer alert flags and procurement delisting and be contractually required to install real-time quality monitors.
4. Compliance with local recharge blueprints is incentivised through green building certifications, voluntary tax rebates from green funds, and visibility on a Recharge Compliant Registry.

Reasoning:

This model shifts from state punishment to peer regulation, replacing coercion with incentives, transparency, and reputation. It empowers communities and market actors to drive conservation through voluntary governance, building a sustainable and cooperative groundwater ecosystem in line with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.5/5	0/5	1/5	3.33/5	3/5	3.67/5	5/5	26.90

Uttar Pradesh Fire and Emergency Services Act, 2022

Provisions:

Section 23 & 36: Failure to comply with directions for fire risk mitigation may lead to imprisonment or a fine.

Section 28: Mandatory appointment of Fire Safety Officer; failure may attract penal consequences.

Section 31: Contravention of provisions of Chapter IV (including inspections, notices, directions) attracts a penalty of imprisonment or fine.

Section 37: Obstruction of fire personnel during firefighting is punishable with imprisonment/fine.

Section 38: Making a false fire report attracts a criminal penalty.

Section 39: General contravention of the Act/rules/notifications is penalised with imprisonment and/or fine.

Recommendations:

1. Voluntary Risk Mitigation Certification: Replace penal directives with voluntary adherence to fire risk standards developed by the independent Fire Safety Guild (FSGs). Property owners can obtain FSG certification based on third-party audits.
2. Self-Appointed Fire Safety Stewards: Section 28's mandate should be replaced with an optional registry of trained Fire Safety Stewards maintained by local housing/industrial associations with FSG support.
3. Peer-Led Fire Preparedness Oversight: Replace Section 31's criminal penalties with peer-verified safety declarations, reviewed periodically by cooperative fire networks.
4. Community Norms for Emergency Cooperation: Replace Section 37's penal approach with community charters encouraging cooperation during emergencies, backed by voluntary service pledges.
5. Reputation-Based Deterrent for False Reports: For Section 38, community-run registries may publish notices against repeated false informants and suspend their access to safety platforms.
6. Non-Coercive Correction of General Violations: Replace Section 39 with non-criminal remedies such as public non-compliance notices, peer advisories, or conditional exclusion from fire insurance pools.

Reasoning:

Local cooperatives, insurers, and civic associations are better suited to govern fire safety through trust-based networks than centralised penal authorities. Property owners and occupiers should manage their own risk through voluntary protocols, not State-mandated appointments or reporting duties. Competitive, private fire safety training and credentialing encourage efficiency and adaptability, avoiding monopolistic state impositions. These reforms promote enforcement through contracts, insurance, and reputation, uphold property rights, and remove arbitrary coercive powers from the State, promoting mutual accountability.

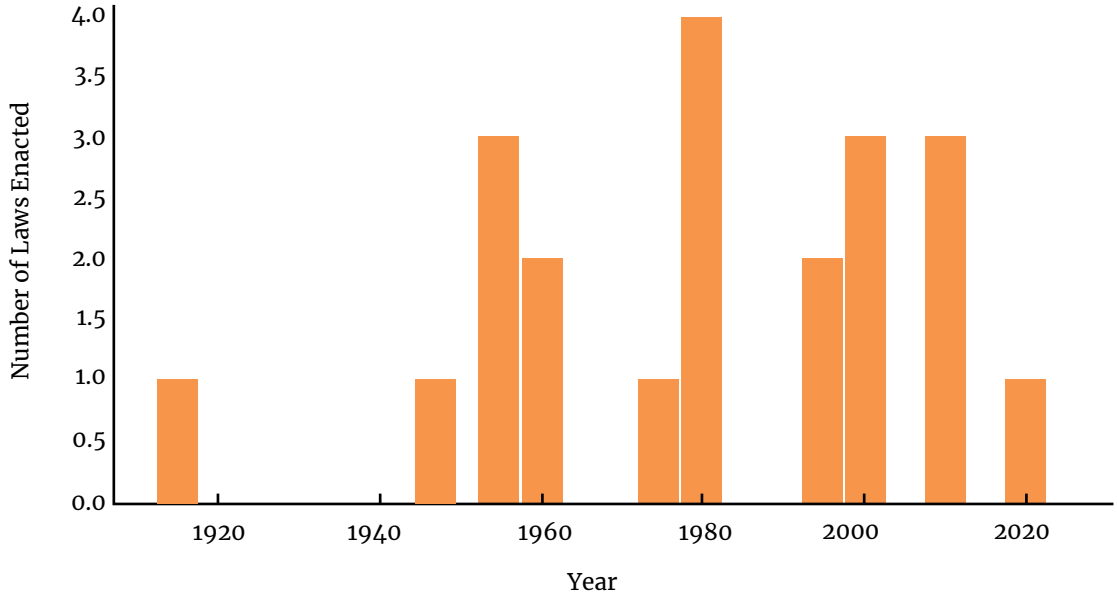
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	0/5	3/5	1.67/5	4.33/5	3/5	5/5	29.80

Rajasthan

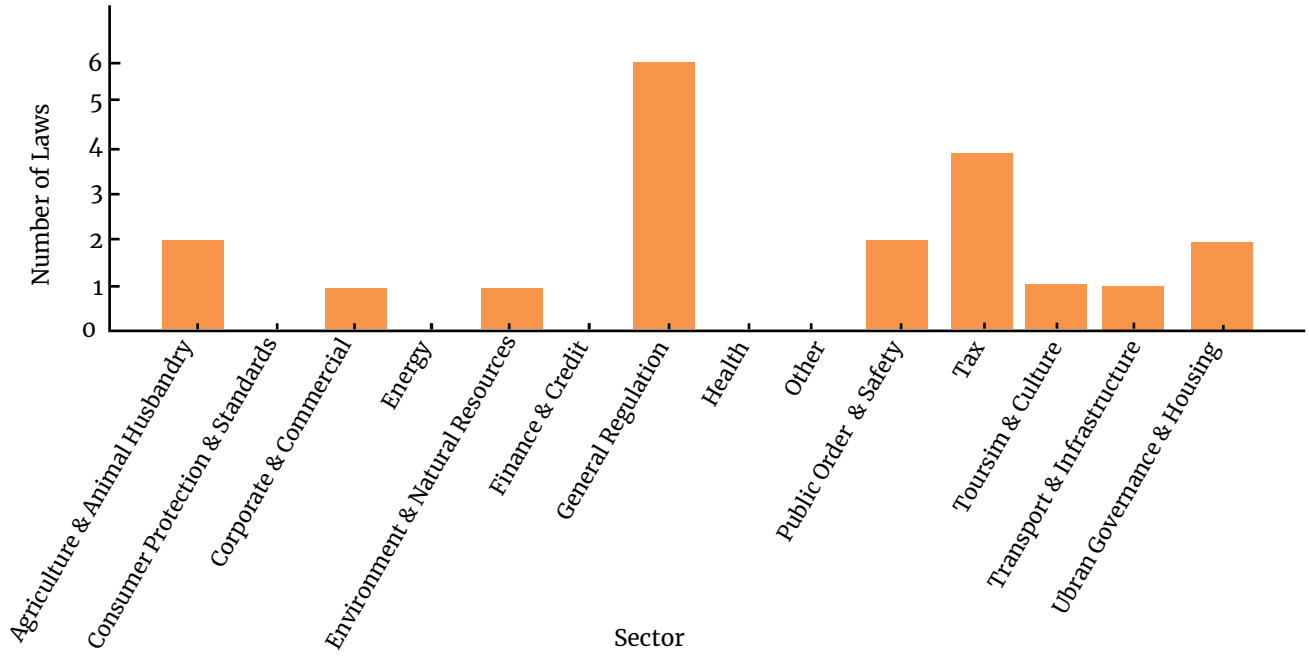
Rajasthan

Rajasthan's economy is diverse, with increased agricultural employment despite a lack of proper sources of irrigation. The state's GSDP is around 17.04 lakh crore rupees with a growth rate of 12.02%, and it also ranked 4th in the BRAP rankings. The state has a single window clearance system for time-bound approvals for various commercial and economic activities such as construction permits, land allotments, and environmental clearances. Even then, the state presents a compelling case for reforms in economic laws: diverse sectoral momentum, strategic investments, and vibrant startup culture set against the backdrop of structural fiscal constraints, regulatory delays (e.g., land and stamp duty issues), and varying regional development. Transforming the laws governing business would help scale investment efficacy and equitable growth across the state.

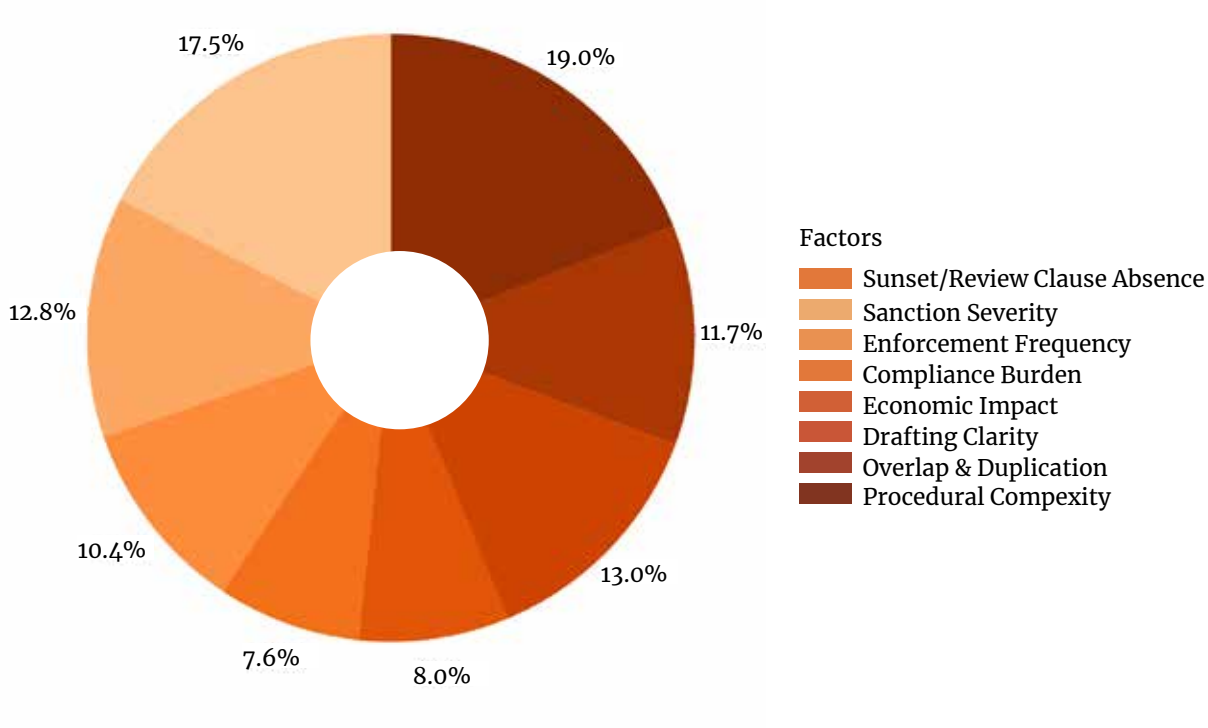
Year-wise Distribution of Laws- Rajasthan



Sector-wise Distribution of Laws- Rajasthan



MCDA Factor Distribution- Rajasthan



Rajasthan Excise Act, 1950, read with Rajasthan Distilleries Rules, 1976

Provisions:

Rule 3: To establish a distillery, applicants must obtain an NOC, construction approval, and operational license from the Excise Commissioner, submitting detailed plans and fees at each stage, including for future alterations.

Rules 21 and 22: The Excise Commissioner appoints officers to oversee distilleries under district-level oversight.

Recommendations:

1. Replace Excise Officers oversight with Independent Distillery Standards Boards (IDSBs) composed of industry professionals, safety engineers, and consumer representatives through a self-regulatory, digitally monitored ecosystem. IDSBs shall ensure that distilleries are able to operate under a perpetual registration model, filing periodic digital declarations related to production volumes, storage, blending, and dispatch, instead of seeking repeated permits for routine operations.
2. IDSBs could host digital platforms for blockchain-based stock logs, GPS-tracked dispatch systems, and automated duty computation. This shall reduce manual errors and build audit trails without the need for constant state oversight. These tools enhance traceability and compliance while preserving business autonomy.

Reasoning:

Introducing digital self-declaration, blockchain-based tracking, and risk-based audits makes the regulatory process real-time, tamper-proof, and less dependent on manual intervention. Delegating oversight to Independent Distillery Standards Boards (IDSBs) composed of industry experts ensures technical standards are upheld without excessive bureaucratic control. This decentralised, peer-reviewed model encourages industry discipline and long-term compliance driven by reputation and transparency rather than fear of punitive state action.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	3.33/5	64.15

Rajasthan Cinemas (Regulation) Act, 1952, read with Rajasthan Cinemas (Regulation) Rules, 1959

Provisions:

Section 3: Cinematograph exhibitions to be licensed and in compliance with any conditions and restrictions imposed by such licence.

Recommendations:

1. Under the Rajasthan Cinemas (Regulation) Act, 1952, replace the licensing requirement and the authority of the District Magistrate to grant or deny licences with a voluntary and digital self-registration system. A discretionary, open-access compliance dashboard maintained by the Autonomous Cinema Councils (ACCs) may be established, with cinema operators declaring safety compliance, seating capacity, and emergency readiness. These Autonomous Cinema Councils (ACCs) shall include cinema owners, distributors, film industry representatives and consumers.
2. Localised franchisees may also voluntarily commit to Quiet Venue Agreements in sensitive areas, enforced through the Citizen-Cinema Boards Committee instead of police enforcement.
3. Inspections, including those by electrical or fire officials, should be replaced with certification by independent, peer-led Autonomous Cinema Councils (ACCs) composed of safety engineers, architects, and consumer representatives.

Reasoning:

These reforms reduce bureaucratic discretion and remove licensing bottlenecks that often delay or deter cinema operations, especially for small or independent venues. By shifting to a digital self-registration model, the regulatory process becomes more transparent, predictable, and accessible, enhancing ease of doing business. Replacing state-led inspections with Autonomous Cinema Councils ensures that safety oversight is grounded in professional expertise and industry knowledge, not generalist administrative power. This peer-regulated approach fosters credibility and trust while reducing rent-seeking and arbitrary enforcement.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	56.44

Rajasthan Fisheries Act, 1953, read with Rajasthan Fisheries Rules, 1958

Provisions:

Section 8: Any person who contravenes the Act, rules, or orders is punishable with up to three months' imprisonment, ₹500 fine, or both. Repeat offenders of fishing-related offences face enhanced penalties up to six months' imprisonment, ₹1,000 fine, or both.

Section 9: A police officer or authorised person may arrest anyone committing or attempting a fishing offence without a warrant if identity is refused or doubtful. Detention is allowed only until the correct identity is ascertained, and cannot exceed 24 hours without a magistrate's order.

Recommendations:

1. Empower local fishers, pond operators, and aquaculture enterprises to form Voluntary Fisheries Management Zones (FMZs). These self-organised collectives will establish their own rules regarding breeding closures, gear standards, catch limits, and seasonal access, tailored to their specific ecosystems.
2. A Voluntary Fishers' Rating Index should be introduced within each FMZ to promote compliance and sustainability, scoring individuals and enterprises based on adherence to sustainable practices, peer feedback, and transparency. Higher ratings enable preferential access to government leases, low-interest loans, insurance schemes, and private buyer contracts.
3. Routine compliance filings-such as stock declarations and seasonal usage logs-should shift to a voluntary self-certification model maintained by FMZs, audited only on complaint or pattern anomalies.
4. A decentralised dispute resolution system should be established through Community Fisheries Panels (CFPs), comprising fishers, cooperatives, panchayat members, and private hatcheries. CFPs must encourage alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, ensuring easy and fast dispute resolution for the stakeholders.

Reasoning:

Allowing voluntary Fisheries Management Zones enables rule-setting by consent, ensuring ecological sustainability through locally agreed practices rather than uniform state mandates. Self-certification for routine filings reduces compliance costs and administrative friction, while audit triggers based on anomalies preserve accountability without blanket oversight. Community Fisheries Panels decentralise dispute resolution, increase legitimacy, and reduce state overload by reserving government intervention for appeal or fraud. A performance-based fishers' rating index ties incentives-like market access and lease prioritisation-to transparent, merit-based criteria, encouraging self-regulation over coercion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	1.5/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	2.67/5	5/5	4.33/5	41.7

Rajasthan Excise Act, 1956, read with Rajasthan Excise Rules, 1956

Provisions:

Sections 14 & 15: Passes for Import, Export, and Transport of Excisable Articles.

Section 54: Penalty for unlawful import, export, transport, manufacture, possession, etc. of Exciseable Articles.

Recommendations:

1. A decentralised Excise Standards Council (ESC) should be established by manufacturers, vendors, and distributors to create and enforce mutually agreed standards for safety, traceability, distribution, and ethical practice, which replace state-imposed, rigid conditions under licensing provisions.
2. ESCs may issue Compliance Certificates and Public Notices of Deviation based on peer evaluations, consumer feedback, and independent audits. Persistent deviation may lead to loss of ESC membership, reduced consumer trust, and market-based exclusion by aggregators or cooperatives.
3. Ensure that high-compliance participants (rated by ESCs) are granted priority access to private wholesale and cooperative retail chains, including rights to fast-track route approvals, bonded warehousing, and logistics pooling. Platforms and cooperatives may choose to transact only with high-rated members, creating a market incentive for compliance.
4. The Excise Department should act as a neutral facilitator—limited to accrediting self-regulatory councils, maintaining public dashboards of voluntary compliance ratings, and intervening only in cases of verified fraud, adulteration, or serious public disturbance.

Reasoning:

ESCs allow self-regulating standards to evolve dynamically, matching distribution, packaging, or retail innovations. In environments with limited enforcement capacity, peer accountability is practical and powerful. ESC members have mutual incentives to uphold quality and expose non-compliance, fostering a cooperative compliance culture. A voluntary, reputation-led model lowers the cost of formalisation, making it easier for rural entrepreneurs, women-led enterprises, and traditional brewers to operate openly within the legal framework. Under this model, the government retains full authority to act in cases of adulteration, public endangerment, or fraud, but steps back from penalising minor clerical or procedural lapses.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	5/5	4.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	46.26

Rajasthan Urban Improvement Act, 1959, read with Rajasthan Urban Improvement (Change of Use) Rules, 1974

Provisions:

Rule 3: A person wishing to convert residential land or premises to commercial use must apply in writing in Form 'A' to the District Collector, verified as per the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.

Rule 4: Upon receiving an application, the Collector or authorised officer must scrutinise it within 30 days and seek advice from relevant planning authorities. The Collector then submits a report with recommendations to the State Government.

Recommendations:

1. Instead of applying for permission to UITs, property owners should be allowed to declare an intended change of land use on a unified digital portal maintained by Accredited Urban Compliance Panels (AUCPs) with automatic acknowledgement if no objections are raised within a fixed time frame. AUCPs shall be autonomous, peer-composed bodies of architects, town planners, engineers, and residents' representatives.
2. Inspection and enforcement powers currently exercised by state-appointed officials should be transferred to Accredited Urban Compliance Panels (AUCPs), overseeing adherence to safety norms, parking guidelines, and impact assessments, independent of government control. UITs should be limited to zoning dispute resolution and infrastructure planning, not micromanaging individual land-use decisions.

Reasoning:

Requiring businesses or homeowners to seek change-of-use permissions from Urban Improvement Trusts (UITs) subjects them to unpredictable delays, potential harassment, and non-transparent decision-making. A self-declaration and public-notice model, where declared use is automatically deemed approved if no objection arises in a fixed time, restores legal certainty, a precondition for productive investment in urban real estate. Further, relying on Autonomous Urban Compliance Panels (AUCPs) composed of town planners, engineers, and peer reviewers introduces technical meritocracy. It reduces dependence on state officers who may lack capacity or neutrality. These peer panels can better assess infrastructure burden, safety, and traffic impact, ensuring a functional rectification period is offered, backed by post-facto compliance through third-party certification.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	50.83

Rajasthan Non-Trading Companies Act, 1960

Provisions:

Section 3: The provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 apply to these companies, but the powers of the Central Government are exercised by the State Government. The State Government may delegate these powers to its officers, modify the provisions as needed, and appoint a Registrar to carry out the related functions.

Recommendations:

1. Instead of requiring approvals, registration renewals, or activity-specific permissions from the Registrar or other state authorities, such companies should operate under a public digital declaration system, where they annually self-report governance structure, membership details, and financial summaries on a unified portal. This portal shall be hosted by Accredited Mutual Governance Councils (AMGCs)-bodies composed of legal professionals, cooperative experts, and civil society representatives.
2. Government officers should no longer have discretionary powers to inspect or suspend these entities. AMGCs should undertake inspection only in the cases flagged by algorithmic anomalies, complaints from members, or credible third-party disclosures. A tiered rectification mechanism offered by AMGCs should apply, offering support and time-bound compliance correction before invoking legal processes.

Reasoning:

Reforming the Rajasthan Non-Trading Companies Act, 1960, to enable self-governance, digital transparency, and peer oversight offers significant advantages for the state and the entities it regulates. Non-trading companies-such as mutual welfare associations, civic bodies, housing societies, and cultural trusts-operate for collective benefit besides profit, and imposing a compliance-heavy, discretionary oversight model undermines their purpose and viability. A self-declaration system, paired with public disclosures and reputation-based trust metrics, reduces bureaucratic friction while maintaining transparency and member accountability. Shifting oversight from government officers to sector-specific councils promotes expert-led, context-sensitive governance instead of one-size-fits-all control.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	2.67/5	2/5	5/5	5/5	42.17

Rajasthan Agriculture Market Produce Act, 1961, read with Rajasthan Agricultural Produce Markets Rules, 1963

Provisions:

Section 27-B: Power of entry and search by the secretary of the market committee.

Section 28(1): Penalty for violation of Market Area limits.

Section 28(2): Penalty for evading the payment of the market fee by the Licensee.

Section 28(4): Penalty for general contravention of any of the provisions of the Act.

Recommendations:

1. Mandatory trader licensing and penalty regimes should be replaced by a system of Voluntary Market Networks (VMNs)-self-organised bodies composed of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), agri-startups, cooperatives, and trading platforms. VMNs should be authorised to develop their own service protocols, logistical pooling mechanisms, price discovery tools, and rating systems for buyers and sellers, with no requirement to seek prior approval from APMCs.
2. APMCs should act only as public infrastructure managers and not regulatory authorities. APMCs should be restricted from monopolising market access, with farmers and traders allowed to freely transact outside mandis, physically or digitally through VMNs, without penal consequences.
3. The power to suspend or cancel any trading activity by the APMC should be restricted to cases of proven fraud or physical market disruption.
4. Allow private agri-logistics players, agri-warehouses, and rural procurement centres to act as parallel market infrastructure without needing APMC recognition.

Reasoning:

In current APMC structures, those in power (often traders) act as gatekeepers, using suspension powers to exclude rivals or small entrants. Removing coercive authority limits this regulatory capture and protects open access to trade. A decentralised market-driven conduct system allows experimentation, reputation-based innovation, and new entrants with alternative models, encouraging greater specialisation and consumer responsiveness. Requiring that any coercive action (like suspension) be tied to proven harm and not arbitrary rules aligns with the principle of proportionality, non-arbitrariness, and equality before the law, consistent with constitutional jurisprudence.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	4/5	4.33/5	3.67/5	2/5	3.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	35.84

Rajasthan Noises Control Act, 1963, read with Rajasthan Noises Control Rules, 1964

Provisions:

Section 6: Contravention, attempts, or abetment of violation of the Act shall be fined up to ₹250 on first conviction, and on subsequent conviction, may face imprisonment, fine, or both

Recommendations:

1. Enforcement powers currently held by inspectors and police should be replaced with local, community-based Noise Resolution Panels (NRPs) composed of resident groups and trade associations, which align with the principle of subsidiarity. These bodies would mediate disputes and issue non-punitive warnings, ensuring proportionate response while protecting local peace. Minor or first-time violations should be decriminalised, eliminating state oversight for minor or procedural lapses.
2. Platforms like e-commerce sites, venue listings, and booking apps must publicly display noise ratings based on compliance tags (e.g., "Quiet Venue Certified" or "Community Approved"). These tags, maintained by NRPs, become incentives for businesses to self-regulate-inturn driven by market trust rather than state threat. This shall empower the consumers to make an informed choice and promote market-driven compliance by the businesses.

Reasoning:

Allowing neighbourhoods and commercial districts to register "sound profiles" and voluntary noise compacts based on mutual consent enables differentiated zones without a one-size-fits-all regulatory burden. Decriminalising first-time or low-impact violations reduces unnecessary criminalisation of routine business or social activity, preserving legal proportionality. Market tools such as noise compliance tags ("Quiet Venue Certified") or platform ratings introduce natural economic incentives for self-regulation, rewarding good behaviour through consumer preference rather than state penalties.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	4/5	2/5	0/5	2.67/5	4.333/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	47.8

Rajasthan State Cattle Fairs Act, 1963, read with Rajasthan State Cattle Fairs Rules, 1963

Provisions:

Rule 3: The officer-in-charge is responsible for managing the State Cattle Fair, including ensuring sanitation, controlling animal diseases, and disposing of unclaimed animal carcasses within the fair area.

Rules 7 and 8: Cattle may only enter or exit the fair area through designated routes set by the officer-in-charge. Entry during the fair requires a red Chithi (entry pass) from the designated outpost.

Recommendations:

1. Cattle traders, breeders, and allied service providers could form Registered Livestock Market Associations (RLMAs) to self-organise fairs, maintain hygiene, record transactions, and ensure welfare standards. RLMAs must provide digital infrastructure, veterinary support, and land access through a transparent allotment system. State oversight must be limited to fraud prevention and epidemiological alerts, not micromanaging trading operations.
2. Simplify registration and movement permits for cattle through self-declaration-based e-passes issued by RLMAs, removing delays caused by manual verification.

Reasoning:

The current state-managed model, where government authorities directly organise, regulate, and license cattle fairs, creates bottlenecks, restricts private initiative, and often fails to respond to the dynamic needs of local traders, breeders, and livestock owners. By enabling Registered Livestock Market Associations (RLMAs) to self-organise fairs, the regulatory burden is shifted from the state to stakeholders with direct incentives to maintain quality, transparency, and service delivery. Simplifying movement permissions and registration through digital self-declaration systems reduces compliance costs and logistical delays, which are significant for small and marginal cattle owners.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	1/5	3/5	4.33/5	29.55

The Rajasthan Soil and Water Conservation Act, 1964, read with The Rajasthan Soil and Water Conservation Rules, 1966

Provisions:

Section 3: The State Government may declare any area as a notified area for soil and water conservation by issuing a notification in the Official Gazette when deemed necessary.

Section 15: Power of State Government to require the State Soil and Water Conservation Board to prepare conservation plans for a notified area.

Recommendations:

1. Permit Soil and Water Stewardship Boards (SWSBs) for peer monitoring, collective responsibility, and reputation-based compliance. These local bodies, composed of farmers, local environmentalists, and community leaders, shall allow farmers to self-declare their practices through digital dashboards hosted by SWBs. Randomised audits and community review shall back the digital dashboards. It shall allow for greater transparency, reducing the need for distant bureaucracies to micromanage routine practices.
2. The existing law relies heavily on compliance with government-formulated plans, inspections, and enforcement by state officers. In contrast, farmers and local water-user groups could be empowered via SWSBs to create and enforce region-specific conservation plans, enable contextual solutions and foster greater buy-in from stakeholders directly impacted by land degradation and water scarcity.
3. Replace current coercive penal mechanisms with incentive-linked, Voluntary Conservation Compacts. VCCs shall offer rewards such as market access, input subsidies, or green certification, which will mobilise participation through benefit and not fear.

Reasoning:

Reforming the Rajasthan Soil and Water Conservation Act and Rules to enable voluntary, community-driven stewardship leads to more sustainable and scalable conservation outcomes. When responsibility is shifted to local stakeholders-such as farmer groups and cooperatives-they are more likely to adopt practices that reflect ground realities, seasonal variations, and crop-specific needs. This decentralised approach replaces static, top-down plans with adaptive, self-monitored frameworks that align better with ecological diversity and agricultural cycles.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	52.10

Rajasthan Sales Tax Act, 1994, read with Rajasthan Sales Tax Rules, 1995

Provisions:

Section 42: Tax or demand is payable upon assessment or order by the assessee. It includes penalties, interest, and fees. Payments must be made within 30 days unless extended.

Section 71: A person is liable for prosecution if they falsely claim to be a registered dealer, submit false records or returns, evade tax, conceal liability, or fail to pay a demand notice within six months.

Recommendations:

1. Transition the Rajasthan Sales Tax regime to a closure- and disclosure-based framework to align it with the post-GST environment. All pending returns, assessments, or disputes should be migrated to a voluntary disclosure and resolution scheme under the Tax Assessment Councils(TACS). These TACs shall comprise independent auditors, legal professionals and business representatives. Businesses can file final reconciliations digitally and resolve liabilities with pre-declared penalty caps and interest rebates through TACs.
2. Trade and tax practitioner bodies certified by TACs may also be designated voluntary compliance partners, assisting taxpayers in legacy closure under a self-certified compliance framework.
3. Restrict the powers of tax officers to investigate only in exceptional, fraud-based cases. It preserves departmental capacity for significant matters while ending routine interference in long-settled accounts and ensuring business trust in the system.

Reasoning:

Reforming the Rajasthan Sales Tax Act, 1994 and its associated rules to prioritise voluntary disclosure and legacy closure delivers legal certainty, administrative efficiency, and economic clarity in a post-GST framework. A self-declaration model with fixed settlement terms restores trust in the system by empowering businesses to come forward without fear of arbitrary reassessment or penal action. It minimises prolonged litigation, reduces departmental backlog, and allows taxpayers and the state to allocate resources more productively. Limiting state intervention to high-risk anomalies and fraud and involving certified professionals as compliance facilitators makes the framework more predictable and less coercive.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	54.74

The Rajasthan Stamp Act, 1998, read with The Rajasthan Stamp Rules 2004

Provisions:

Section 37: Examination and impounding of instruments by Public Officers believed not to be duly stamped.

Section 73: Any person executing, issuing, negotiating, or using unstamped chargeable instruments, or voting under an unstamped proxy, is liable to a fine up to ₹5,000. If a penalty has already been paid under the relevant sections, it shall be deducted from the fine.

Recommendations:

1. Offer for transactions involving stamping to be processed through a digital self-declaration portal managed by the recognised market bodies, such as Stamp Accreditation Councils, instead of by the Collector or other designated state authorities. SACs shall comprise legal professionals, real estate intermediaries, financial institutions, and document service providers. These SACs shall determine what constitutes duly stamped and what falls under the category of unduly stamped. These bodies would issue verifiable e-stamp certificates based on auto-computed duty amounts and declared values. Proportionate rectification mechanisms under SACs should replace criminal action for minor or first-time under-declarations.
2. Government officers should no longer hold routine powers to impound documents or adjudicate duties. Audit and oversight functions should shift to sampling-based post-facto review by neutral, independent panels under SACs rather than universal pre-clearance.
3. Permit businesses (especially NBFCs, law firms, and real estate platforms) to purchase stamp credits in advance through SACs, which can then be dynamically applied to real-time transactions. This will reduce payment friction and promote smoother bulk compliance without manual intervention for each transaction.

Reasoning:

Transitioning to a decentralised, trust-based stamp duty framework enhances procedural efficiency and significantly reduces dependency on discretionary government intervention. Empowering professional, self-regulatory bodies to handle stamping processes makes the system more responsive to market needs and less prone to bureaucratic delay or rent-seeking. Auto-computed duty declarations and digital certification bring greater predictability and transparency, encouraging voluntary compliance and streamlining high-volume transactions. This approach aligns with trust-based governance by recognising voluntary compliance as the norm, embedding accountability within professional ecosystems, and treating citizens and businesses as responsible participants rather than subjects of suspicion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	3/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	76.44

Rajasthan Sports (Registration, Recognition and Regulation of Associations) Act, 2004, read with Rajasthan Sports (Registration, Recognition and Regulation of Associations) Rules, 2004

Provisions:

Section 4: The Registrar shall scrutinise the application to register the Sports Association to ensure all required information is provided and examine the Memorandum and bye-laws to confirm their compliance with the provisions of the statute.

Recommendations:

1. A federated, self-regulatory model should be adopted wherein independent sports associations may form Sporting Accreditation Councils (SACs). SACs shall be sector-specific, autonomous bodies governed by athletes, coaches, club representatives, and community stakeholders. Under this model, registration of sports bodies shall be conducted via a public self-declaration portal hosted by SAC. The associations shall disclose their governance norms, financial statements, dispute resolution mechanisms, and code of conduct on these portals.
2. State recognition should be replaced with voluntary affiliation to SACs, linked to eligibility for public funding, facility usage, or tournament access. Government officers should be restricted to a facilitator role, providing infrastructure, co-funding, and international coordination.

Reasoning:

Self-declaration portals reduce compliance friction and promote transparency, while peer evaluation offers continuous, context-specific oversight without punitive rigidity. By linking SAC affiliation to access to public benefits rather than legal validity, the model retains incentives for good governance without coercion. Restricting the government's role to facilitation—providing infrastructure, dispute forums, and international coordination—ensures focus on service delivery instead of control. These reforms empower athletes, clubs, and communities, and shift the regulatory mindset from permission to performance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	5/5	56.02

Rajasthan Enterprises Single Window Enabling and Clearance Act, 2011

Provisions:

Section 3: Constitution, Powers, and Functions of State and District Empowered Committees to process applications for permissions and exemptions under Rajasthan laws if the Competent Authority fails to act within prescribed timelines.

Section 7: Competent and Relevant State Authorities must dispose of applications by businesses for regulatory clearance within the prescribed time.

Section 11: Grant of customised packages, concessions, exemptions or relaxations by the Government, or any other authority subordinate to any enterprise.

Recommendations:

1. Self-Certification Councils (SCCs), composed of industry associations, technical experts, legal advisors, and independent auditors, should be accredited to assist enterprises in navigating sectoral requirements, issuing voluntary compliance endorsements, and maintaining transparent public filing records.
2. Permit businesses to file a unified digital declaration on a digital repository maintained by SCCs that covers land use, utility access, labour norms, and environmental safeguards, automatically generating a time-stamped business commencement certificate without awaiting departmental vetting. These reforms would fully activate the intent behind single-window legislation; not merely as a digital interface for old processes, but as a rule-based, consent-driven model that enables timely, autonomous business entry while preserving accountability through structured, peer-regulated transparency.
3. Departmental authorities should lose discretionary veto powers for the exemption window, and be transformed into post-facto verification by the SCCs only upon red flag triggers, such as pattern anomalies or registered complaints.

Reasoning:

Transforming the single window system into a true self-declaration and trust-based platform reduces procedural friction, empowers entrepreneurs, and restores the presumption of compliance in regulatory design. Allowing enterprises to begin operations without awaiting multiple departmental approvals minimises delay, eliminates redundancy, and lowers the cost of regulatory uncertainty—particularly for small and first-time business owners. By involving accredited Self-Certification Councils in guiding compliance and monitoring transparency, accountability is embedded within professional and peer ecosystems, rather than being subject to discretionary state oversight. Removing departmental veto powers during the exemption period prevents arbitrary obstruction and encourages a more predictable, rule-based environment.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	48.65

Rajasthan Goods (Control of Production, Supply, Distribution and Trade and Commerce) Act, 2014, read with Rajasthan Goods (Licensing and Control of Production, Supply, Distribution and Trade and Commerce) Order, 2014

Provisions:

Section 7: Power to refuse a Licence to the traders for trading declared goods by the Licensing Authority

Section 10: Suspension and cancellation of licence by the Licensing Authority on contravention of any of the terms and conditions of the licence by the trader.

Recommendations:

1. Repeal the existing requirement for compulsory licensing. In its place, a Digital Self-Declaration Registry should be introduced and maintained by sector-specific Trade Standards Councils (TSCs), voluntary, self-regulatory bodies composed of producers, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and logistics firms. Participants would register their operational details, storage capacity, and agree to a code of best practices for supply integrity and product traceability.
2. The discretionary authority of Licensing Officers to suspend or cancel licences should be withdrawn. Instead, Monitoring and Support Groups (MSGs) functioning under the TSCs should be authorised to review deviations or compliance breaches. These MSGs would offer tiered correction windows, allowing businesses to remedy issues without fear of arbitrary shutdowns or penal actions.
3. The government should intervene only in cases of fraud, cartelisation, or consumer harm, based on objective, digital triggers as per the TSC's digital registry.
4. Permit trade platforms, cooperatives, and consumer groups to assign "Trust Ratings" or "Efficiency Badges" to suppliers and vendors based on on-time delivery, dispute resolution history, and fulfilment consistency. These trust-based reputational tools can drive market discipline more effectively than state enforcement.

Reasoning:

Replacing mandatory licensing with a digital self-declaration registry removes bureaucratic gatekeeping and accelerates formal market entry, especially for small and mid-sized traders who often face disproportionate compliance burdens. Eliminating the power of licensing officers to suspend or cancel permissions unilaterally ensures that regulatory actions are based on objective, rule-based criteria, not discretion, thereby reducing corruption and regulatory uncertainty. Introducing Trade Standards Councils empowers industry participants to regulate themselves and improves compliance outcomes by leveraging industry expertise and commercial incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	4.33/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	3.33/5	26.04

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and The Rajasthan Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Rules, 2016

Provisions:

Rule 3: The State Government will form a Town Vending Committee (TVC) for each local authority, chaired by the Municipal Commissioner and including officials and nominated members.

Rule 8: TVC grants vending certificates to eligible vendors based on surveys and space. If applicants exceed capacity, selection is by lottery, and others are relocated.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that TVCs are restructured into Vendor Coordination Boards(VCBs) with elected vendor representatives, local residents, and independent urban experts. These boards would facilitate vending zone layouts, sanitation services, and peer dispute redressal rather than act as gatekeepers for permissions or punitive action.
2. Instead of mandatory, quota-based vending certificates issued through TVCs with state oversight, a digital self-declaration portal should be introduced by the VCBs. Vendors would register voluntarily with basic identity, vending location, and service type, generating a QR-coded digital vending ID with real-time public visibility. The portal must also integrate payment systems, grievance redress, and feedback tools to support vendor visibility and service quality, enabling a shift from policing to allowing livelihoods to flourish.

Reasoning:

Reforming the Rajasthan Street Vendors Rules, 2016, through a trust-based and market-oriented framework improves livelihood security, governance efficiency, and urban inclusivity. A self-declaration model respects the principle of voluntarism and treats vendors as responsible economic actors, not subjects of permission. It reduces bureaucratic hurdles and creates a transparent, digital registry that improves planning without resorting to coercive enforcement. Shifting enforcement to community-based Vendor Ethics Panels promotes peer accountability, reduces the risk of arbitrary fines or evictions, and builds local trust. It also aligns with the principle of subsidiarity, resolving issues closest to where they arise and reducing the burden on the state.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	2.67/5	3/5	4.33/5	5/5	48.23

Rajasthan Urban Land (Certification of Titles) Act, 2016

Provisions:

Section 22. Applications for issuance of a certificate of title to the Urban Land Title Certification Authority by landowners.

Section 25: A Certification Authority may issue a provisional certificate of title for urban land for two years after verifying ownership documents. If no objections arise, a permanent certificate may follow.

Recommendations:

1. Introduce a self-declared, digitally verified title ledger maintained by independent Title Verification Boards (TVBs) composed of property law experts, surveyors, and urban planners. The landowners shall file title declarations onto the ledger, which shall be automatically linked to cadastral maps, transaction history, and notarised sale deeds via a unified online portal. TVBs shall operate under predefined timelines with public reasoning and offer certification tags to the properties duly verified.
2. Limit the role of government authorities in digitising and hosting land records, facilitating integrations with revenue and municipal databases, and not adjudicating title conclusiveness.
3. Create decentralised Objection Resolution Panels composed of civil society members, retired judicial officers, survey experts, and property professionals to address objections raised against a title application. These panels would replace unilateral inquiry powers of state officers and operate within a fixed resolution timeline, ensuring transparency, fair hearing, and reasoned decisions.

Reasoning:

Reforming the Rajasthan Urban Land (Certification of Titles) Act, 2016, to reduce state discretion and shift toward a trust-based, market-driven property certification framework significantly enhances legal predictability, efficiency, and private investment. By introducing a self-declared title ledger, backed by digital integration with municipal and revenue records, the state moves from being a gatekeeper to a neutral data host. This shift reflects the principle of minimal government, where the state provides infrastructure and dispute frameworks but does not certify individual property claims unless necessary. Transparent and quickly verifiable land records reduce risk and unlock business capital flows, particularly in real estate, retail, warehousing, and urban services.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	48.63

Rajasthan School Fee Regulation Act, 2016, read with Rajasthan School Fee Regulation Rules, 2017

Provisions:

Section 10: Powers and functions of the Regional Development Authority to undertake planning, development, regulation, and management of the Special Investment Region, including land acquisition, implementation of development schemes, execution of contracts, etc.

Section 39: Restrictions on Use and Development within a declared Development Scheme area without prior permission from the Regional Development Authority.

Section 41: Power of cancellation of permission on account of misrepresentation, breach of conditions, or legal violations resulting in the development being deemed unauthorised.

Recommendations:

1. The management of SIRs should be entrusted to Independent Investment Zone Councils (IIZCs), autonomous self-regulatory bodies comprising landowners, investor groups, infrastructure developers, and certified urban planners. These councils would oversee planning coordination, internal dispute resolution, and adherence to voluntary development standards as formulated by them.
2. Procedures for layout approval, business commencement, and environmental compliance should adopt a green-channel approach under SIRs, allowing businesses to proceed based on self-declared submissions, subject only to data-flagged audits or formal complaints.
3. Routine compliance filings such as investment declarations, employment records, and project updates should follow a self-certification model hosted on a digital registry by IIZCs, with only randomised third-party verification in select cases.

Reasoning:

Empowering Independent Investment Zone Councils with planning and compliance functions decentralises authority, builds stakeholder ownership, and allows faster, context-aware decision-making. A green-channel, self-declaration system for approvals reduces delays, cuts compliance costs, and eliminates the need for repeated departmental interactions—removing a significant barrier for private sector participation. It fosters predictability and legal certainty, especially crucial for large-scale and long-gestation investments. Replacing compulsory land acquisition with transparent, consent-driven aggregation protects property rights and ensures community buy-in, minimising resistance and litigation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	2.67/5	5/5	5/5	50.43

Rajasthan Special Investment Region Act, 2016, read with Rajasthan Special Investment Region Rules, 2017

Provisions:

Section 10: Powers and functions of the Regional Development Authority to undertake planning, development, regulation, and management of the Special Investment Region, including land acquisition, implementation of development schemes, execution of contracts, etc.

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Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	2/5	2.67/5	5/5	5/5	50.43

Rajasthan Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Act, 2019, read with Rajasthan Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Facilitation of Establishment and Operation) Rules, 2019

Provisions:

Section 5: An intending entrepreneur must file a prescribed declaration to establish and operate an enterprise; the State nodal agency shall issue an Acknowledgement Certificate upon receipt.

Recommendations:

1. The current system of acknowledgements and clearances still involves backend validation by multiple departments, which creates uncertainty and scope for discretion. Instead, MSMEs should be allowed to commence operations immediately upon digitally filing a unified self-declaration form.
2. Sector-specific Self-Regulatory Industry Clusters (SRICs), composed of local business associations, trade professionals, and technical experts, should be recognised to guide new enterprises on voluntary safety, labour, and environmental standards. These SRICs would maintain public registries of best practices and offer optional compliance ratings, enabling market-led reputation incentives in place of state enforcement.
3. Government authorities should intervene only in cases of substantiated harm, complaints, or data-flagged non-compliance, not as a condition of initial operation.

Reasoning:

Shifting to a trust-based, self-declared model for MSME operations reinforces the fundamental principle that honest entrepreneurs should not be presumed non-compliant at the outset. Allowing enterprises to begin functioning upon digital self-declaration removes the uncertainty, delays, and rent-seeking often associated with departmental verifications and physical inspections. Empowering sector-specific self-regulatory clusters to issue voluntary guidance and compliance ratings ensures that standards are upheld through expertise, peer accountability, and market incentives—rather than coercive enforcement. Limiting government intervention to flagged or complaint-driven instances creates regulatory clarity while preserving public safeguards.

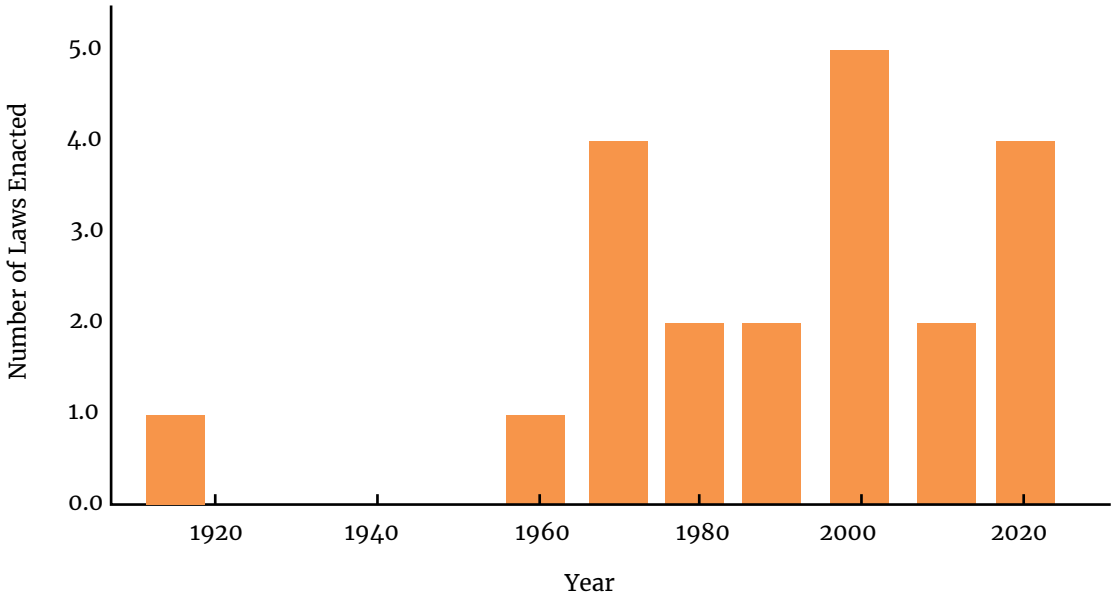
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	1/5	4.33/5	39.94

Andhra Pradesh

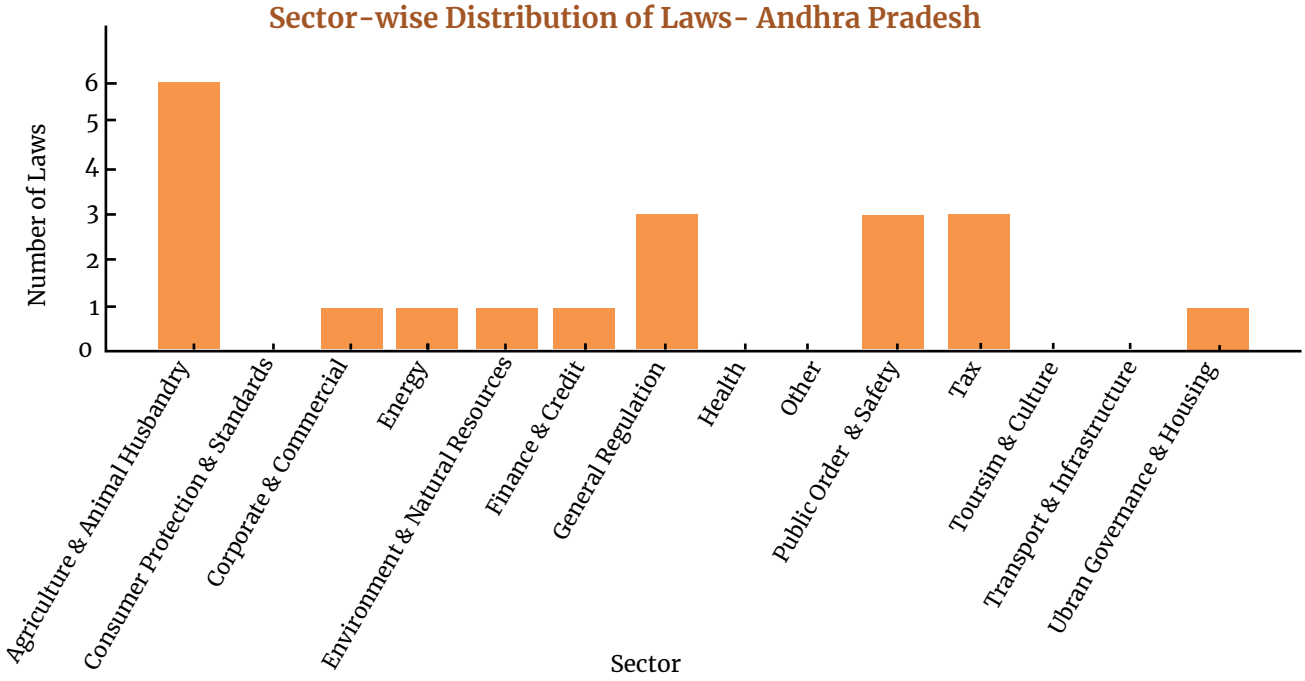
Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh is India's 8th largest state economy, driven by key sectors such as agro processing, ports, logistics, IT and manufacturing. It ranked 1st in India on the state *Ease of Doing Business* (EoDB) index and was later categorised as a top achiever in the 2024 Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) assessment. The GSDP of Andhra Pradesh for 2024-25 is estimated at 16.41 lakh crore rupees, amounting to a growth of 12.5% over 2023-24. The state's regulatory landscape includes a single window portal enabling rapid investment facilitation with a strong focus on real-time approvals and digital systems. In 2023-24, agriculture, manufacturing, and services accounted for 37%, 23%, and 40% of the economy. The state demonstrates strong economic dynamism, rising per capita incomes, sectoral balance, and rapid investment attraction - but faces hindrance from increasing debt, fiscal strain and capacity constraints. Modernising business laws, especially in areas like land acquisition, MSME regulation, infrastructure clearances, and investment facilitation, can help sustain growth, reduce compliance friction and set further inclusive economic potential in motion.

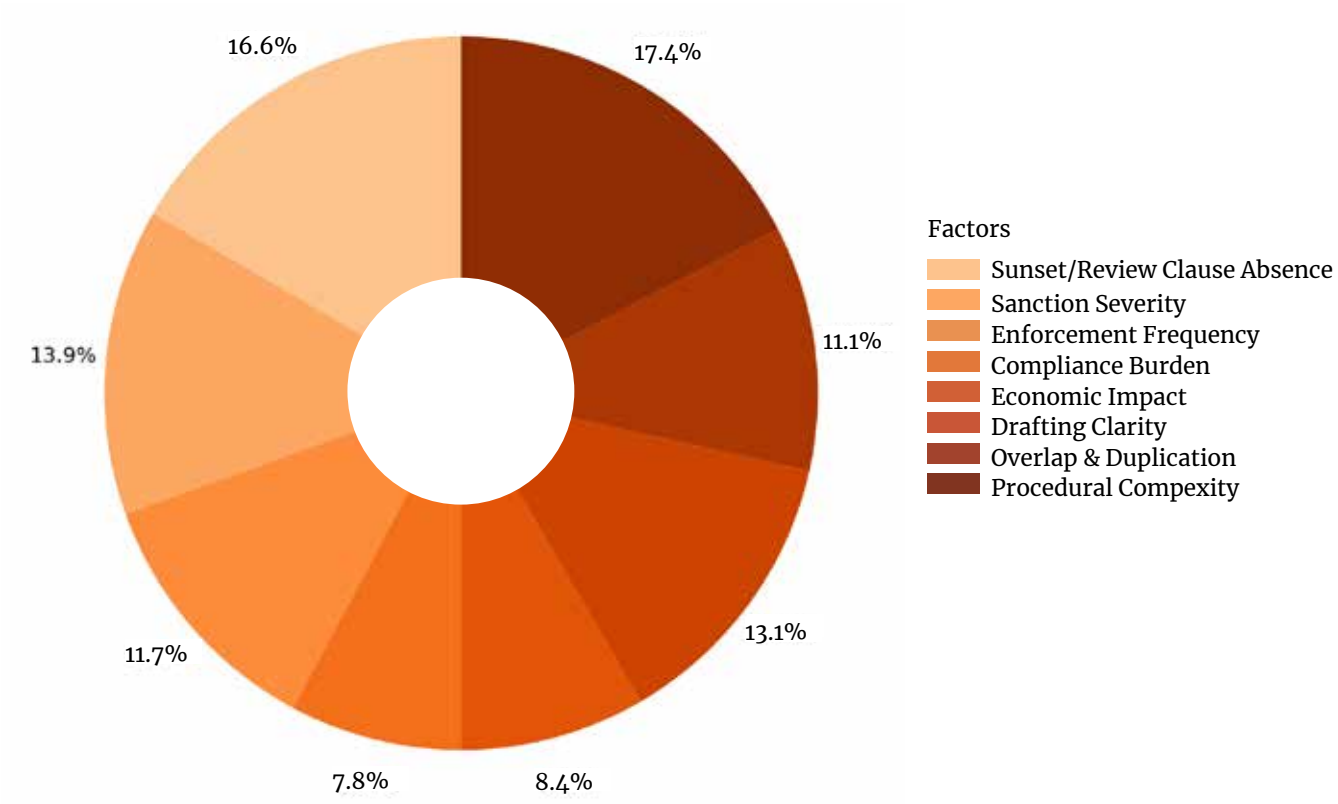
Year-wise Distribution of Laws- Andhra Pradesh



Sector-wise Distribution of Laws- Andhra Pradesh



MCDA Factor Distribution- Andhra Pradesh



Andhra Pradesh Land Encroachment Act, 1905

Provisions:

Section 6(1): Summary eviction power of Collector/Tahsildar/Deputy Tahsildar. Forfeiture of crops, buildings, and constructions if not removed after notice.

Section 6(2): Eviction procedure through notice and physical removal.

Section 6(3): Re-entry after eviction is punishable.

Section 7: Prior notice required before proceedings under Sections 5 or 6.

Recommendations:

1. Replace summary eviction powers with a decentralised mediation mechanism. A Land Mediation and Governance Council (LMGC)—comprising representatives of landowners, occupant communities, civil society organisations, and neutral subject-matter experts (e.g., land surveyors, GIS analysts). This council will facilitate voluntary, negotiated resolutions without coercive eviction.
2. Promote voluntary settlement through flexible tenure and shared-use models. The LMGC may help parties explore: Alternative resettlement in nearby locations through voluntary relocation agreements. Shared-use models with clearly defined cost-sharing, revenue-sharing, and legal frameworks for co-ownership or co-tenancy. Time-bound transition plans (e.g., phased exit over 3–6 months) to ensure that occupants secure alternative housing or land before vacating.
3. Instead of fines or criminal penalties for re-entry, occupants may perform public service contributions such as maintaining community or common lands, afforestation drives or water-body rejuvenation and conducting skill-development workshops for local youth.

Reasoning:

Shifts decision-making from a single government officer to a plural, community-inclusive forum. Encourages voluntary agreements, which are less likely to be resisted and more socially sustainable. Restitution via community service converts penalties into constructive contributions—land maintenance, afforestation, skill-sharing- keeping the social fabric intact while ensuring accountability. The LMGC model shifts the State's role from enforcer to facilitator, replacing coercion with consent-based, technology-enabled solutions. It keeps land in productive use, protects both ownership and occupation rights, reduces litigation, and aligns with classical liberal principles of voluntary exchange, private initiative, and limited government intervention.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	87

Andhra Pradesh Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1963

Provisions:

Section 6: If the tax due in respect of any motor vehicle has not been paid as specified in Section 4, the registered owner or the person having the possession or control thereof shall, in addition to payment of the tax due be liable to penalty which may extend to twice the quarterly tax in respect of the vehicle, to be levied by such officer, by order in writing and in such manner as may be prescribed.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish government vehicle seizure and replace it with a self-regulated, peer-driven platform where vehicle owners can easily report and pay their taxes online.
2. Individual vehicle owners opt to join a pool, contributing a small periodic payment to the pool fund. The pool fund pays taxes on behalf of members when due, especially during low-income or off-season periods.
3. Develop a voluntary, digital ecosystem for motor vehicle taxation, mobile apps for payment tracking, public dashboards showing compliance and enabling peer recognition.

Reasoning:

These reforms enable taxpayers to manage compliance autonomously, reducing state discretion. Taxpayers trust peer mechanisms over state surveillance. This encourages voluntary risk management and reduces fear of default.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	3.67/5	5/5	5/5	62.58

The Telangana (Agricultural Produce and Livestock) Markets Act, 1966

Provisions:

Section 23(1): Failure to pay fees levied under section 12 (fees on notified agricultural products) or contravening the licensing provision of section 7.

Section 23(2): A Magistrate can recover unpaid market fees at their discretion and pay over the costs of prosecution of the market committee.

Section 23(4): Wilful violations of Sections 17 and 17A, prohibiting unauthorised trade allowances and enabling their recovery within 11 years, attract penalties.

Recommendations:

1. Industry stakeholders such as farmers, traders, and market committees will voluntarily agree to self-regulation standards and resolve disputes through peer-reviewed audits or third-party arbitration.
2. In Section 23(2), remove the magistrate discretion to impose prosecution costs. Instead, fee schedules for recovery should be introduced based on actual incurred costs, not punitive assessments.
3. Replace the state inspector monopoly with Market Oversight Councils at each mandi. Councils include traders, farmers, consumer representatives and independent auditors. MOCs can handle fee recovery, issue warnings and set local compliance norms.
4. Those traders with high compliance would receive discounted stall rentals, priority for premium trading spaces and access to cooperative financing via MOCs. Those traders with repetitive non-compliance would lose privileges instead of facing criminal charges.

Reasoning:

Prevents arbitrary financial burdens and ensures fairness. Local governance respects contextual knowledge and reduces costs for states. Compliance becomes profitable, not punitive.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	50.43

Andhra Pradesh Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1968

Provisions:

Section 12: Reoccupitation of land from which a person is evicted shall lead to imprisonment for up to one year and a fine of one thousand rupees, and an order can be served to the person by any Magistrate convening the said person.

Recommendations:

1. Replace government eviction enforcement with Property Stewardship Councils (PSCs) composed of property owners, long-term occupants, and natural mediators. PSCs facilitate voluntary agreements surrounding compensation, relocation or continued occupancy on lease terms. These bodies function through contractual settlements, not executive orders.
2. Establish ward-level or district-level boards with community representatives to resolve non-violent occupancy disputes outside government offices, using mediation and negotiated settlements.
3. Occupancy disputes are redirected to voluntary private arbitration through registered associations, arbitration councils or professional services, where parties submit evidence and agree to abide by a neutral decision.
4. Build an open-access digital platform where occupants can file claims and upload evidence, property owners can post terms for regularisation, and neutral mediators facilitate resolutions.

Reasoning:

These recommendations help in resolving property disputes peacefully and fairly. They reduce conflict, protect property rights and foster a collaborative culture of responsibility and ownership, rather than dependence on coercive state action.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	68.65

Andhra Pradesh Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1971

Provisions:

Section 3(1): The Government may prohibit strikes in any essential service by general or special order if satisfied it is necessary in the public interest.

Section 3(4)(a): No person employed in essential service shall go or remain on strike.

Section 3(4)(b): Any strike declared or commenced becomes illegal.

Recommendations:

1. Amend the Act to clearly define " essential services" to include only core public safety and welfare functions. Exclude developmental or supplementary services such as Anganwadi workers or clerical staff. Introduce a mandatory advance notice period (eg 15 days) for strike actions, enabling negotiation before prohibition.
2. Provide legal exemptions for strikes that follow due process under the Industrial Disputes Act and do not disrupt critical services. Replace criminal penalties with civil remedies for first-time or non-malicious violations.
3. Create a digital, time-bound grievance portal for workers in essential services, allowing structured resolution of disputes without resorting to strikes.
4. Establish Community Oversight Boards (COBs) at the district or municipal level, composed of worker representatives from essential services, consumer representatives and independent professionals. The board would receive and resolve grievances, facilitate mediation and negotiation between service providers and employees and provide public reports to ensure transparency and predictability.

Reasoning:

Community Oversight Boards institutionalise cooperation, trust and accountability at the local level. By giving citizens and workers a structured forum to address service-related issues, the government shifts from command and control to participatory, trust-based governance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	66.93

The Andhra Pradesh Land Reforms (Ceiling On Agricultural Holdings) Act, 1973

Provisions:

Section 24 (1): A person liable to furnish a declaration under the Act must do so within the prescribed period and with correct information.

Section 24(2): Must comply with all provisions, rules, and orders under the Act.

Section 24(3): Officers must report any transaction with respect to land as required by the Act.

Recommendations:

1. Replace punitive disclosure enforcement with a Voluntary Compliance Board (VCB) composed of farmer associations, local land rights groups and civil society representatives. Provides waiver of penalties for self-reported errors and recognition incentives.
2. Replace top-down inspections with farmer-led land monitoring councils. These councils conduct land use verification drives and facilitate public grievance redressal for land hoarding.
3. Encourage voluntary land pooling/cooperative farming models where small landholders can access shared resources and markets. Land above the ceiling, if disclosed voluntarily, can be pooled into Community Farming Trusts for collective use, with benefits shared

Reasoning:

Encourages honest declarations via non-coercive mechanisms. Leverages community trust and shared land stewardship, minimising enforcement costs. It makes land compliance economically beneficial, reduces hoarding incentives, and promotes efficient land use without forced redistribution.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	1/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	45.22

Andhra Pradesh Prevention of Begging Act, 1977

Provisions:

Section 2: Soliciting or receiving alms, whether or not under any pretence, such as singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing tricks or offering any article for sale

Recommendations:

1. Instead of criminalising soliciting or receiving alms, establish voluntary charitable networks where individuals can freely engage in fundraising activities or offer services in exchange for donations without government interference. Market-driven charitable organisations can set their own standards for alms solicitation, ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethically sound practices. Platforms for donations (physical or digital) will be peer-regulated through voluntary codes of conduct established by independent bodies.

Reasoning:

Individuals and organisations should have the freedom to engage in charitable activities without government restrictions. Instead of using force (such as fines or imprisonment), the market can foster mutual assistance based on voluntary donations and market-based incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	87

The Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Indebtedness (Relief) Act, 1977

Provisions:

Section 11 to be read with sections 5 and 6: This section imposes penalties for noncompliance with Sections 5 and 6, such as failing to submit required statements or disobeying Tribunal orders.

Recommendations:

1. Before issuing an order or taking enforcement action, a mediation session facilitated by a neutral third party is required to resolve disputes or clarify obligations.
2. Replace statutory penalties with a framework where registered creditor associations, such as cooperatives, farmer collectives or trade bodies, can create their own compliance codes for submitting statements and resolving disputes.
3. Embed private arbitration clauses in all agricultural lending contracts, handled by local chambers of commerce or independent agricultural boards.
4. Create a digital platform run by cooperatives, fintechs or farmers' federation where compliance with disclosure and cooperation is publicly rated.

Reasoning:

Peer accountability tends to be faster and less adversarial than state enforcement. Market reputation and credibility to obtain further loans have become key enforcement tools, reducing litigation. Dispute resolution costs remain predictable and capped, and parties can choose specialists familiar with agricultural finance, leading to better-informed outcomes. Farmers can make informed choices based on public reputation and not just legal guarantees.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	21.88

Andhra Pradesh Tax on Professions, Trades, Callings and Employments Act, 1987

Provisions:

Section 11(1): Failure to deduct tax at payment time or failure to pay after deduction makes the assessee in default and liable for interest.

Section 11(2): Enrolled persons failing to pay tax are liable for interest.

Section 12: Penalty for nonpayment without reasonable cause.

Recommendations:

1. Create a Self-Regulatory Tax Compliance Organisation (SRTCO) for industries to voluntarily manage tax withholding and timely payments.
2. Encourage businesses to voluntarily comply with tax payment deadlines through market incentives such as tax rebates, discounts, or access to funding. Interest for non-payment can be replaced with peer-reviewed penalties, including business sanctions or exclusion from financing opportunities for consistently non-compliant entities.

Reasoning:

Individuals and organisations should have the freedom to engage in charitable activities without government restrictions. Instead of using force (such as fines or imprisonment), the market can foster mutual assistance based on voluntary donations and market-based incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	4.33/5	58.24

The Andhra Pradesh Oil Palm (Regulation of Production and Processing) Act, 1993

Provisions:

Section 15:. Any person without a license is liable for a fine of up to ten thousand rupees, plus one thousand rupees for each day the offense continues.

Recommendations:

1. Remove compulsory sale zones where farmers must sell only to designated processors; instead, allow free market choice in processor selection. Establish open market procurement mechanisms such as auction platforms or price boards.
2. Replace rigid processor licensing with voluntary registration, open to farmer collectives, cooperatives and private players.
3. Enable voluntary contract farming arrangements governed by standard model contracts developed via farmer groups and processor associations. Provide dispute resolution through local arbitration councils (non-state).
4. Eliminate state-led inspection mandates. Allow R&D institutions, agribusiness experts and farmer mentors to conduct voluntary advisory visits. Farmers can contact them for guidance on productivity, sustainability and compliance.

Reasoning:

Mandatory zones limit farmer agency and market competition, leading to price suppression and monopsony-like conditions. Free choice ensures price discovery and improves farmer income. Licensing restricts processor competition, leading to inefficiency and price suppression. Contracts ensure predictable prices and services, while decentralised dispute forums prevent costly bureaucratic litigation. Voluntary expert visits replace compliance fear with value-added knowledge transfer.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	46.09

The Andhra Pradesh Mutually Aided Co-operative Societies Act 1995

Provisions:

Section 38(1): Offence if: (a) Fails to give notice/documents, (b) Willfully neglects/refuses required actions, (c) Provides false/insufficient information.

Recommendations:

1. Mediation and arbitration within cooperative networks are required before legal proceedings can occur.
2. Introduce voluntary scorecards based on timely audits, member participation, and efficiency of grievance resolution. High scores yield access to public support schemes or discounted service charges from partner agencies.
3. Establish Cooperative Compliance Panels which can issue advisories for minor lapses, expulsion from cooperative networks for fraud and fines only in severe cases.

Reasoning:

Minimises litigation burden, resolves issues faster and upholds the voluntary spirit of cooperation. Rewarding compliance builds a culture of pride and openness. Peer accountability fosters trust, and learning avoids bureaucratic overreach and encourages continuous improvement. t), the market can foster mutual assistance based on voluntary donations and market-based incentives.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	51.29

Andhra Pradesh Prohibition Act, 1995

Provisions:

Section 8A: Anyone who makes or stores illicitly distilled liquor, in violation of Section 7-B, shall face imprisonment between three and eight years, and a fine of at least two lakh rupees for the first offence and at least five lakh rupees for the second.

Recommendations:

1. Decriminalise personal consumption and low quantity possession of alcohol. Create the Voluntary Alcohol Quality Council (VAQC), which includes health professionals, vendors and citizen groups. Set advisory standards and issue safe vendor certificates.
2. Instead of criminal penalties, businesses that engage in illicit practices will face temporary suspension from the distribution network or denial of retail access.
3. Compliance with ethical production standards and legal requirements will be ensured through third-party audits and dispute resolution mechanisms overseen by the VQAC.

Reasoning:

Blanket ban risk creation of parallel economies, increasing the risks from unregulated alcohol and adulteration. These reforms reduce unsafe consumption in hidden and unregulated spaces. It also supports tourism and hospitality while ensuring community safety. It helps transition from criminal prohibition to regulated liberty, where responsible consumption is allowed and public health is protected while creating economic opportunities through legal market participation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.33/5	32.51

The Andhra Pradesh Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act, 1986

Provisions:

Section 2(b): Defines a "bootlegger" as anyone involved in illicit liquor or intoxicant activities, including offenders and their assistants.

Section 2(j): Defines a "land-grabber" as anyone who unlawfully occupies land (public or private), enters into or creates illegal tenancies or leave and licence, agreements or any other agreement in respect of such lands, builds or rents unauthorized structures, collects charges through intimidation, forcibly evicts occupants, or abets such acts.

Section 9: The provision mandates that the Government may, whenever necessary, constitute one or more Advisory Boards for the purposes of the Act. Each Board must comprise a Chairman and two other members. The members must be persons who are either Judges, former Judges, or qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court.

Recommendations:

1. Decriminalise the manufacturing, selling, and distribution of alcohol and other intoxicants, removing penalties associated with bootlegging. Legalise and regulate alcohol and intoxicant production through self-regulatory market bodies (e.g., Alcohol Manufacturers and Distributors Association). These organisations will establish industry standards for production, distribution, and sales. Businesses violating industry rules will face reputational penalties, such as loss of market access, exclusion from business networks, and consumer boycotts.
2. Licensing and certification for businesses will be managed privately by industry peers rather than government bodies. Instead of state-enforced penalties for bootlegging, peer-reviewed audits and self-regulation within the industry will ensure that legal standards are met.
3. Instead of the Government constituting Advisory Boards, a Voluntary Review Panel may be formed when stakeholders (citizens, forest communities, industry participants, or affected groups) choose to invoke it. Such Panels could be constituted through a registry of independent arbitrators, retired judges, academics, and civil society experts, maintained transparently but outside direct government control. Parties may voluntarily agree to submit disputes or policy evaluations to such Panels. Their recommendations would carry persuasive, non-binding authority, backed by credibility and reputation rather than state coercion.

Reasoning:

By removing the criminal penalties associated with bootlegging and instead promoting a regulated market, producers, distributors, and consumers have greater freedom to engage in alcohol-related activities while ensuring compliance through industry-set standards. The self-regulatory market body will create ethical standards for producing and distributing alcohol and intoxicants. These standards will be peer-reviewed and backed by the market forces that incentivise responsible practices. For example, businesses violating rules will lose access to suppliers, customers, or distribution networks, creating a market-driven enforcement mechanism.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	72.14

The Andhra Pradesh Electricity Reform Act, 1998

Provisions:

Section 40: Section 14 deals with licensing for the transmission and supply of electricity. Engaging in the business of transmission/supply/use of energy in contravention of the Act or related Acts.

Section 41: Penalty for refusal or failure to comply with any provision in the act.

Recommendations:

1. Allow industry associations or independent certifiers to issue voluntary licenses for small producers and distributors, recognised by law. Licensees can self-certify compliance annually with private audit reports.
2. Allow privately negotiated grid access contracts between small producers and distributors, with standard templates created by industry groups. Remove state-mandated access fees or approvals for small-scale integration.
3. Allow private compliance certifiers (e.g., energy consultants and audit firms) to issue voluntary compliance ratings. High-rated firms enjoy fast-track approvals, reduced inspections and lower penalties in case of violations.
4. Establish Energy Ombudsman Panels. Each district/regional zone may have one panel with one industry representative, consumer advocate, and independent legal expert. Parties can choose to approach the ombudsperson or regular courts.

Reasoning:

Mobilises private capital, reduces state fiscal burden and ensures infrastructure aligns with actual demand. Firms share data voluntarily, boosting investor confidence and public trust. Shifts enforcement from the state to trusted market players. Builds a compliance culture based on reputation, not fear. Encourages participatory governance, resolves disputes quickly and prevents over-reliance on the court/state.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	58.22

Andhra Pradesh Water, Land and Trees Act, 2002

Provisions:

Section 19: Contamination of groundwater, including through the direct disposal of wastewater into aquifers, is prohibited and punishable by up to six months imprisonment or a fine of ₹2,000 to ₹50,000.

Recommendations:

1. Replace state control over water extraction and borewell drilling with voluntary Water User Associations (WUAs) or CWMCs organised at the village or watershed level. Councils issue self-regulated borewell permits, using local water tables and usage history.
2. Introduce tradable water rights where users (farmers, industries) hold quantified rights to extract water. Rights are bought and sold through a community water exchange. Extraction beyond quota shall lead to community penalties enforced through peer sanctions or denial of community access. Dynamic pricing based on scarcity encourages conservation and efficient use.
3. Replace criminal penalties with voluntary arbitration panels consisting of local farmers, environmental experts, and civil society representatives to mediate land and water disputes, determine reparations and monitor outcomes.

Reasoning:

Assigning quantified water rights to users transforms water from an open-access, over-extracted resource into a defined property right, improving stewardship. Farmers or industries that use less can sell unused rights, encouraging efficient use and allowing scarce resources to flow to higher-value uses. Many water/land conflicts are civil, but criminalised unnecessarily, burdening courts and creating fear. Voluntary arbitration provides a non-coercive, participatory resolution. Councils can create rules suited to local conditions, such as seasonal bans and community recharge requirements, and they can offer flexibility and adaptability. These suggested reforms can help reduce bureaucratic costs and avoid licensing corruption. Funds saved can be reinvested in recharge structures, R&D, and community awareness.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	87.00

The Andhra Pradesh Micro Finance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Act, 2011

Provisions:

Section 17: If an MFI provides loans without registration under Section 3, or gives further loans without approval under Section 10(1), or in violation of Section 10(4), the persons responsible for its management (including partners and directors) may face imprisonment of up to three years and a fine of up to one lakh rupees.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Self-Regulatory Microfinance Body (SRMB) to oversee MFIs. MFIs will voluntarily join the SRMB, agreeing to comply with industry-set standards for loan disbursements, loan approvals, and operational transparency. Replace rigid licenses with open access registries where MFIs register, share terms and undergo peer audits. Allow borrowers to report grievances on public platforms.
2. Non-compliance will be handled through peer-reviewed sanctions, including reputation damage, loss of market access, or exclusion from trusted business networks, rather than state-imposed imprisonment or fines.

Reasoning:

Encourages small entrants by reducing barriers to entry. Respects individual agencies and supports innovation in the microfinance sector. Promotes predictability and informed borrower choice. Regulatory bottlenecks are reduced, and market reputation becomes the key element that drives compliance.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1.67/5	4/5	0/5	0/5	3/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	21.25

Andhra Pradesh Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 122(2): Non-payment of taxes or tax credit wrongly availed calls for a penalty of ten thousand rupees or ten per cent of the tax due from such person for non-fraudulent cases, and for reasons of fraud, the penalty is equal to ten thousand rupees or tax owing from such person.

Recommendations:

1. For non-fraudulent errors, replace fixed monetary penalties with self-correction windows of 90 days, monitored by industry-led Tax Discrepancy Boards (TDBs). Disputes unresolved by TDBs may proceed to private arbitration panels recognised by the GST council.
2. Violators may face contractual consequences, such as suspension from GST networks, loss of aggregator access or blacklisting by trade councils. Restitution payable via escrow, bond-backed guarantees administered by registered market intermediaries.

Reasoning:

Formation of industry-led bodies reduces state burden, avoids litigation costs and promotes peer accountability in the tax ecosystem. It also avoids punishing small mistakes or low-value errors with harsh penalties. Small businesses often face minor delays. Capped penalties and grace periods reduce fear and encourage timely correction.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	5/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	3.67/5	5/5	5/5	68.65

The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Corridor Development Act, 2020

Provisions:

Section 11: Developers must not promote or invite for booking/sale/lease without prior permission from the Authority. Only Magistrates of specific ranks may take cognisance upon a written complaint.

Recommendations:

1. Replace state-administered "notified industrial zones" with voluntary Industry Cluster Management Authority (ICMA) managed by industry associations or developer consortia. Cluster members agree to standard rules and service contributions via contractual agreement.
2. Replace compulsory land acquisition powers with voluntary land pooling schemes through digital exchange platforms. Landowners trade land for equity in the industrial venture or long-term lease income.
3. Allow private developers to issue infrastructure bonds for financing roads, water, and power inside corridors. Investors receive returns from usage charges, not state subsidies.
4. Industrial zones must publish voluntary disclosures on the environment and employment via private-managed transparency portals.

Reasoning:

Industrial development thrives on local knowledge and entrepreneurial needs, not top-down regulation. Avoids coercion and displacement. Promotes negotiated solutions where landowners benefit financially and continuously. Mobilises private capital, reduces state fiscal burden and ensures infrastructure aligns with actual demand. Firms share data voluntarily, boosting investor confidence and public trust.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.33/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	50.43

The Andhra Pradesh Animal Feed (Regulation of Manufacture, Quality Control, Sale, Distribution) Act, 2020

Provisions:

Section 33: Imposes a subjective penalty for those contravening provisions under this act, such as the sale of unbranded feed, false advertisements, and the prevention of sampling for inspection.

Recommendations:

1. Replace the state-led licensing authority and Animal Feed Quality Control Committee with an autonomous Animal Feed Standards Council (AFSC). The council would include cattle farmers, feed producers, animal rights groups, civil society representatives, and consumer advocates. Such a council would be self-financed, and decisions would be made via consensus and public consultation.
2. Make licenses voluntary, where firms can opt in to obtain certification with compliance scorecards. Those with a higher compliance would enjoy priority treatment in public procurement, discounts on inputs or resources and an invitation to join policy making.
3. Replace mandatory inspections with voluntary expert visits by AFSC field teams from leading R&D organisations. Visits are to focus on advice, diagnostics, and technical support to help feed producers improve quality and profitability.

Reasoning:

Encourages adaptive local solutions and better standards to come out of people who are actually affected. Allows firms to signal trustworthiness without state mandates. Shifts enforcement from coercion to incentives. Turns inspection from policing to partnership and helps in aligning the interests of producers and consumers.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	3.67/5	2/5	3/5	5/5	46.09

The Andhra Milk Procurement (Protection of farmers) and Enforcement of Safety of Milk Standard Acts, 2023

Provisions:

Section 16: Use of non-standard milk analysers in the Milk Procurement Centre shall be fined up to fifty thousand rupees and imprisoned for 6 months with a fine if continued.

Recommendations:

1. Replace centralised government enforcement with a multi-stakeholder Dairy Standards Board composed of farmer cooperatives, private dairies, consumer groups and veterinary/public health experts. The board sets voluntary milk safety standards, conducts peer audits, and resolves disputes through conciliation panels.
2. Allow cooperatives or dairy firms to handle grievances about procurement or quality disputes.
3. Allow small farmers and dairy units to file self-declarations of compliance, with voluntary third-party audit options.
4. Develop open digital platforms for tracking milk source, quality checks, and certifications managed by the industry. Buyers and consumers can verify milk safety before purchase.
5. Remove the dedicated penal framework for milk analysers. Instead, let private licensing bodies and industry codes of conduct govern them—misuse is penalised by lack of access to market services or revocation of voluntary licenses, not jail.

Reasoning:

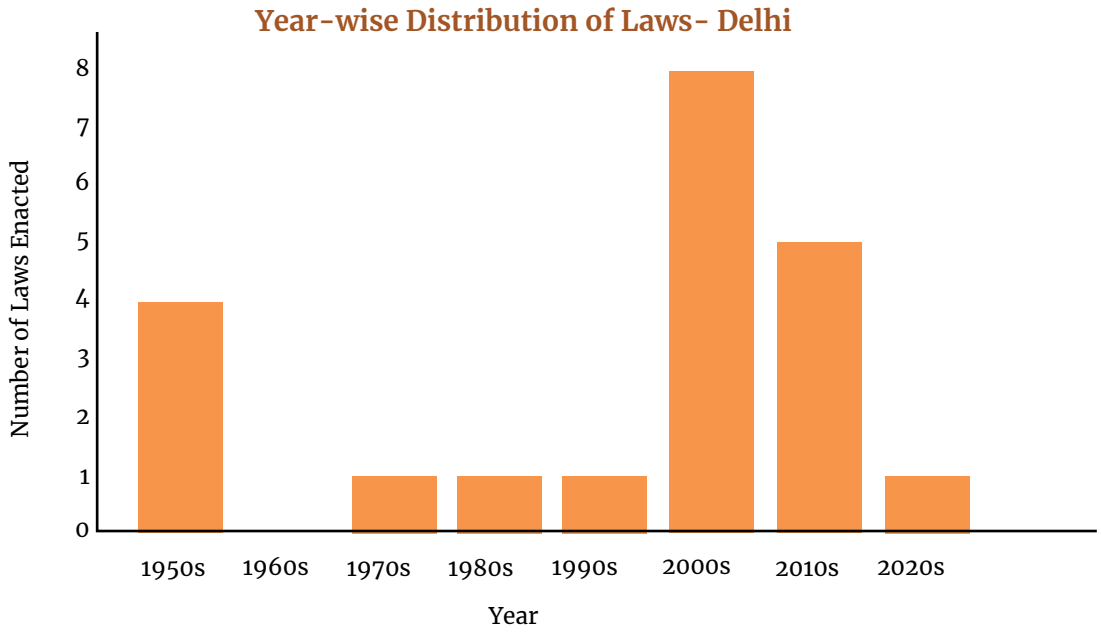
Encourages local solutions and trust-based enforcement rather than top-down mandates. Keeps enforcement close to the ground and resolves issues quickly and fairly. Reduces compliance cost and fear. Encourages honest participation and scales enforcement based on risk, not size. Information empowers market actors. Reduces reliance on inspectors. Prevents harassment of technical professionals. Upholds fairness and allows market discipline to ensure competence

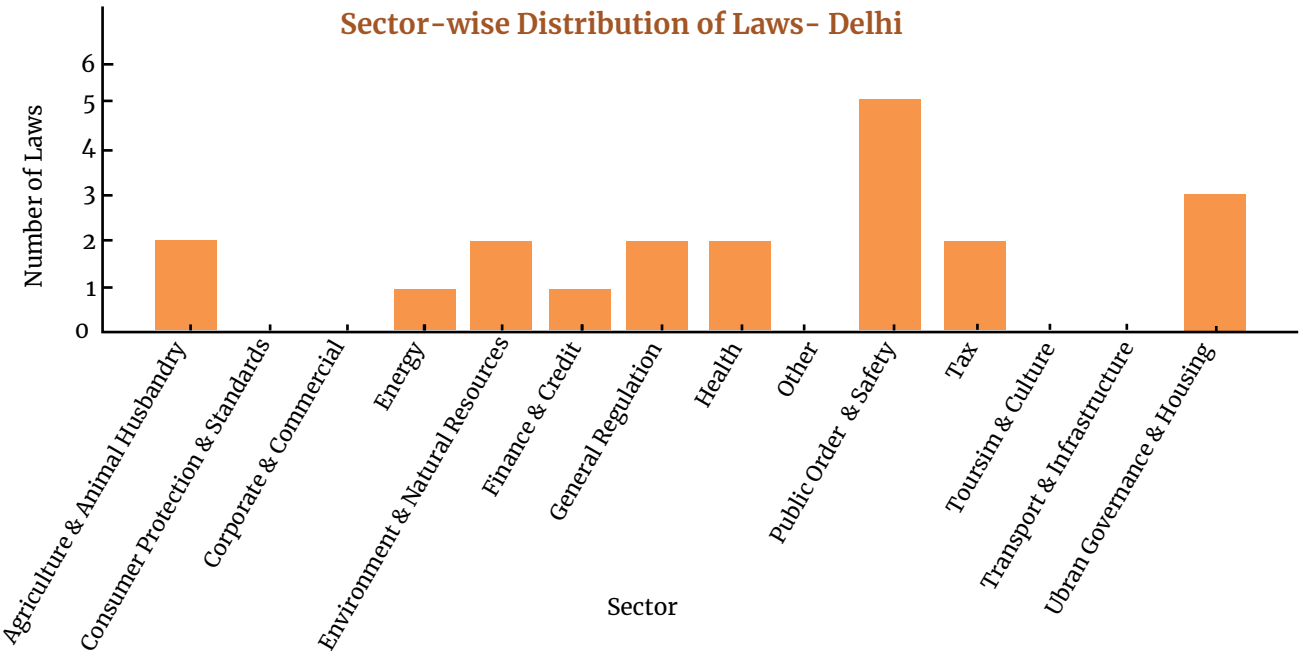
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.50/5	0/5	0/5	5/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	56.52

Delhi

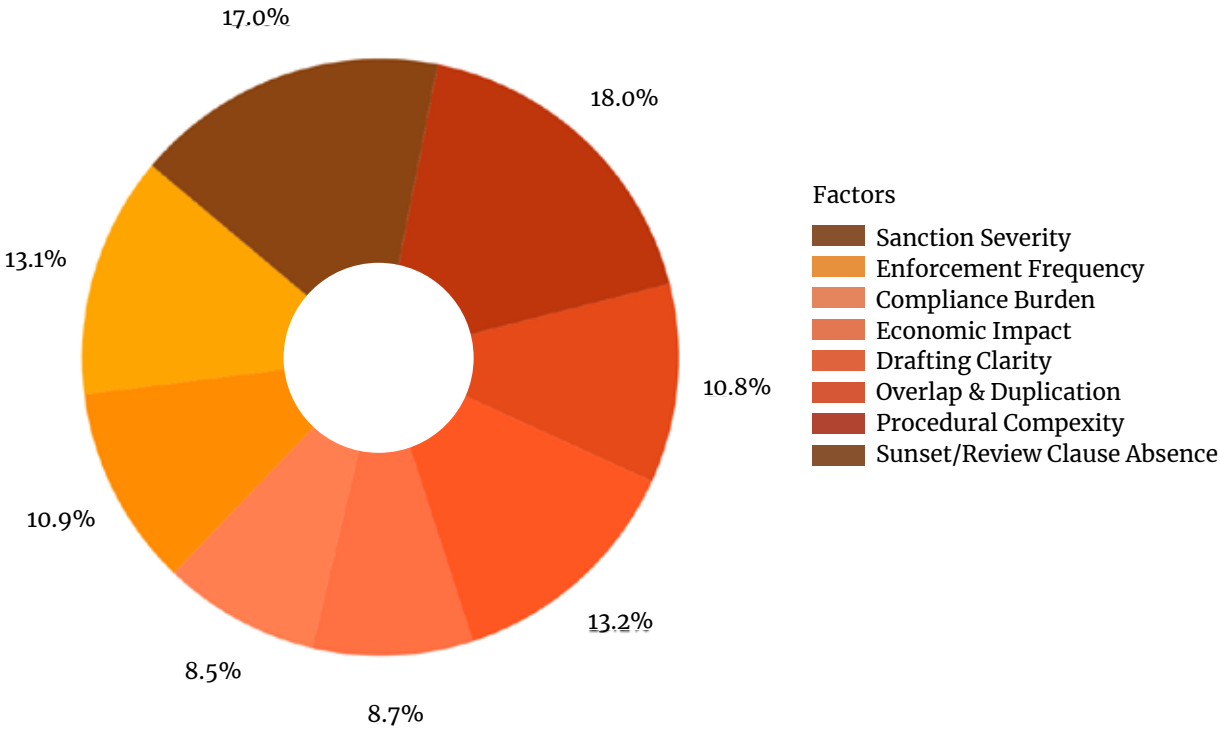
Delhi

With its 11.08 lakh crore rupees of GDSP, Delhi is driven by real estate, tourism, and finance sectors. The per capita income of Delhi (₹ 4,61,910 in 2023-24) is more than two and a half times the national average, highlighting its role as one of India's most prosperous and commercially active regions. Delhi's business landscape is robust, supported by a Single Window Clearance System that streamlines approvals for licenses, permits, and registrations, with 59 services across 12–13 departments, integrated via APIs and linked with NSWS. Delhi has streamlined business by repealing outdated laws and enacting 70 departmental regulatory reforms to boost transparency and reduce compliance. However, it could not reach the top 18 achievers in the BRAP rankings 2024, indicating the need for improvement in *Ease of Doing Business* reforms. Given Delhi's concentration of high-value service sectors, start-up activity, and its status as the policy capital, reforms in business law ecosystems have the potential to serve as a benchmark for other jurisdictions. This analysis flags problematic provisions, providing alternative recommendations backed by practical reasoning aimed at streamlining compliance and fostering innovation-driven business environments.





MCDA Factor Distribution- Delhi



Delhi Nursing Home Registration Act, 1953

Provisions:

Section 4: Requires every nursing home, including those accredited by NABH/NABL and other statutory bodies, to undergo annual re-registration with the Chief Commissioner, involving repeated inspections, lengthy paperwork, and discretionary delays that increase operational and compliance costs.

Section 8: Grants authorities broad, subjective power to suspend or cancel registration without graded penalties, fixed timelines, or mandatory pre-cancellation rectification opportunities—risking closure of compliant facilities over minor or procedural non-conformities.

Recommendations:

1. Nursing homes to voluntarily adopt a standard patient rights and disclosure charter (treatment costs, safety measures, grievance process), co-developed by healthcare guilds and patient advocacy groups, ensuring informed consent without rigid state templates.
2. Under new provisions, Local Joint Healthcare Accreditation Committees comprising medical associations, public health experts, and community representatives will vet applications transparently and improve decentralisation, subsidiarity, and spontaneous order, while ensuring stakeholder collaboration.

Reasoning:

Multi-year validity and deemed approvals reduce administrative load for compliant operators while allowing oversight through random audits. Mandatory rectification periods before cancellation protect patients' access to care and prevent unnecessary closures. Digital portals streamline applications, cut scope for corruption, and provide real-time tracking. Public reporting of actions increases accountability and builds trust, treating nursing homes as partners in healthcare delivery rather than as constant compliance suspects. This approach aligns with modern regulatory principles that balance safety, efficiency, and ease of doing business in the healthcare sector.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	4.33/5	2/5	5/5	4.33/5	5/5	1/5	70.82

Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957

Provisions:

Section 416: Criminal penalties, including fines up to ₹5,000 and continuing fines of ₹50–₹500 per day, are imposed on commercial/industrial users for establishing, altering, or extending any factory, workshop, or trade premises using steam, electricity, water, or other mechanical power without prior written permission of the Commissioner.

Section 417: Premises not to be used for specific purposes without a licence.

Sections 418-421: Licensing of trades, markets, and slaughterhouses.

Recommendations:

1. Low-risk businesses (non-hazardous shops, small offices, service outlets) may opt into Self-Regulatory Trade Guilds that uphold health, hygiene, and zoning norms. Businesses would voluntarily register with the SRTG and adhere to market-driven guidelines for establishing, altering, or extending facilities. Membership ensures automatic recognition without repeated licensing approvals, reducing bureaucratic intervention while preserving safety standards.
2. Standard-size signage that meets building and safety norms should require only a one-time self-declaration; advertising tax provisions that duplicate GST coverage should be deleted to avoid double taxation.

Reasoning:

This approach eliminates the need for duplicative state-imposed approvals, which often burden businesses already vetted through frameworks like GST, FSSAI, Udyam, or the Factories Act. By transitioning to a self-regulated system managed by industry associations and peer-reviewed compliance, businesses are empowered to voluntarily comply with industry standards without government intervention. The Self-Regulatory Body (SRB) will ensure compliance with objective criteria—focused on zoning, safety, and environmental standards—thereby replacing discretionary refusal grounds with predictable, fair decision-making processes.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	4/5	5/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	2.67/5	90.41

Delhi Development Act, 1957

Provisions:

Section 12: Prohibits any development of land without prior written permission of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), giving broad discretion and no time-bound approval process, causing long delays, higher project costs, and uncertainty for commercial real estate and infrastructure businesses.

Section 31: Allows immediate stoppage and demolition of unauthorised structures without adequate opportunity for hearing, independent review, or appeal before enforcement, exposing compliant businesses to abrupt operational shutdowns and financial losses.

Recommendations:

1. Decentralise Planning Powers to Local Planning Committees (LPCs): Prepare Zonal Development Plans through voluntary, citizen-led and community-governed planning committees of business associations, urban designers, citizen groups, and elected representatives.
2. Voluntary Digital Transparency Through Community-Maintained Dashboards: Encourage planning collectives, citizen forums, and industry bodies to co-develop and maintain open digital dashboards tracking plan progress, pending modification requests (formerly under Section 13), and land-use conversion status, promoting transparency, accountability, and ease of access for all stakeholders without bureaucratic delay.
3. Shift to Self-Regulation and Risk-Based Compliance by Professionals: Replace routine enforcement with a self-certification model where registered architects, planners, and accredited local stakeholder forums acknowledge and record consensual land-use and layout changes. Risk-based reviews can be triggered only by anomalies, ensuring that responsible stakeholders operate in a low-friction, compliance-light environment.

Reasoning:

These reforms move from discretionary, opaque control to a transparent, time-bound, and rights-respecting framework for urban development. Deemed approvals reduce bureaucratic delays, improving business efficiency and project cost certainty. Objective online criteria discourage rent-seeking and promote fairness. Mandating notice and independent review before enforcement action ensures due process, protecting legitimate investments. Compensation for wrongful action restores trust and signals accountability. A fully digital permission system improves transparency, public oversight, and predictability, aligning with trust-based governance principles that treat businesses as collaborative partners in planned urban growth rather than as subjects of arbitrary control.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	1.50/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	2.67/5	86.06

Delhi Motor Vehicle Taxation Act, 1962

Provisions:

Section 3: Imposes a mandatory tax on every motor vehicle kept or used in Delhi, regardless of operational usage, with no seasonal, idle, or fleet-based exemptions, creating unnecessary costs for logistics, transport, and fleet-leasing businesses during non-operational periods.

Section 11: Allows high penalties and interest for delayed payment, without provision for genuine operational disruptions or force majeure situations, disproportionately burdening businesses with fluctuating cash flows or seasonal demand.

Recommendations:

1. Voluntary Correction & Transport Trade-Led Dispute Resolution: Replace the state-issued notice and penalty regime for incorrect or delayed vehicle tax payment with voluntary correction platforms governed by transport trade-led Tax Discrepancy Boards (comprising fleet owner associations, driver unions, and vehicle dealer bodies). Self-declared corrections within a fixed grace period incur no penalty; unresolved disputes move to private mediation/arbitration through accredited transport compliance professionals.
2. Removal of Vehicle Seizure & Asset Attachment Powers: Abolish powers to seize or detain vehicles purely for tax recovery. Shift to civil claim proceedings or contractual risk mechanisms such as vehicle tax compliance bonds or escrow-linked registration renewals administered by market-based insurance/finance institutions, ensuring recovery without disrupting livelihoods or service continuity.

Reasoning:

These reforms move from a rigid, one-size-fits-all tax regime to a flexible, usage-linked taxation model that reflects actual business operations. Seasonal and idle vehicle exemptions reduce unnecessary financial strain on fleet operators and logistics companies, especially during market downturns or off-peak months. Pro-rata taxation ensures fairness while maintaining revenue streams for the state. Capping penalties and linking interest to RBI rates prevents excessive punitive costs, encouraging timely voluntary compliance. A digital fleet tax management system increases transparency, reduces human discretion, and simplifies compliance for large operators.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	2/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	2/5	2/5	3.33/5	53.43

Delhi Police Act, 1978

Provisions:

Section 28: Prior police licence required for cinemas, clubs, restaurants, and entertainment venues, with broad discretion, no fixed timelines, and a high risk of delays and harassment.

Section 141: Police can mandate licences for certain trades or goods storage without clear standards or appeal, inflating compliance costs.

Recommendations:

1. Replace the police-issued license requirement with voluntary compliance through sector-specific self-regulatory bodies (SRBs). Cinemas, clubs, restaurants, and entertainment venues will self-regulate their operations under the guidance of industry-led bodies that set operational standards for safety, security, and business practices. These SRBs will conduct peer-reviewed audits, ensuring compliance without government intervention.
2. Establish LSACs at the ward or zonal level, comprising business owners and civic bodies, to co-design local safety protocols and emergency response plans.

Reasoning:

By transitioning regulatory oversight from police authorities to industry-specific self-regulatory bodies (SRBs), businesses gain greater autonomy and flexibility. Created and governed by industry stakeholders, SRBs will set clear, transparent standards tailored to each sector's unique needs, whether in hospitality, entertainment, or trade. This removes the unpredictable and often arbitrary enforcement seen in government-imposed systems, allowing businesses to operate within clear guidelines.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.50/5	3/5	2/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	2.67/5	76.52

Delhi Fire Safety Act, 1986 & Delhi Fire Safety Rules, 2010

Provisions:

Section 3: Section 3 allows authorised officials to inspect specified buildings after three hours' notice (or anytime for urgent safety), with owners' cooperation, respecting occupants' privacy, social, and religious sentiments.

Recommendations:

1. Amend Section 3 to allow registered fire safety professionals or empanelled auditors to certify compliance for non-hazardous commercial buildings.
2. Create a unified, stakeholder-owned and self-governed digital clearance platform that voluntarily integrates fire safety compliance with other construction and business-related NOCs, operated through open collaboration between industry associations and service providers, enabling mutual recognition of approvals, eliminating duplication, streamlining processes, and reducing transaction costs through jointly agreed standards and interoperable systems—without centralised control.

Reasoning:

Reforming on the line of Trust-based governance means shifting from suspicion to partnership. Risk-based, data-driven inspections, capped frequency, and time-bound reporting reduce disruption and costs while targeting real hazards. Recognising accredited third-party certifications fosters self-regulation, freeing regulator capacity. Digital checklists, transparent dashboards, and future integration of IoT and predictive analytics create outcome-focused oversight—delivering safer buildings, encouraging innovation, and making compliance faster, cheaper, and more predictable for responsible businesses.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	4/5	4.33/5	2/5	3/5	4.33/5	5/5	4.33/5	83

Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994

Provisions:

Section 8: Prohibits cutting, girdling, lopping, or removing any tree without prior written permission from the Tree Officer, with broad discretionary refusal powers and no time-bound decision framework, leading to costly delays for compliant businesses.

Section 9: Allows authorised officers to seize timber, tools, and vehicles suspected of involvement in unauthorised tree felling, even before guilt is proven, creating operational disruption and inventory losses for businesses engaged in lawful activities.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Multi-stakeholder local committee (licensed arborists, municipal officers, RWAs, developers, and environmental experts) to approve pruning, lopping, or removing hazardous/obstructive trees without separate Tree Officer clearance.
2. Community Regulation to be encouraged: Adopt a shift towards consultative enforcement models that prioritise trust, transparency, and corrective measures.
3. Restorative Justice and Ecological Stewardship: As an alternative to a monetary fine for water wastage, the Water Users Group (WUG) arbitration panel in Delhi may direct the person to contribute labour or resources to a "Community Drain and Waterbody Revitalisation Initiative", a self-funded and self-managed project by the WUG. This initiative would focus on ecological restoration in the city, such as planting trees along drains to prevent soil erosion, cleaning stormwater channels, and creating natural filtration zones to recharge groundwater.

Reasoning:

This proposal shifts from coercive, permission-heavy state control to a trust-based, participatory model of environmental stewardship. It replaces arbitrary approval delays and punitive seizures with transparent, time-bound, and evidence-driven processes, empowering certified professionals and community oversight in place of unchecked official discretion. This reflects a modern, collaborative governance approach—moving from rigid, top-down enforcement to voluntary compliance, market reputation, and shared responsibility—balancing ecological protection with economic vitality in an innovation-friendly regulatory environment.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	3/5	1/5	0/5	2/5	2/5	3/5	3/5	43.50

Delhi Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act, 1994

Provisions:

Section 4: Completely bans the slaughter of specified cattle without considering age, productivity, or health, forcing businesses to maintain unproductive animals, increasing costs for dairy, meat-processing, and allied industries without providing viable disposal or trade alternatives.

Section 11: Authorises officers to enter premises, inspect, and seize cattle or equipment based on suspicion, without clear evidentiary standards or safeguards, leading to operational disruption, reputational damage, and potential misuse against lawful businesses.

Recommendations:

1. Introduce a certification process led by licensed vets and farmers' cooperatives to assess terminal illness. This respects individual agency and market realities, while reducing unviable ownership burdens.
2. Create decentralised Cattle Welfare Committees at the district level - Empanel local stakeholders like veterinarians, dairy associations, NGOs, gaushalas, and farmers to decide cases of cattle preservation, sale, or transfer. This reflects the principle of subsidiarity and spontaneous order.
3. Set up a voluntary cattle management registry linked with digital land and agri-data platforms - Enable farmers and owners to digitally declare, track, or surrender cattle through a single digital registry linked with animal health records. This improves transparency, reduces corruption, and aligns with predictable governance.

Reasoning:

Deviation from coercive and suspicion-driven enforcement with objective, transparent, and time-bound processes that protect both animal welfare and business rights is a sign of growth. Allowing the slaughter of certified unproductive or diseased cattle respects economic realities while maintaining agricultural sustainability. Mandatory veterinary timelines prevent bureaucratic delay, and evidence-based inspection powers reduce misuse. Quick restitution for wrongful seizure safeguards livelihoods, while digital tracking and certification portals promote transparency, reduce human discretion, and encourage voluntary compliance. This trust-based governance model shifts from punitive, top-down control to cooperative regulation—ensuring that legitimate businesses can operate efficiently while upholding public interest in humane and sustainable cattle management.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	1.50/5	2/5	2.67/5	2/5	1/5	1/5	5/5	47.83

The Delhi Rent Control Act, 1995

Provisions:

Section 7: Landlords can increase standard rent by up to 10% of the cost for improvements or recover utility charges paid for tenants, but cannot charge taxes on the property.

Section 22: Landlords (including companies and public institutions) can evict tenants if the premises are needed for their employees or the institution's activities, under specific conditions.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Multi-stakeholder local committee (licensed arborists, municipal officers, RWAs, developers, and environmental experts) to approve pruning, lopping, or removing hazardous/obstructive trees without separate Tree Officer clearance.
2. Community Regulation to be encouraged: Adopt a shift towards consultative enforcement models that prioritise trust, transparency, and corrective measures.
3. Restorative Justice and Ecological Stewardship: As an alternative to a monetary fine for water wastage, the Water Users Group (WUG) arbitration panel in Delhi may direct the person to contribute labour or resources to a "Community Drain and Waterbody Revitalisation Initiative", a self-funded and self-managed project by the WUG. This initiative would focus on ecological restoration in the city, such as planting trees along drains to prevent soil erosion, cleaning stormwater channels, and creating natural filtration zones to recharge groundwater.

Reasoning:

By removing state-set limitations on rent increases, the market can determine rent levels based on mutual agreements between landlords and tenants. This approach fosters fairer negotiations that reflect actual improvements or utility charges, empowering businesses and individuals to negotiate terms that suit their needs. Allowing landlords to recover utility charges directly from tenants without regulation encourages responsible consumption and cost-sharing based on actual usage.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	2.50/5	4.33/5	2.67/5	4.33/5	5/5	5/5	4.33/5	80.35

Delhi Prohibition of Smokers & Non-Smokers Health Protection, 1996

Provisions:

Section 4: Bans smoking in all public places, including restaurants, hotels, and private clubs open to the public, without provision for designated smoking zones—forcing businesses to incur heavy retrofitting costs or lose clientele.

Section 11: Imposes fines and possible imprisonment for proprietors if customers smoke on premises, regardless of reasonable preventive measures taken, creating strict liability and high compliance costs for hospitality businesses.

Recommendations:

1. Voluntary Compliance through Public Space Health Guilds: Replace rigid, police-enforced checks with voluntary compliance programs run by Public Space Health Guilds comprising restaurant owners, transport operators, workplace associations, and public health NGOs. Members adopt and self-monitor smoke-free commitments.
2. Peer-Led Dispute Resolution for Compliance Issues: Handle disputes (e.g., complaints about smoking in designated no-smoking areas) through guild-led mediation boards that engage both complainants and premises operators, escalating only repeat or serious violations to enforcement agencies.
3. Create a Voluntary Code of Practice through Hospitality Associations: Encourage industry bodies (e.g., restaurant and hotel associations) to co-develop and self-certify smoking control norms, as it will promote collaborative governance, spontaneous order, and local solutions rather than top-down enforcement.

Reasoning:

One-size-fits-all- prohibition model to a balanced, risk-managed approach that safeguards public health without crippling hospitality businesses is the new normal. Allowing designated smoking zones ensures compliance without alienating customers or requiring costly structural overhauls. Protecting proprietors who demonstrate preventive action aligns with fairness principles and reduces harassment risk. Shared facilities lower compliance costs for small enterprises in malls or complexes. Digital self-certification and transparent penalty reporting foster trust, accountability, and predictable enforcement. This approach treats businesses as allies in promoting public health rather than as automatic offenders, supporting Delhi's hospitality sector while maintaining health protections.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	4/5	2.67/5	3.67/5	3/5	1.67/5	2/5	5/5	57.40

Delhi Medical Council Act, 1997

Provisions:

Section 15: No person other than a medical practitioner whose name is entered in the State Medical Register shall practice medicine in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Recommendations:

1. Replace the state-led show cause and punitive penalty framework for minor professional lapses with voluntary correction platforms governed by peer-led Medical Practice Review Boards (comprising senior practitioners, hospital associations, and medical academics). Self-reported errors or compliance gaps corrected within a defined window incur no penalty; unresolved disputes go to private mediation or professional arbitration under the Indian Medical Association's neutral panels.
2. Create a Digital Self-Declaration Mechanism for Visiting/Short-Term Practitioners: Introduce a one-click portal for doctors from other states to self-certify credentials if they temporarily work in Delhi (seminars, camps, hospitals, etc.).
3. Establish an Independent Grievance Redressal Board with Equal Patient and Private Healthcare Representation: Form a multi-stakeholder body that includes patients, private hospitals, medical professionals, and civil society representatives, ensuring that grievance resolution is not limited to Delhi Medical Council members but reflects balanced, independent oversight.
4. Reputation-Based Professional Accountability: Replace heavy punitive fines with reputation-based deterrents managed by industry-led Medical Ethics & Compliance Councils. Chronic non-compliance or unethical conduct may lead to negative entries in public professional registries, suspension of membership in premier medical bodies, or restrictions on participation in medical networks, thus leveraging professional trust rather than solely punitive state measures.

Reasoning:

These recommendations reduce redundant licensing, promote interstate medical mobility, and embrace modern telemedicine practices. By decentralising control, encouraging self-regulation, and involving diverse stakeholders, the system becomes more transparent, accountable, and business-friendly—aligned with the principles of liberty, spontaneous order, and limited government, fostering trust-based governance and healthcare innovation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	2.50/5	3.33/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3.67/5	62.02

Delhi Jal Board Act, 1998

Provisions:

Section 55: Empowers Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to levy charges irrespective of service quality or actual consumption, with rigid assessment methods and no provision for dispute resolution or metering exemptions, increasing operational costs for industries, hotels, and commercial complexes.

Section 18: Allows disconnection for non-payment or alleged misuse without adequate notice or pre-disconnection hearing, disrupting business continuity and affecting production, hospitality, and essential services, even for billing disputes or minor procedural lapses.

Recommendations:

1. Commercial and bulk water users are encouraged to voluntarily join Self-Regulatory Groundwater Guilds that uphold extraction limits, recharge obligations, and water quality benchmarks. These guilds, run by user associations and technical experts, maintain transparent records and promote collective stewardship without coercive state enforcement.
2. Create a stakeholder-driven Water Pricing Advisory Council (WPAC): Insert a new provision under Section 17 to form WPAC, including industrial representatives, housing bodies, and environmental experts, as it will bring transparency, reflect voluntary consensus, and introduce subsidiarity in tariff formulation, avoiding arbitrary rate hikes.
3. Incentivised Compliance with Recharge Blueprints: Entities that follow local aquifer recharge and watershed restoration blueprints receive market and reputational benefits—such as green building certifications, voluntary tax rebates from pooled green funds, and visibility on a Recharge Compliant Registry for procurement preference.

Reasoning:

DJB's framework shifts from a monopolistic, coercive utility model to a service-and-accountability-based governance structure. Metered billing ensures businesses pay for actual consumption, eliminating arbitrary assessments. Linking tariff reviews to service quality prevents unjustified hikes and incentivises infrastructure improvements. Introducing pre-disconnection notices and hearings protects operational continuity while preserving DJB's revenue interests. Transparency through quarterly reporting builds public trust, aligns with cooperative governance principles, and treats water consumers as sustainable management partners rather than captive payers. This trust-based, performance-linked model fosters voluntary compliance, reduces disputes, and promotes efficient water use in Delhi's commercial sector.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.50/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4.33/5	88.64

Delhi Common Effluents Treatment Act, 2000

Provisions:

Section 7: Mandates fixed, uniform contributions for Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) operations irrespective of actual effluent volume or pollutant load, burdening small and compliant units equally with large polluters, raising operational costs for MSMEs and discouraging investment in in-house treatment technologies.

Section 16: Allows authorities to suspend utilities for non-payment or alleged violations without prior hearing or graduated penalty process, disrupting manufacturing and service units even in cases of billing disputes or temporary operational lapses.

Recommendations:

1. Implement a tiered contribution system, where businesses pay based on the 'actual' volume and pollution levels of effluents they generate. This system will be managed by a self-regulated body representing industrial sectors, establishing fair, market-driven rates for effluent treatment. Small businesses and compliant units will not bear the same financial burden as larger polluters, encouraging the adoption of in-house treatment technologies and reducing the financial strain on MSMEs.
2. Replace flat government penalties with public environmental performance ratings managed by industry and trade associations. Persistent non-compliance can result in delisting from industrial buyer networks, loss of supplier certifications, or denial of green finance access.
3. Establish a publicly accessible Effluent Transparency Ledger where treatment plant performance, audit results, and discharge quality reports are updated in real time. Poor performers are flagged, encouraging market and peer pressure to improve.
4. Create an online platform for monthly effluent discharge reporting with auto-flagging of anomalies and third-party inspection options. It will boost transparency and predictability, reduce inspector raj, and respect individual agency and consent.

Reasoning:

The blanket cost impositions and coercive enforcement with a fair, transparent, and performance-based system must be rooted out. Public disclosure of costs and collections builds trust and deters misuse of funds. A digital compliance platform streamlines processes, reduces discretionary power, and fosters cooperative environmental governance—treating industries as partners in pollution management rather than default offenders.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	1.50/5	5/5	4.33/5	3/5	1/5	3.67/5	2.67/5	65.60

Delhi Electricity Reforms Act, 2000

Provisions:

Section 19: No person, except those authorised by license or exemption, shall engage in transmitting or supplying electricity in Delhi, with disputes referred to the Commission, whose decision is final, and with the power to disconnect unlicensed operators.

Section 23: The Commission may inquire into a licensee's conduct based on complaints or its own knowledge and, if necessary, revoke the license for non-compliance or failure to meet obligations, with a three-month notice period and the option to impose new conditions instead of revocation.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Self-Regulatory Electricity Body (SREB) where licensed operators voluntarily comply with industry standards for electricity transmission and supply. Disputes or non-compliance will be resolved by third-party audits or peer-driven arbitration, with self-regulation ensuring fair competition and responsible practices. The SREB will handle licensing, and penalties for non-compliance will be peer-imposed, such as temporary suspension from the industry network or reputation loss, rather than government-driven disconnection.
2. License revocation will be handled through independent arbitration, and penalties for non-compliance will include market-driven actions like exclusion from business networks or limited market access. Licenses will be renewed or adjusted based on audit results, without government intervention.

Reasoning:

Removing government licensing and revocation powers creates a more flexible, responsive system where businesses are held accountable by market forces rather than the government. Self-regulation ensures greater industry buy-in, as companies work together to create and enforce relevant and context-specific standards for the sector. Replacing government inquiries with third-party arbitration ensures that disputes are resolved swiftly and fairly without bureaucratic delays. This allows businesses to continue their operations without the risk of arbitrary enforcement or indefinite disruptions, ensuring business continuity while also maintaining accountability.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.5/5	3/5	3/5	5/5	3/5	5/5	1/5	67.39

Delhi APMC (Regulation) Act, 2007

Provisions:

Section 23: Mandates that all notified agricultural produce be sold only in regulated APMC / Notified markets, restricting direct trade, raising transaction costs, and preventing farmers, processors, and retailers from accessing competitive supply chains or negotiating better prices.

Section 62: Empowers the Market Committee to levy multiple fees (market fee, cess, development charges) on every transaction, even for direct sales or value-added processing, inflating operational costs and discouraging investment in agri-logistics and processing businesses.

Recommendations:

1. Allow farmers, processors, and retailers to trade directly without mandatory APMC involvement. This will create open and competitive supply chains where market participants can negotiate better prices, fostering price discovery and market efficiency. A Self-Regulated Agricultural Body (SRAB) will oversee the ethical practices of all market players, ensuring fairness and transparency.
2. Transition to a voluntary fee system managed by industry associations or market players. These industry bodies will set transparent, reasonable fees for access to market infrastructure and value-added services, ensuring that businesses and farmers pay only for services received..

Reasoning:

These reforms shift the APMC framework from a monopolistic, coercive model to a competitive, transparent, and farmer–business–friendly system. Removing the compulsion to sell only in regulated yards empowers producers and buyers to engage in direct, technology-enabled trade, cutting intermediaries and transaction costs. Rationalising market fees prevents cost escalation and makes Delhi a competitive hub for agri-processing and logistics.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	1.50/5	3.67/5	3/5	4.33/5	4.33/5	5/5	3.67/5	78.22

The Delhi Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, 2007

Provisions:

Section 3: Criminalises any writing, printing, painting, or marking on property without written permission, with imprisonment up to one year, creating compliance hurdles for businesses engaging in outdoor advertising, even when the content is lawful and non-intrusive.

Section 5: Makes all offences under the Act cognizable, enabling police to register FIRs and initiate arrests without a warrant, increasing harassment risks for legitimate advertisers, event promoters, and shopkeepers using minimal display material.

Recommendations:

1. Community Art & Beautification Offsets: Replace penalties for minor unauthorised displays with restorative community art projects—clean-up drives, sanctioned murals, or urban greening—organised under guild oversight, creating public benefit while addressing violations.
2. Introduce a Self-Declaration Portal for Wall Advertisements and Notices: Develop an online system where businesses and event organisers can self-declare legal wall posters on designated zones by geo-tagging them and uploading RWA/NOC consent.
3. Incentives for Compliance & Beautification: Entities consistently following guild norms may receive priority access to premium public ad spaces, eligibility for municipal beautification awards, and visibility on the Aesthetics Compliance Registry for both public and private tenders.
4. Voluntary Compliance through Urban Aesthetics Guilds: Replace heavy state inspection with self-regulation by Urban Aesthetics Guilds comprising RWAs, market associations, advertising agencies, and heritage groups. Members shall adopt community-approved design and placement norms for public messaging.

Reasoning:

Allowing exemptions for authorised formats reduces compliance friction for MSMEs and event organisers. A self-declaration digital approval process fosters ease of doing business and curbs petty corruption. Limiting cognizable status for minor violations protects against harassment while preserving enforcement for serious, damaging defacement. Clear definitions prevent arbitrary interpretation, and a public portal ensures transparency, predictability, and equal access for small and large businesses. This aligns with trust-based governance, treating business communication as a legitimate economic activity rather than a presumptive offence or arbitrariness. It ensures limited and accountable government and promotes transparency and predictability in a self-regulatory environment. Such mechanisms encourage spontaneous order, where market players uphold norms not because of deterrence, but through shared responsibility.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	4/5	3/5	3/5	2.67/5	3/5	2.67/5	5/5	60.89

Delhi Plastic Bags & Garbage Control Act, 2008

Provisions:

Section 4: Imposes an absolute ban on specified plastic bags without a phased transition, recycling alternatives, or industry adaptation support, causing abrupt disruption, inventory losses, and compliance uncertainty for manufacturers, retailers, and food service businesses.

Section 7: Allows officers to seize goods, tools, and packaging suspected of violating the Act without prior testing or verification, leading to operational disruption, financial losses, and scope for harassment of compliant businesses.

Recommendations:

1. Enable participative, science-based regulation allowing certified biodegradable and recyclable alternatives: managed by sustainability-driven business owners, replacing the blanket ban with a tiered compliance framework developed in consultation with manufacturers, consumers, recyclers, and environmental bodies. Sustainably designed carry solutions should be encouraged, reinforcing trust-based governance and voluntary, market-led ecological solutions.
2. Decentralise Waste Audit and Enforcement to RWAs, Market Associations, and Ward Committees: Shift compliance monitoring from centralised inspectors to local civic bodies, RWAs, and industry groups, with incentives for high-performing zones. This embeds the principle of subsidiarity, decentralisation, and regional solutions.
3. Mandate Collaborative Public Awareness Campaigns Co-Led by Manufacturers: Replace top-down notices with joint outreach campaigns involving plastic manufacturers, recyclers, NGOs, and market associations. This promotes individual agency, consent, and public-private cooperation.

Reasoning:

Graded restrictions and material exemptions recognise the role of innovation in sustainable packaging while reducing economic shock to affected industries. Scientific verification before seizure prevents wrongful targeting of compliant businesses, and compensation for wrongful seizure restores trust. Digital registration and inspection portals increase transparency, streamline enforcement, and promote voluntary compliance. This shifts governance from coercion to cooperation, aligning environmental protection with business continuity, fostering innovation in sustainable materials, and building market-driven trust in compliance rather than relying solely on top-down enforcement, which aligns with Vision 2030.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	3/5	2/5	1/5	2.67/5	2.67/5	3/5	47.85

Delhi Money Lenders Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 4: Requires every money lender, including corporate and NBFC entities already regulated under RBI norms, to obtain a separate state licence, duplicating compliance, creating conflicts of jurisdiction, and increasing entry barriers for legitimate credit providers.

Section 6: Mandates physical maintenance of detailed transaction registers in prescribed formats, subject to surprise inspections, without provision for digital record-keeping, leading to redundant paperwork, inspection anxiety, and high administrative costs for compliant financial enterprises.

Recommendations:

1. Incentives for Guild-Compliant Lending: Lenders with high compliance scores and zero dispute ratios will receive green channel renewals, access to pooled credit guarantee funds, and public listing as "Trusted Lenders" on the digital ledger.
2. Lending guilds will develop and enforce model loan disclosure formats, interest caps for guild members, and voluntary fair practice codes, ensuring informed consent without rigid state micro-regulation.
3. Replace court-first or police-led recovery disputes with guild-operated mediation boards. These resolve repayment issues, interest disputes, and documentation errors within fixed timelines before escalation to civil courts.
4. Introduce a Risk-Proportionate Licensing Framework: Insert new rules to differentiate between high-volume and low-volume lenders, allowing self-declaration for micro-lenders (under ₹5 lakhs/year), as it will promote voluntary exchange, decentralisation, and reduce unnecessary compliance costs for informal businesses.
5. Establish Local Credit Advisory Forums: Create district-level forums comprising money lenders, borrowers, trade unions, and consumer bodies to collaboratively resolve disputes and set ethical standards for spontaneous order, subsidiarity, and empower communities to self-regulate..

Reasoning:

Exempting RBI-regulated entities eliminates jurisdictional duplication and lowers unnecessary licensing costs. Deemed approvals curb bureaucratic delays, improving the ease of doing business. Allowing digital records reduces administrative burden and aligns with paperless governance. Risk-based audits maintain oversight without penalising compliant lenders with excessive inspections. Public disclosure of regulatory actions promotes accountability, deters misuse of powers, and builds trust between legitimate credit providers and state authorities—treating lenders as responsible economic facilitators rather than default suspects. This supports a more efficient, innovation-friendly financial ecosystem in Delhi.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.50/5	3/5	3.33/5	2.67/5	5/5	2.67/5	2.67/5	74.35

Delhi Prevention of Touting & Malpractices Tourist Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 3: Criminalises unregistered guiding with fines and imprisonment, without an explicit exemption for licensed travel agencies or certified operators, creating overlapping licensing burdens and harassment risk for compliant tourism businesses and freelancers.

Section 5: Grants police authority to arrest suspected touts without a warrant or immediate judicial oversight, enabling misuse against legitimate business representatives, harming Delhi's tourism image, and increasing operational uncertainty for operators engaging with clients in public spaces.

Recommendations:

1. Tourism Ethics & Conduct Charter: Guilds develop and enforce a voluntary code of ethics covering fair pricing, service guarantees, and honest advertising. Accredited members display the charter and a verifiable accreditation number for tourist confidence.
2. Constitute a Local Tourism Stakeholder Committee for Dispute Resolution: Establish a district-level grievance redressal body comprising licensed tour operators, civil society, and tourist police.
3. Publish a Public Registry of Licensed Tour Operators & Guides: Create a transparent, online, multilingual registry integrated with QR codes to distinguish verified professionals.
4. Transparent Listing of Approved Service Providers: Maintain a publicly accessible, regularly updated directory of accredited guides, tour operators, and service providers with ratings, compliance history, and feedback to help tourists make informed choices.

Reasoning:

Exempting already certified professionals removes duplication and aligns with the central tourism policy. Digital self-certification reduces paperwork while preserving verification integrity. Curbing warrantless arrests limits misuse and protects lawful operators from harassment, improving Delhi's hospitality image. Single-window digital systems simplify compliance for small operators, while public disclosure of enforcement actions builds trust by showing fair, targeted application of the law. This aligns with a trust-based governance approach—treating tourism businesses as partners in promoting the city, not as default suspects.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3/5	1.50/5	3/5	2/5	2.67/5	2.67/5	3.33/5	5/5	59.57

The Delhi Goods & Service Tax Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 29: Allows tax authorities to suspend or cancel GST registration for procedural defaults, late returns, or perceived violations, often without adequate hearing, paralysing business operations and supply chains, and increasing compliance costs even for minor lapses.

Section 54: Mandates a lengthy, documentation-heavy refund process with multiple verifications, leading to working capital blockage for exporters and businesses dealing in inverted duty structures, increasing financing costs and discouraging timely compliance.

Recommendations:

1. Voluntary Correction & Trade-Led Dispute Resolution: Replace the current state-issued show cause and penalty regime with voluntary correction platforms governed by trade-led Tax Discrepancy Boards. Businesses may self-declare and correct errors within a defined window without penalty. Unresolved disputes move to private mediation or arbitration facilitated by accredited tax professionals, reducing coercive state intervention.
2. Removal of Asset Attachment Powers: Abolish the GST officers' power to attach assets for tax recovery. Instead, implement civil claim proceedings or contractual risk instruments such as escrow accounts or tax compliance bonds administered by market-based financial institutions, ensuring recovery without paralysing business operations.
3. Reputation-Based Compliance Enforcement: Replace punitive state fines with reputation-based deterrents managed by industry-led Compliance Councils. Persistent non-compliant entities may face trade network debarment, negative compliance ratings, or denial of access to aggregator and e-market platforms, creating a market-driven incentive to comply.

Reasoning:

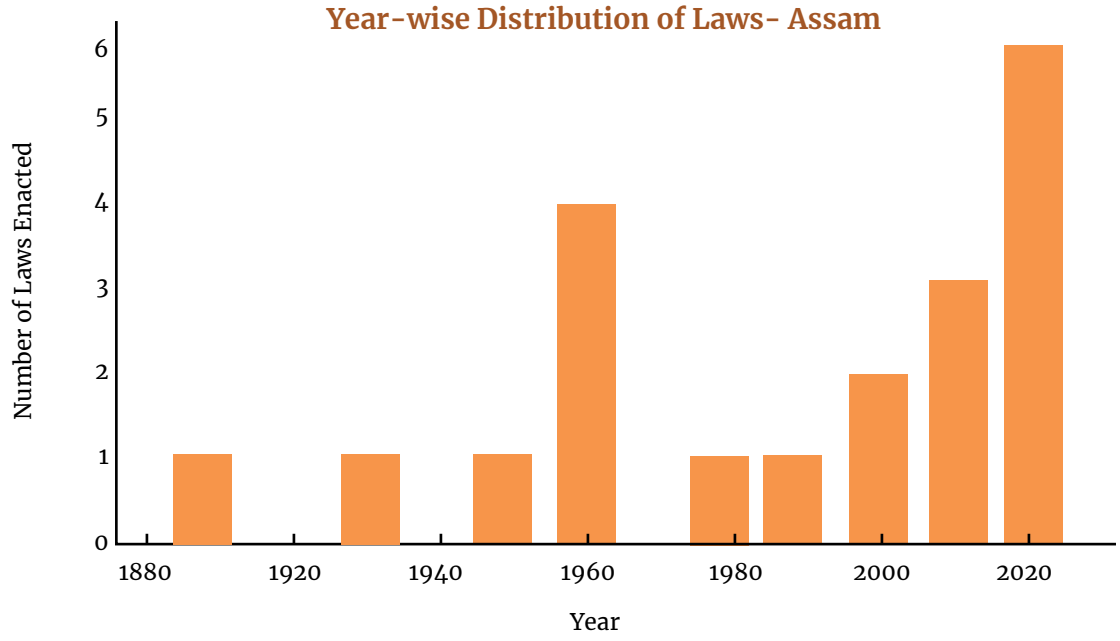
These reforms reduce the scope for arbitrary disruption of business activities and align GST administration with the principles of ease of doing business. Narrowing cancellation powers to serious violations prevents honest taxpayers from facing crippling operational shutdowns for minor procedural lapses. Quick restoration provisions maintain business continuity while still ensuring compliance. Time-bound, tech-enabled refunds prevent working capital strain, making compliance less punitive and more facilitative. Transparency in cancellations and refund performance builds public trust, aligns with cooperative tax governance, and treats businesses as revenue mobilisation partners rather than potential defaulters. This trust-based model fosters higher voluntary compliance and economic resilience.

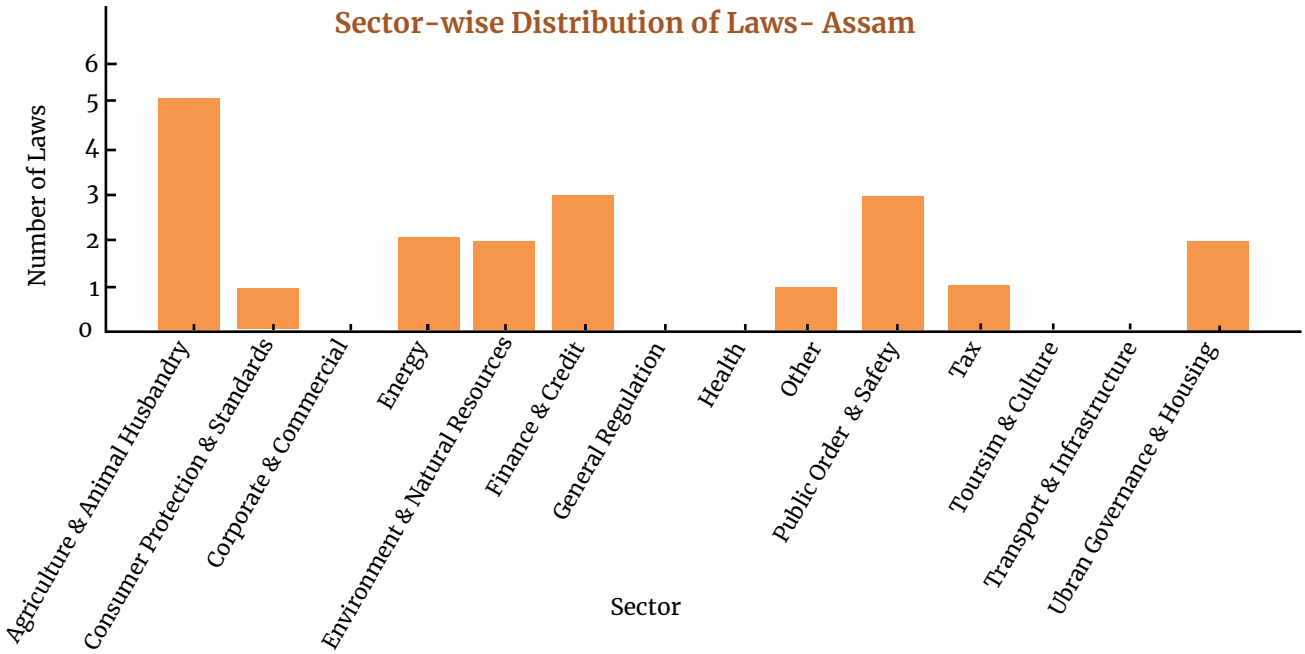
Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.50/5	5/5	3.33/5	5/5	5/5	3.33/5	1/5	75.19

Assam

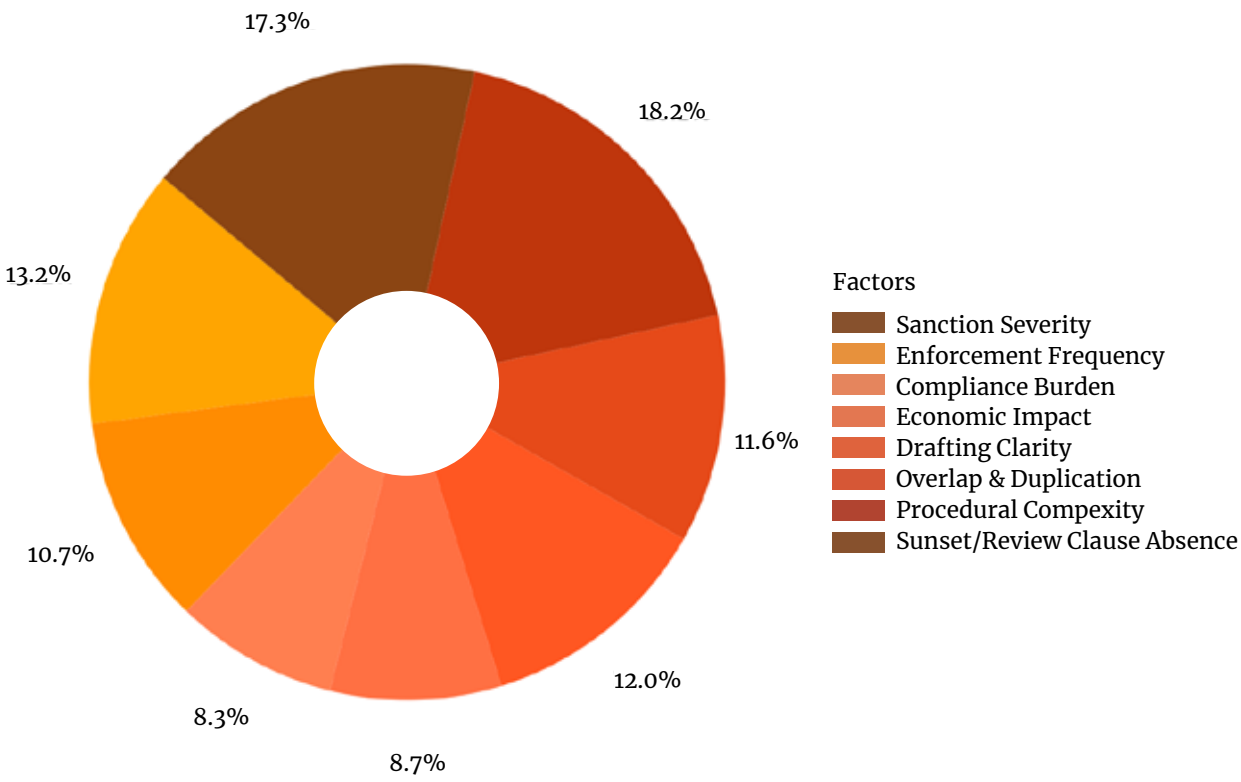
Assam

Assam's economy is driven by key sectors such as tea, oil and natural gas, petrochemicals, handloom and handicrafts, tourism and a growing logistics sector. The nominal GSDP of the state is likely to attain 6,43,667 crore rupees, accommodating a 12.74% growth rate. Assam ranked 9th according to the EoDB ranking. As of June 2025, Assam had approximately 455,689 enterprises registered under the Udyam (MSME) portal- up from 133,434 in 2022-23. In 2024, Assam's cabinet introduced the Repealing Bill to eliminate 48 obsolete acts. Its single window clearance system also integrates about 40-plus business-related services from 18 different departments. Assam's evolving economic dynamics- driven by rapid MSME expansion and industrial and service sector growth- make a compelling case for modernising its regulatory environment. Lawmakers and policymakers must address the outdated or burdensome legal provisions that could otherwise hinder entrepreneurial momentum, MSME scalability, and strategic industrial development.





MCDA Factor Distribution- Assam



The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886

Provisions:

Section 25: Any person removing, destroying, or damaging a boundary mark is liable to a fine not exceeding two hundred rupees, or in default, imprisonment not exceeding two months.

Section 58: Any person neglecting to apply for registration of acquired rights or interests in property, as required by Section 52, is liable to a fine not exceeding two hundred rupees.

Section 95: Contravention of rules made under Section 93 (regarding grazing grounds) is punishable with a fine not exceeding two hundred rupees, or if repeated, with a fine not exceeding fifty rupees for each day the contravention continues.

Section 156: Breaches of any rules under this Regulation for which no other penalty is provided are punishable with a fine not exceeding one hundred rupees, or on conviction before a Magistrate, to imprisonment which may extend to six months, or with a fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

Recommendations:

1. Replace fines with a community-led dispute resolution through a third-party body, such as a Land Dispute Resolution Committee (LDRC). The body shall facilitate mediation and may direct compensation for restoration and damages.
2. Omit the penalty for non-registration. Every person should self-register voluntarily to enjoy access to public benefits. LDRC can initiate a community review to assess and mediate non-compliance.
3. Substitute Section 95 to vest management, permission-granting, and collection of fees or penalties in the LDRC. The same body will retain all collected sums for maintenance and improvement.
4. A breach of rules, for which no specific penalty has been specified and which lacks mens rea, shall not attract a penalty or criminal prosecution. Instead, such breaches may be cured through rectification windows, compensatory obligations towards another landholder, or to uphold community interest in general or temporary suspension of access to land-linked administrative services.

Reasoning:

This proposal replaces coercive state intervention with voluntary, community-driven, and incentive-based mechanisms. It empowers local institutions, strengthens self-governance, and shifts from punitive to civil or compliance-first remedies. This reflects a classical liberal shift towards spontaneous order, localised solutions, decentralisation and subsidiarity-fostering self-sufficient governance and reducing bureaucratic friction.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	2.5/5	5/5	2/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	3.33/5	39.20

The Assam Money Lenders' Act, 1934

Provisions:

Section 7C: Any person contravening sub-section (1) (carrying on business without a registration certificate) is punishable with imprisonment up to three years or with a fine up to five thousand rupees or with both, and a daily fine for continuing contravention.

Section 11: Penalises money-lending advertisements contravening the section with imprisonment up to six months, or with a fine of up to five hundred rupees or with both.

Section 12: Outlines general provisions for penalties, including imprisonment up to six months or a fine up to one thousand rupees or both for contravention of certain sections, and for continuing offences, an additional daily fine.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish mandatory registration and associated imprisonment or fines. Allow individuals to freely lend money under private contracts governed by consent and enforceable through civil courts or arbitration. Promote voluntary registration platforms or lending guilds that accredit trustworthy lenders based on borrower feedback and repayment history.
2. Let platforms, cooperatives, or fintech associations publish ethical advertising guidelines, enforceable via community complaints and blacklisting. Allow marketplaces to self-verify lenders before allowing advertisements, protecting borrowers via transparent disclosures.
3. Eliminate blanket penal provisions for technical or procedural non-compliance. Handle issues like delayed filings or procedural lapses via private contract enforcement, peer mediation, or community dispute boards. Introduce reputation-based penalties, loss of accreditation, reduced access to private arbitration services, or public ratings, not jail.

Reasoning:

Criminalising unregistered or small-scale money-lending suppresses informal finance, especially for rural and underserved communities. Classical liberal principles oppose coercion and support free, voluntary economic activity. Instead of state licensing and punishment, borrower trust, lender reputation, and transparent contracts should govern credit markets. Self-regulating lender associations and digital lending platforms can set quality standards, mediate disputes, and protect against fraud without jail terms, fines, or bureaucratic interference. This decentralised, non-coercive approach ensures access to finance while upholding liberty, accountability, and fairness through market incentives and civil redress.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.5/5	1/5	0/5	2.67/5	1.67/5	3.33/5	4.33/5	19.30

The Assam Cinemas (Regulation) Act, 1953

Provisions:

Section 3: Prohibits the exhibition of cinematograph shows without a license.

Section 7: Provides a general penalty for contravening any of the provisions of the Act or the conditions of a license.

Section 8: Grants the power to revoke a license.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish the requirement for a government license to exhibit cinematograph shows. Allow voluntary certification by film exhibitors' guilds or cinema safety and accessibility cooperatives, based on building safety, viewer experience, and community rating standards. Empower consumer review platforms and market ratings to drive quality and accountability.
2. Remove state-imposed penalties for not complying with licensing rules or arbitrary provisions. Replace with civil remedies in cases of private nuisance (e.g. noise, safety) handled via local dispute boards or venue insurance agreements.
3. Allow venues to participate in market-based voluntary accreditation, where membership can be suspended or revoked by peer consensus based on transparent rulebooks.

Reasoning:

The requirement of licensing, threat of penalties, and power to revoke permission to operate cinemas violate the principle of freedom of expression, trade, and association. Under a classical liberal model, the exhibition of films is a matter of voluntary contract between content creators, venues, and audiences. Instead of government-imposed compliance, market-driven mechanisms-such as audience feedback, peer certification, reputation systems, safety insurance, and decentralised arbitration-ensure safety, decency, and operational standards. Eliminating state licensing, favouring self-regulating entertainment markets, protects creative freedom while ensuring public trust through voluntary, non-coercive norms.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	2.67/5	0/5	2/5	3.67/5	4.33/5	2.67/5	20.67

The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956

Provisions:

Section 4 (1): No person/family can hold land exceeding 50 bighas.

Section 4(2): No violation of ceiling exemptions for tea garden landholders.

Section 5: Mandatory return to be filed by the person holding land above the ceiling within the prescribed period.

Section 34(2): Penalty for failure to submit returns: Punishes a person who fails to submit a return with imprisonment up to three months, a fine up to ₹500, or both.

Recommendations:

1. Remove coercive landholding limits. Allow free land acquisition and transfer based on voluntary contracts and market value. Use community land trusts or peer-monitoring networks to flag land hoarding if it causes direct harm.
2. Allow all productive land use, tea or otherwise, under equal voluntary rules. Let industry cooperatives self-certify sustainable or excessive land use.
3. Make returns voluntary and confidential for market data purposes. Encourage landowner forums or digital registries to maintain interoperable landholding disclosures. Promote self-declaration platforms to increase trust among buyers, sellers, and investors.
4. Remove imprisonment/fine provisions. Use peer reputation, market blacklisting, or restricted access to private land services (e.g. leasing platforms or credit networks) to incentivise disclosure.
5. Abolish all criminal and administrative penalties for furnishing incorrect information. Instead, establish a private, non-profit organisation, the Assam Land Stewardship Trust (ALST). The ALST, funded by voluntary contributions, will employ private auditors to verify land returns. The ALST will facilitate mediation with all affected parties if an audit reveals a discrepancy.
6. Implement a system where a landholding can only be bought, sold, or used as collateral if its returns are certified by a private auditor from the ALST. This creates a market-based incentive for compliance, as landowners who fail to submit returns find engaging in land-related transactions challenging.

Reasoning:

These reforms are founded on the principles of Decentralisation and Subsidiarity and Voluntary Exchange & Free Markets. By reducing the state's authority in the process of auditing and penalising, the reforms empower a private, third-party entity to ensure compliance through reputation and market incentives. This approach respects Individual Agency & Consent by allowing landowners to voluntarily participate in the system to gain the benefits of a certified landholding. The shift from coercive state power to private mediation and market-based solutions aligns with Limited & Accountable Government and provides a more efficient, flexible, and trusting system for land record management. In a free market, inefficient land use is naturally disincentivised through opportunity costs, while community land associations, cooperatives, and registries can flag and discourage excessive concentration without coercion. This creates a fluid, transparent, productive land economy governed by self-interest, not compulsion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	1.50/5	1/5	1.67/5	1/5	1/5	3.67/5	3.33/5	22.30

The Assam Weights and Measures (Enforcement) Act, 1959

Provisions:

Section 25: Penalty for use of unstamped weights and measures: Imposes a fine up to ₹1,000 for a first offence and a fine and/or imprisonment for a second or subsequent offence.

Section 26: Penalty for manufacture of weights, etc., without license: Punishes the offence with imprisonment and/or a fine.

Section 11 (ii): Punishes an offence with a fine of not less than ₹500 and not more than ₹1,000, and/or imprisonment up to three months.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish state-imposed penalties for using unstamped weights. Allow voluntary certification by market-trusted verification bodies or consumer associations. Create open reputation platforms where sellers with verified accuracy attract higher ratings and buyer trust, while inaccurate sellers are flagged.
2. Remove the requirement of state licensing for manufacturing weights and measures. Instead, promote voluntary guilds of scale/tool makers who maintain technical standards and issue conformity marks recognised by vendors and buyers. Buyers can choose tools verified by trusted auditors—not compulsory government stamping.
3. Decriminalise technical violations unless fraud is proven with the intent to deceive. Allow consumers and trade partners to pursue civil restitution through independent resolution forums or product liability insurance claims, rather than resorting to criminal prosecution.

Reasoning:

Using and manufacturing weights and measures is best governed by trust-based market systems, not coercive state penalties. Criminalisation for unstamped tools or lack of licenses imposes high entry barriers and enables rent-seeking without ensuring accuracy. In a classical liberal framework, voluntary certification, consumer rating systems, independent verifiers, and seller reputations offer far more dynamic and accountable regulation. These non-state mechanisms allow innovation, reduce compliance costs, and punish fraud by exclusion and restitution—not jail or fines. This creates a transparent, self-correcting market where accuracy is rewarded and deceit is penalised naturally.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1.67/5	0/5	1.67/5	1.67/5	0/5	2.67/5	3/5	4.33/5	21

The Assam Regulated and Licensed Warehouse Act, 1959

Provisions:

Section 26: Punishes contravention of the provision of carrying on a warehouse business without a license with imprisonment for up to one year, a fine, or both.

Section 31: Punishes the failure to insure goods with imprisonment up to one year, a fine, or both.

Section 32: Punishes improper maintenance of accounts and records with imprisonment up to six months, a fine, or both.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish mandatory government licensing and penalties. Replace it with a voluntary certification and ratings system managed by a private, non-profit organisation like the Assam Warehouse Standards Board (AWSB). The AWSB, funded by contributions from farmers, traders, and warehouse operators, would certify warehouses based on transparent criteria for quality, safety, and record-keeping. The ratings would be publicly available online, allowing consumers to make informed choices. This creates a market-based incentive for compliance and proper record-keeping, as a poor rating or lack of certification would deter customers.
2. Repeal the penalties for failing to insure goods. Instead, encourage using a third-party escrow service managed by the AWSB, where warehouse fees are held until proof of valid insurance is provided. This mechanism ensures that goods are insured, as the warehouse cannot access its fees otherwise. This approach is more effective and less intrusive than government penalisation. It also provides a transparent and accountable process for all parties.

Reasoning:

These reforms are grounded in the principles of Voluntary Exchange & Free Markets and Spontaneous Order & Local Solutions. Replacing a coercive state regulatory system with a voluntary, market-driven certification and ratings model empowers stakeholders to govern themselves through reputation and informed choice, reducing the need for government intervention. The shift from government-led enforcement to private, third-party solutions like an escrow service for insurance verification aligns with Limited & Accountable Government and provides a more efficient, flexible, and trustworthy system for the warehousing sector. This approach respects Individual Agency by allowing businesses to choose whether to participate in the certification system to gain a competitive advantage, and it ensures that the core objective-protecting stored goods-is achieved without resorting to criminal penalties.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	2.67/5	3/5	1/5	1/5	2/5	4.33/5	27.13

The Assam Taxation (On Goods Carried by Road or Inland Waterways) Act, 1961

Provisions:

Section 13: Penalises the failure to submit returns and tax evasion.

Section 22: Details the mode of recovery for unpaid taxes, including interest charges.

Section 24: Provides for prosecution for certain offences, including knowingly submitting a false return.

Section 26: Allows for the compounding of offences.

Recommendations:

1. Eliminate punitive penalties for return non-submission. Replace with voluntary, digitally verifiable invoicing systems linked to logistics networks or trade associations. Promote private freight auditing services to ensure transaction transparency as a market prerequisite for business credit or insurance.
2. Replace coercive tax recovery processes with voluntary settlements, credit-based trade ledgers, and dispute resolution boards facilitated by logistics guilds or commodity associations.
3. Decriminalize reporting failures and false returns unless proven to involve willful fraud with quantifiable harm. Let industry platforms maintain compliance reputations, where dishonest operators are publicly flagged or removed from verified logistics chains.
4. Replace compounding of offences with mutual settlements and corrective disclosure incentives, backed by third-party logistics councils or digital transaction platforms.

Reasoning:

Government-controlled tax filing, prosecution, and recovery processes for goods movement distort commerce, discourage voluntary compliance, and invite bureaucratic overreach. Trade relationships should be treated as matters of private contract, not criminal law. Instead of criminal penalties and forced recovery, market actors (transport unions, trader cooperatives, and digital freight platforms) can maintain verified compliance records, offer private arbitration for disputes, and use reputation-based deterrents for non-compliance. This decentralised ecosystem rewards transparency and deters fraud, without coercion, ensuring both economic efficiency and freedom of enterprise.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	2/5	0/5	1/5	2/5	5/5	4.33/5	21.83

The Assam Irrigation Act, 1983

Provisions:

Section 69: This section provides an omnibus penalty for contravening any provision of the Act.

Section 63: The Act and its penalty section implicitly penalise water wastage.

Section 75: Makes all offences under the Act cognizable.

Recommendations:

1. Community-Led Dispute Resolution: Repeal the state-enforced penalty system. Instead, establish a local Water Users' Guild (WUG), a peer-led body of farmers and landowners. The WUG would be responsible for creating and enforcing a regional code of conduct for irrigation. Minor infractions would result in a verbal warning from the guild. For more serious offences, the WUG's arbitration panel would mediate the dispute and, if necessary, mandate restitution.
2. Restorative Justice and Ecological Stewardship: As an alternative to a fine for water wastage, the WUG's arbitration panel may direct the person to contribute labour or resources to a "Community Canal Desilting and Maintenance Initiative," a self-funded and self-managed project by the WUG. This initiative would focus on ecological restoration, such as planting trees to prevent soil erosion and creating natural filtration systems.
3. Decriminalisation and Protecting Farmers: All offences under the Act should be made non-cognizable and bailable. This is a crucial safeguard against arbitrary arrest by state authorities for what are essentially regulatory violations. This reform protects farmers' rights and reduces the potential for harassment, fostering a more trust-based relationship between the authorities and the farming community.

Reasoning:

These reforms are grounded in the principles of Decentralisation and Subsidiarity and Voluntary Exchange & Free Markets. By shifting irrigation governance from a centralised state authority to a local, community-led Water Users' Guild, the law empowers farmers to govern themselves through a system of mutual accountability and respect for local conditions. This removes coercive state power and replaces it with a more flexible, responsive, and effective system. Focusing on restorative justice and ecological stewardship transforms penalties into community-building and environmental protection efforts. This approach solves real-world problems and reinforces the principles of Spontaneous Order & Local Solutions and Limited & Accountable Government.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	0/5	3.67/5	0/5	1/5	4.33/5	2/5	4.33/5	22.16

The Assam Sericulture (Silk Worm Seed Cocoon and Silk Yarn Control) Act, 1987

Provisions:

Section 11: Penalises various offences with imprisonment and/or a fine.

Section 14: This section holds directors or officers liable for offences committed by the company unless they can prove due diligence.

Recommendations:

1. Formation of Silk Guild: A Sericulture Quality Guild or similar local association can be created to enforce standards via peer auditing and reputational ranking.
2. Private quality certifiers can issue "Verified Sericulture Partner" tags, which may be revoked on non-compliance.
3. Internal cooperative bye-laws can be created at the company level to clearly define operational accountability. Peer cooperatives can maintain blacklists of bad actors and exclude them from networked trade.
4. Private contract platforms can include restoration bonds, quality guarantees, or indemnity clauses, without invoking the State.
5. Community-Led Dispute Resolution: Repeal the proposed government-run adjudication and appeals process. All disputes related to sericulture, including those between rearers, reelers, and buyers, would be handled by a private, third-party arbitration panel appointed by the peer-led Sericulture Quality Guild. This panel's decisions would be legally binding and enforceable as a civil matter.

Reasoning:

State punishment distorts trust-based, skill-driven artisan ecosystems. Market actors require quality and traceability - no need for jail to enforce it. Community cooperatives and contract norms are better suited to prevent fraud than blanket criminalisation. Using a private, third-party arbitration panel for dispute resolution aligns with the principles of Decentralisation and Subsidiarity, ensuring that disputes are resolved efficiently and fairly locally.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	3/5	2/5	1.67/5	1/5	2/5	5/5	27.87

The Assam Excise Act, 2000

Provisions:

Section 10: The State may prohibit import/export/transport via notification.

Section 14(1)(a-e): Manufacture, bottling, cultivation, or use of liquor materials only with a license.

Section 15: Excise Commissioner may license distilleries, breweries and warehouses with government sanction.

Section 34: Licensees must maintain State-prescribed weights/measures and comply with testing on request.

Section 53(1): Penalty for unlawful import, manufacture, possession, etc. up to 2 years imprisonment.

Section 64: General penalty for unspecified offences is a fine up to Rs 2,000.

Section 64-A: Penalises the company and the person/s in charge regarding the commission of offences by companies.

Section 84: State can frame rules for licensing, duties, enforcement, etc.

Recommendations:

1. Any prohibition shall only be enforceable if passed by local community referendum (either village council or urban ward committee), after public consultation and with a transition window of 60 days.
2. Replace mandatory licensing with self-registration and voluntary third-party certifications.
3. Any individual or enterprise who is registered with an accredited independent Excise Standards Board or recognized trade association may not require government sanction. Certification will be based on published safety, hygiene, transparency, and traceability standards.
4. All producers and sellers of intoxicants shall disclose the weights, measures and alcohol content on packaging as per voluntarily adopted industry standards recognized by third-party metrology or food safety bodies.
5. Unlawful import shall result in civil recovery of unpaid duty with surcharge, public blacklisting, and temporary suspension from excise registry or marketplace access.
6. Any breach not explicitly penalized may attract corrective compliance directives and graded fines, based on economic harm, imposed by peer compliance forum, not government officers.
7. Individual personnels of companies shall not be penalized unless there is evidence of intent or gross negligence, judged by a third-party ombudsman or industry panel.
8. Rule making powers should vest in an independent Excise Reform Board, with representation from producers, consumers, local bodies, and civil society. The governing framework should be subject to mandatory public consultation, cost-benefit analysis, and sunset review clause.

Reasoning:

Community referendums prevent executive overreach, safeguard livelihoods, and discourage black markets. Self-registration can reduce rent-seeking and promote ease of entry for small producers. Market exclusion and transparency are more effective and just deterrents. Governing frameworks made by an independent body comprising of stakeholders ensures rules are evidence-based, transparent, and responsive to market realities—not instruments of arbitrary control.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.33/5	1.50/5	4.33/5	3/5	3/5	4.33/5	3/5	4.33/5	38.76

The Assam Fish Seed Act, 2005

Provisions:

Section 7: The proviso to sub-section (4) states that failing to undergo and complete mandatory training can lead to the cancellation of registration and the license granted to the applicant.

Section 9: Sub-section (1) allows for license cancellation if the licensee has violated any provisions of the Act or rules, or failed to comply with license conditions.

Section 20: This section imposes punishment with a fine up to three thousand rupees for a first offense, and for a second or subsequent offense, with imprisonment up to six months or a fine up to five thousand rupees or both.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish mandatory government licensing and penalties for non-compliance. Replace this with a voluntary, multi-level certification system run by a private, peer-led organization, such as an Assam Fish Seed Quality Council (AFSQC). The AFSQC would offer certifications (e.g., Verified, Certified, Premium) based on quality and ethical standards. Competing third-party agencies would provide training, and AFSQC certification would require proof of training completion from an accredited provider. The AFSQC would handle complaints and have the authority to suspend or revoke a business's certification based on peer review and consumer feedback, thereby replacing punitive measures with a market-based reputation system.
2. Repeal all criminal penalties, including fines and imprisonment. Offenses, such as providing substandard fish seed, would be treated as civil matters. A mediation and arbitration panel, facilitated by the AFSQC, would resolve disputes between businesses and farmers. The panel would have the authority to mandate compensation or direct the offending business to provide restitution in the form of healthy fish seed to the affected farmers. This ensures direct restitution for the victim without government intervention.

Reasoning:

These recommendations are founded on the principles of Voluntary Exchange & Free Markets and Decentralization and Subsidiarity. Replacing a coercive state licensing system with a voluntary, market-driven certification model empowers fish seed producers and consumers to drive quality standards through reputation and choice, reducing the need for government intervention. The shift from government-led enforcement to private, peer-based dispute resolution aligns with Limited & Accountable Government and Spontaneous Order & Local Solutions by removing punitive fines and fostering a more constructive and responsive system.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.50/5	3/5	3.67/5	2/5	2/5	2/5	3.67/5	35.67

The Assam Public Works (Regulation of Road Development and Road Transport) Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 12, 16 & 17: The Act provides for various penalties for unauthorized occupations and constructions on road land, including fines and the cost of removal.

Section 20: Grants the power to arrest anyone who commits an offense under the Act without a warrant and refuses to provide their name and residence.

Section 19: Allows for the compounding of offenses, but with limited scope and clarity.

Recommendations:

1. Omit all punitive penalties and fines. Instead, establish a local Road Users' Guild (RUG), composed of residents and local business owners, to manage and resolve disputes over unauthorized occupations. Minor, non-obstructive encroachments would receive a 'Community Rectification Notice' with a 30-day period for voluntary removal. Major encroachments would be subject to a civil claim for damages to be arbitrated by the RUG. The encroacher would bear the costs of removal.
2. Remove all powers of warrantless arrest in road-related matters, especially for non-violent administrative breaches. Replace with community enforcement mechanisms—such as neighbourhood road councils or transport stewardship forums—to resolve identity disputes or usage violations through mediation or civil notices. Let road developers include contractual access terms enforceable via civil damages or third-party adjudication, not detention.
3. The compounding provision should be replaced with a system of voluntary restitution. The RUG can facilitate an agreement where the encroacher pays the cost of removal and restoration, and in return, the RUG issues a public statement of resolution, thus closing the matter without government intervention.

Reasoning:

Criminalizing road encroachments and granting arrest powers for civil usage disputes violate the classical liberal principles of non-aggression, private negotiation, and voluntary order. Roads and public spaces should be governed by community ownership models, property-based contracts, or usage rights enforced by mutual agreement, not coercive statutes. Civil remedies-such as negotiated access fees, peer-managed registries, and cooperative dispute boards-preserve both order and liberty. In such a system, wrongdoers are excluded or required to make restitution, not criminalized or jailed, ensuring functional road management while upholding individual dignity and economic freedom.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1/5	0/5	3.67/5	0/5	4.33/5	3.33/5	5/5	5/5	24.66

The Assam Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2010

Provisions:

Section 6: Where an offense under the Act is committed by a company, every person in charge and responsible for the conduct of its business, as well as the company, shall be deemed guilty unless they prove the offense was committed without their knowledge and that they exercised all due diligence to prevent its commission.

Section 8: The Special Tribunal shall, as far as possible, dispose of cases within twelve months from the date of application for cases falling under sub-section (1), and within six months for cases falling under sub-section (7).

Recommendations:

1. Reversal of Burden of Proof: For Section 6, the recommendation is to revise the provision so that company leaders are only held liable if it is established that the offense was committed with their consent, connivance, or due to their neglect.
2. Market-Based Redressal through Private Claims: Any affected individual, community body, or land rights group may initiate a private claim for restitution or mediation before a designated Land Compliance Mediation Forum (LCMF) consisting of community representatives and civil societies. The mediation outcome needs to be publicly disclosed to discourage breaches on companies' end.
3. Independent third party auditor and ombudsman can be engaged to assess the procedural lapses and suggest reforms.
4. Mandatory Timelines for Dispute Resolution: The recommendation for Section 8 is to constitute a LCMF (including stakeholders from industries, companies, banks, citizens, and any other relevant stakeholder), in place of a government-led Special Tribunal, to handle dispute resolution, management, permission granting and monitoring functions. In case of non-resolution, the matter may be escalated to a federated community appellate board composed of peer mediators from different zones and associations. The phrase "as far as possible" should be removed to make case disposal timelines mandatory.

Reasoning:

This reform intends to reverse the burden of proof in corporate offenses, ensuring that individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty and protecting company leadership from harassment. By focusing on consent, connivance, or neglect, the law targets genuine lapses in corporate governance, promoting Limited & Accountable Government and discouraging arbitrary liability. Instead of criminalizing company officers by default, accountability should arise through transparent peer-reviewed forums and public disclosure that incentivize compliance through market reputation rather than the punitive sanction. Similarly, dispute resolution should not rely on state tribunals but on pre-agreed, time bound arbitration to ensure efficient, low-cost, sector specific redressal. These reforms empower the landholders and communities to have autonomy over conflict resolution.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
1.67/5	1.5/5	2.67/5	1.67/5	2.67/5	3.67/5	3.67/5	5/5	29.31

The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Assam) Rules, 2014

Provisions:

Section 85: Do not contravene provisions of the Act relating to payment of compensation or rehabilitation and resettlement.

Section 86: Penalizes the individuals in-charge of the company at the time the offence was committed. when there is proof that the offence is committed with the consent of any person-in-charge due to neglect on their part, the officer must also be deemed guilty

Section 87: Penalizes the head of the department when an offence is committed by any department of the government (unless proven otherwise)

Recommendations:

1. Instead of state-imposed Rehabilitation and Resettlement mandates, voluntary land purchase or use agreements can include negotiated compensation clauses, co-designed by affected parties. Community-negotiated covenants and independent land dispute resolution forums can be established for resettlement issues.
2. Eliminate automatic liability based on office held. Allow contractual assignment of responsibility within private entities. Enforce liability only where individual contractual duty or willful involvement is proven in a civil dispute forum—not presumed by law.
3. Abolish presumption of guilt. Replace criminal enforcement with internal departmental accountability frameworks and public performance audits by citizen-led boards or transparency alliances. Use voluntary whistleblower platforms to expose breaches, not prosecution.

Reasoning:

Criminalising failure to compensate or rehabilitate via rigid statutes centralises land disputes and suppresses cooperative, negotiated outcomes. In a voluntary, consensual contract between landowners, communities, and project developers, compensation and R&R terms are defined and enforced through private agreements, independent arbitration, and public transparency, not State-imposed penalties. Similarly, company officers or department heads should be liable only when they've explicitly undertaken the relevant duties—not merely by designation. Shifting from punitive law to community-driven grievance resolution and market reputational consequences creates stronger, trust-based mechanisms that adapt to local realities without State coercion.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	1.67/5	3.33/5	2/5	1/5	1.67/5	4.33/5	27.44

The Assam Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017

Provisions:

Section 122: Imposes penalties up to the amount of tax evaded or a minimum of ₹10,000 for various offenses, including issuing false invoices, furnishing false information, and failing to pay tax.

Section 129: This section provides for the detention and seizure of goods and conveyances in transit that are in contravention of the Act.

Section 132: Criminalizes offenses like tax evasion, issuing false invoices, and non-remittance of collected taxes, with penalties including imprisonment from six months to five years, along with a fine.

Section 135: Introduces a presumption of mental state (mens rea) for offenses under the Act, shifting the burden of proof to the accused.

Recommendations:

1. Replace with voluntary trade association blacklists, supplier scoring systems, and buyer-seller complaint redressal mechanisms. Use audit assurance platforms (private or cooperative) that verify transaction integrity for credibility in the marketplace.
2. Replace government authority to seize goods in transit with digital logistics consortia, which can use real-time traceability, blockchain receipts, and voluntary compliance ledgers to monitor transport legitimacy. Handle transport irregularities via civil mediation or supply chain credit-score reduction, not physical seizure.
3. Shift to voluntary reconciliation via independent tax mediation bodies, mutually selected by buyer-seller pairs or industry forums. Use service denial, rating penalties, and market exclusion instead of jailing individuals or imposing coercive fines.
4. Abolish Presumption of Mens Rea (Section 135): Repeal this section to restore the principle of presumed innocence. The state must bear the burden of proving wrongful intent for any offense, rather than the accused having to prove their innocence.

Reasoning:

State-led detention, penal fines, and imprisonment for tax-related issues violate the principles of proportionality and voluntary association. These provisions criminalize economic activity and discourage small businesses. In a market-regulated framework, compliance is incentivized by access to reputation systems, voluntary certifications, real-time buyer-vendor ratings, private audits, and peer accountability. Errors or disputes are resolved via transparent, third-party reconciliation forums, while trust is built through platform-led disclosures and reputational signals—not surveillance or incarceration.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	1.50/5	3.67/5	1.67/5	5/5	2/5	3.67/5	1.67/5	32.14

The Assam Heritage (Tangible) Protection, Preservation and Maintenance Act, 2020

Provisions:

Section 26: This section provides an omnibus penalty for contravening any provision of the Act.

Section 27: This section allows for the compounding of offenses.

Recommendations:

1. Heritage Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Program: Replace the penalty system entirely with a market-based TDR program. Owners who commit to the preservation of their heritage property would be issued "Heritage TDR Certificates." These certificates represent the unused development potential of their land and can be sold on an open market to developers in designated urban zones, who can then use them to build with greater density or height than normally permitted. The "penalty" for damaging a heritage property becomes a purely economic one: the forfeiture of this valuable, sellable asset.
2. Restorative Justice and Community Involvement: For compoundable offenses (obstruction and unauthorized construction), a "Heritage Restoration Contribution" may be directed in lieu of a portion of the fine. This contribution would involve funding or providing materials for the upkeep and maintenance of a local heritage property, of an equivalent value to the waived fine.
3. Independent Community Heritage Boards can be created to assess preservation and publicly rank compliance. Non-compliant owners may be excluded from Heritage-Linked Tourism Directories, community managed grant/donation platforms or any kind of access to private restoration funds.

Reasoning:

This reform is grounded in the principles of Voluntary Exchange & Free Markets. It fundamentally reframes heritage preservation from a liability enforced by state punishment into a tangible financial asset. This model respects the Presumption of Liberty and Individual Agency, as property owners are incentivized, not coerced, into becoming willing custodians of heritage to unlock economic value. It fosters Spontaneous Order by allowing the market, rather than government planners, to determine the price and allocation of development rights. This represents a Limited Government approach where the state's role is to facilitate a market, not to criminalize citizens, thereby demonstrating Constitutional Restraint and creating a powerful, self-sustaining engine for urban conservation.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
3.67/5	0/5	2/5	0/5	2/5	3.67/5	1/5	3.33/5	18.50

The Assam Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020

Provisions:

Section 125: Imprisonment or fine if agricultural produce are sold outside the specified platform or if there is unauthorized trading within delineated market areas.

Section 126: Punishes the operation of a market or trading without a license.

Section 127: Punishes a market functionary for carrying on business without registration.

Section 128: Punishes the evasion of market fees.

Recommendations:

1. Allow private players, Framer Produce Organizations (FPOs) and co-ops to set up markets based on open entry and self-governance.
2. Replace licensing with voluntary rating systems or public trust registries maintained by non-government bodies. Self licensing should be done on the market participants' own volition.
3. Platforms or co-ops should be enabled to certify traders/functionaries based on performance, reputation, and voluntary code of conduct.
4. Buyer-seller feedback systems or peer reviews can be used as the main accountability system.
5. Compulsory market fees should be abolished. Market operators can levy optional-service based user fees.
6. Market participants should pay only if they opt in to platform services like warehousing, grading and digital access.

Reasoning:

Criminalising trade for bureaucratic non-compliance violates economic liberty. Voluntary participation, reputational enforcement, and market-based incentives are more effective than coercion. Farmers and traders flourish in a competitive, decentralised system with multiple options, not a state-regulated monopoly.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
2.67/5	0/5	3/5	0/5	3.67/5	1/5	4.33/5	3.33/5	20.83

The Assam Micro Finance Institutions (Regulation of Money Lending) Act, 2020

Provisions:

Section 6: Allows suspension or cancellation of registration for "any sufficient reason," with conviction under the Act explicitly stated as sufficient cause.

Section 13: Outlines the duty to maintain accounts and furnish copies.

Section 15: Requires MFIs to submit monthly statements.

Section 20:Punishes carrying on business without registration with imprisonment up to three years and a fine up to one lakh rupees.

Section 21: A general penalty provision for contravention of any provision or rule for which no separate penalty is provided.

Recommendations:

1. Industry associations, borrower councils, or federations shall maintain voluntary trust registries or credibility scores based on transparent performance indicators.
2. Investors, rating agencies, and borrower platforms can access audited books as a voluntary prerequisite for funding, listing, or market access instead of state-imposed accounting mandates.
3. Peer platforms, credit bureaus, and private aggregators may be enabled to collect, audit, and publish financial health indicators for market participants.
4. Abolish mandatory registration and criminal penalties. Allow Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) to freely enter the market, subject to trust-based inclusion in voluntary federations or certification platforms.
5. Enforce market discipline through blacklisting, boycott by borrowers' unions, trust withdrawal by investors, and public review systems.

Reasoning:

Coercive registration, data submission, and punitive controls on microfinance institutions (MFIs) undermine financial innovation, restrict entry, and suppress informal credit ecosystems. A classical liberal framework empowers borrowers and investors—not the State—to regulate access and accountability. In such a system, MFIs compete for reputation and transparency in order to gain clients and capital. Voluntary registries, credit rating alliances, and borrower collectives replace state licensing as sources of trust. Rather than using imprisonment or forced reporting, this model relies on reputation, peer oversight, and economic incentives to ensure fair lending practices and transparent operations—making the credit ecosystem both free and self-correcting.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	4.33/5	5/5	2.67/5	2/5	3.67/5	2.67/5	33.01

The Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021

Provisions:

Section 7: Sub-section (3) prohibits transport of cattle without a valid permit. Sub-section (4) allows for seizure of vehicles or conveyances used for illegal transport, with no explicit provision for their release on bond during pendency of a case.

Section 10: Sub-section (2) provides for action against the Animal Market Committee, including license cancellation, after a hearing, for failure to maintain records.

Section 11: Sub-section (5) states that provisions related to seized articles and their disposal "shall not apply to the cattle" seized, implying cattle may not be released to the owner on bond.

Section 14: Declares all offenses under this Act to be cognizable and non-bailable.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish mandatory transport permits for cattle movement. Let market operators, transporters' guilds, and buyer-seller cooperatives enforce traceability and disease-safety through voluntary certification or QR-linked transport logs. Replace seizure with civil redress mechanisms, where losses or disputes are addressed via community mediation or private arbitration, not confiscation.
2. Remove government licensing and penalties for market committees. Allow animal markets to operate as voluntary collectives or private platforms that maintain digital or physical ledgers for market reputation and customer trust. Use peer rating systems and buyer-vendor feedback mechanisms to drive compliance with animal health and origin tracking, without State interference.
3. Return seized animals immediately unless proven ownership is fraudulent through a voluntary dispute resolution body or livestock arbitration panel. Prioritise animal welfare through local cooperative monitoring, not bureaucratic seizure.
4. Treat disputes or violations (if any) as civil contractual breaches, to be addressed through private grievance redress platforms or community-based animal welfare boards.

Reasoning:

Criminalising cattle transport, seizing vehicles, and detaining animals without due process undermines property rights, economic freedom, and rural livelihoods, especially for small farmers and transporters. In a classical liberal framework, cattle movement, trade, and welfare are governed by market incentives, voluntary associations, and decentralized accountability, not coercive state power. Traders, transporters, and animal market operators act reputably when their access to buyers, capital, and services depends on it. Cooperatives, trade guilds, and rating platforms can enforce health standards, humane practices, and transparency without denying bail or seizing property.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
5/5	1.50/5	2/5	0/5	2.67/5	5/5	2/5	3.33/5	25.30

The Assam Tourism (Development & Registration) Act, 2024

Provisions:

Section 9: Sub-section (1), clause (i) allows for removal if the certificate holder "violated any of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder". Clause (iii) allows removal if the holder has been "found guilty of malpractice".

Section 20: Penalizes those who carry on a tourism business without registration with a fine.

Section 25: Prohibits certain activities, such as begging, in tourist areas and imposes a fine.

Recommendations:

1. Abolish the mandatory state registration and penalties for non-compliance. Replace it with a multi-level, voluntary certification system run by a Tourism Standards Guild (TSG), a peer-led body of tourism operators. The TSG will offer different "Trustmark" certifications (e.g., Bronze, Silver, Gold) based on standards of quality, safety, and ethical conduct. Non-compliant operators will not face state fines, but will lose their Trustmark and be listed on a public registry of non-certified providers. The TSG will have a dispute resolution panel composed of industry experts and consumers to handle complaints and a right to appeal will be granted for any suspension or removal of a Trustmark.
2. Decriminalize the act of begging and replace the monetary penalty with a voluntary, rehabilitative approach. Empower local tourist cooperative bodies or RWAs to manage norms in public spaces through voluntary codes of conduct, signage, and peer-moderated interventions. Allow private property owners and business collectives to manage their spaces using civil remedies and non-state enforcement contracts (e.g. private security or steward associations).

Reasoning:

Tourism flourishes when it is open, creative, and community-driven—not when it is license-bound, police-managed, and vulnerable to arbitrary state control. Criminalizing unregistered tourism services or "undesirable" behavior in tourist zones disincentivizes innovation, self-employment, and informal participation. A classical liberal approach replaces this with voluntary business transparency, peer-based trust systems, tourist review-driven accountability, and community-managed civic norms. Trust and safety can be ensured not by coercive registration and penalties, but by reputation systems, rating platforms, mutual review boards, and private associations that govern their members through incentive-based mechanisms.

Sanction Severity	Enforcement Frequency	Compliance Burden	Economic Impact	Drafting Clarity and Plain Language	Overlap and Duplication	Procedural Complexity	Sunset/ Review Clause Absence	Total MCDA Score
4.33/5	0/5	3/5	3/5	2.67/5	2/5	3/5	3.33/5	32.80

House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several St
have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.
hall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen
hen elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.
es and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according
ll be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, an
of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congr
bsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall no
each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New H
e, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jerse
Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.
cies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill s
Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.
Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for s
one Vote.
ly after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into t
first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Y
on of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or o
ture of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, wh

shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United S
n Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.
dent of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.
shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall e
ed States.
shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmat
e Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members p
Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjo
the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment

Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each Sta
eof may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.
s shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unle
Day.
House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each
ings; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of ab
nder such Penalties as each House may provide.
may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence

shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in thei
s and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those present, be entered on
se, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor
he two Houses shall be sitting.
enators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid
They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their A
tive Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall

er Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Author
en created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person holding any Offi
mber of either House during his Continuance in Office.

for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Am
which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the

Conclusion

The true measure of a legal system lies not in how rigorously it enforces obedience, but in how effectively it enables innovation (Lyytinen et al., 2025). As India stands on the cusp of an economic and social transformation envisioned in Viksit Bharat 2047 (Press Information Bureau, 2025), the pressing task is to design laws that make enterprise the "default" norm, not the exception. This compendium captures that challenge in concrete, operational terms. Drawing on lessons from six states and the central level, it demonstrates that regulatory reform is not merely about pruning statutory excess, but about reshaping the grammar of governance. By anchoring compliance in clarity rather than coercion, the work presented here translates the aspirations of the Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 into grounded, actionable strategies (Press Information Bureau, 2025; Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2023). The emerging vision is one of trust-based governance, where citizens confidently engage the state, and the law functions as a scaffold for shared prosperity rather than a barrier to it (Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, 2024).

The research in this compendium offers a multi-layered portrait of India's regulatory environment. Through the combined efforts of six state teams and the central legislation review, the project documents the persistence of overcriminalisation, procedural rigidity, and fragmented regulatory authority, alongside the institutional and economic costs these impose. While the contexts differ, the underlying barriers share a common thread — an inherited regulatory culture that prizes control over collaboration and procedure over outcomes.

While each jurisdiction has its unique economic profile and sectoral priorities, several patterns emerged with striking consistency. In Uttar Pradesh, a heavy reliance on imprisonment clauses for administrative breaches (Times of India, 2025) mirrors the situation in Maharashtra and Delhi, where technical non-compliance often attracts criminal liability disproportionate to the harm caused. In Assam and Andhra Pradesh, the burden of overlapping mandates between state and central agencies creates duplicative compliance burdens and enforcement uncertainty. Despite recent reform initiatives, Rajasthan retains legacy provisions that delay dispute resolution and inhibit voluntary registration in certain sectors. Even the central legislation review, though operating under a different jurisdictional logic, echoed these themes— revealing the persistence of obsolete offences and procedural requirements that impose high private costs for negligible public benefit.

A shared principle is at the heart of nearly every recommendation: replacing criminal sanctions for minor, procedural, or technical violations with proportionate civil remedies. In Assam, for instance, excessive penalisation of low-risk infractions in agriculture and fisheries has constrained local enterprise, while in Maharashtra, licensing provisions that criminalise the absence of permits for low-risk activities have undermined small-scale entrepreneurship. At the central level, proposals to decriminalise cheque dishonour and procedural delays in corporate filings (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2023) echo this logic on a national scale. Across these contexts, the underlying message is clear: an overly punitive regulatory state erodes both economic efficiency and public trust.

Equally important is the shift towards decentralised, participatory governance structures. State-level proposals frequently envision self-regulatory organisations or industry-led bodies, such as the Molasses Trade Integrity Council in Uttar Pradesh (Times of India, 2025) or sector-specific guilds in Delhi, that position compliance oversight closer to the point of economic activity. Though varied in form, these models share a foundational belief: compliance is stronger when it is co-owned by those it governs. At the central level, this philosophy finds expression in the call for statutory review mechanisms and sunset clauses (Times of India, 2025), institutionalising adaptability as a core principle of governance. By weaving these decentralised and iterative mechanisms into the legal fabric, both state and central recommendations move India away from a monolithic, control-driven regulatory state towards a polycentric system that is more responsive, contextual, and fair.

The application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) framework brought empirical precision to the reform priorities identified in this compendium. By systematically weighing parameters such as economic impact, compliance burden, and sanction severity, the framework exposed stark variations in the performance of state-level statutes. In several cases, low scores reflected not an absence of reform intent but structural deficiencies such as

outdated drafting, procedural duplication, or overbroad penal clauses, which undercut effectiveness. These results reinforce a central message: meaningful decriminalisation requires more than philosophical alignment with trust-based governance; it demands systematic, data-driven evaluation of legal provisions.

Technology, too, emerges as a unifying thread in governance reform. Across states, proposals converge on the adoption of single-window clearance systems, online self-declarations (Times of India, 2025), and real-time tracking platforms. Andhra Pradesh seeks statutory backing for its single-window portal; Delhi is integrating municipal approvals into unified e-governance systems. At the central level, the emphasis is on harmonising these digital platforms and embedding safeguards for transparency and predictability (AZB Partners, 2025). The convergence here is telling: whether addressing a local bottleneck in property registration or streamlining a nationwide compliance process, digital systems are seen as both cost-reducing and trust-enhancing, minimising bureaucratic discretion while empowering citizens and businesses with clarity and control.

State-specific realities, however, shape the contours of reform. Rajasthan's introduction of compliance-linked incentives, ranging from fast-track approvals to digital recognition badges, reflects a proactive strategy of rewarding good actors rather than merely punishing bad ones. Uttar Pradesh's priority is to consolidate and strengthen existing digital frameworks (Times of India, 2025), ensuring consistency and legal certainty for reforms already in motion. Assam's push to revise reverse-onus clauses that undermine the presumption of innocence speaks to a broader constitutional imperative, while Andhra Pradesh's identification of "shadow laws" and outdated statutes addresses the often-overlooked problem of regulatory vagueness that often escapes formal reform processes. These differences do not dilute the unity of the compendium's vision; they demonstrate how a shared philosophy of trust-based governance can take varied and locally resonant forms.

The common challenges faced by teams across different jurisdictions, be it duplication between central and state laws, procedural complexity that inflates transaction costs, and the absence of systematic legislative review (Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 2023), all point to structural barriers that transcend geography. These problems are as much a product of governance culture as of statutory text. Without institutionalised mechanisms for legislative housekeeping, outdated or overlapping provisions persist, breeding uncertainty and unnecessary friction. This is why both state and central recommendations converge on the need for periodic statutory reviews, whether through restructured law commissions, permanent legislative audit cells, or mandated sunset clauses. Such mechanisms are essential to making decriminalisation not a one-off reform, but an ongoing habit of governance.

In this compendium's research process, stakeholder mapping and interviews were not ancillary exercises but central to identifying both the intent and the unintended consequences of existing provisions. For example, in Assam and Maharashtra, feedback from small-scale industrialists revealed that criminal penalties often have less to do with enforcing standards than providing leverage in administrative negotiations. In Delhi and Rajasthan, local municipal officials highlighted how procedural redundancies slow enforcement of genuinely harmful conduct. These perspectives underscore that the lived realities of both regulators and the regulated must inform effective reform.

Seen in this light, the Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 is both a milestone and a starting point. Its objectives: rationalising sanctions, enhancing predictability, and encouraging voluntary compliance; align squarely with the principles animating this compendium. However, the central bill, by design, cannot address the full range of state-level regulatory burdens that shape everyday economic life. The work presented here complements and extends the Jan Vishwas vision by showing what these principles look like in practice across diverse legal and economic landscapes. From urban licensing in Delhi to agricultural regulation in Assam, from industrial policy in Andhra Pradesh to trade governance in Uttar Pradesh, the reforms proposed here demonstrate that decriminalisation is not an abstract legal category, but a tool for shaping real-world incentives and outcomes.

A shift to trust-based governance will not materialise through legislative text alone; it will depend on redesigning institutions, processes, and relationships. This model demands that enforcement agencies recalibrate their posture from punitive oversight to facilitative engagement — prioritising identifying genuine risk and deploying sanctions proportionately to the harm caused. It calls for regulatory processes that are accessible, predictable, and navigable by citizens without specialised legal assistance.

If pursued with intent, this transformation can potentially redefine the very texture of economic life in India. Decriminalisation, when paired with incentives for compliance, transparent processes, and localised oversight, can free up resources currently trapped in low-value enforcement and redirect them towards productive investment, innovation, and social development. It can reduce the economic drag of uncertainty, enable micro and small

enterprises to formalise without fear, and foster a regulatory climate in which citizens experience the state as an enabler rather than an obstacle. Over time, this could generate not just higher GDP growth, but a more inclusive and participatory economy in which opportunities are distributed more evenly and trust forms the basis of public life.

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 offers both a timeline and a benchmark for this work. The recommendations in this compendium — grounded in empirical research, informed by stakeholder experience, and tested against principles of liberty and proportionality — provide actionable steps towards that vision. They bridge the conceptual goals of national reform with the operational realities of state-level governance, demonstrating that systemic change is achievable when principles are translated into context-sensitive, implementable policies. In doing so, they also remind us that ease of living is the accurate measure of ease of doing business (Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, 2024); a system that makes compliance intuitive and proportionate will ultimately serve both economic growth and human dignity.

As this compendium closes, it does so with a recognition that the work is not complete. Reform is a process, not a product, and the momentum created by Jan Vishwas 2.0 must be sustained and deepened through continued collaboration between policymakers, industry, and civil society. The proposals here are intended not as a final word, but as a legislative and institutional toolkit — adaptable, scalable, and rooted in a philosophy of trust — that can guide India's regulatory evolution over the next two decades.

In charting a course from punitive compliance to trust-based governance, India has the opportunity to align its legal system with its developmental ambitions. We can persist with a model that treats citizens as potential offenders to be monitored, penalised, and constrained, or we can embrace one that sees them as partners in creating a free, fair, and prosperous nation. The evidence, the principles, and the aspirations laid out in this compendium argue decisively for the latter. If these recommendations are implemented with the seriousness they deserve, then by 2047, the promise of Viksit Bharat will be measured not only in the size of the economy but in the everyday freedoms (Press Information Bureau, 2025), opportunities, and dignity enjoyed by its people.

House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several St
have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.
hall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen
hen elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.
es and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according
ll be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, an
of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congr
bsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall no
each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New H
e, Massachusetts eight, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New York six, New Jerse
Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.
cies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill s
Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.
Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for s
one Vote.
ly after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into t
first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Y
on of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or o
ture of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, wh

shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United S
n Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.
dent of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.
shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall e
ed States.
shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmat
e Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members p
Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjo
the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment

Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each Sta
eof may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.
s shall assemble at least once in every Year, and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December, unle
Day.
House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each
ings; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of ab
nder such Penalties as each House may provide.
may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence

shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in thei
s and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those present, be entered on
se, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor
he two Houses shall be sitting.
enators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to be ascertained by Law, and paid
They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their A
tive Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall

er Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Author
en created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been encreased during such time; and no Person holding any Offi
mber of either House during his Continuance in Office.

for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Am
which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the

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Scholar Profiles

Aadya Bharti

Aadya Bharti is an Economics undergraduate at Hindu College, University of Delhi, with a Minor in Political Science. Her academic interests lie in institutional economics and behavioural public policy, exploring how governance frameworks influence economic and social outcomes. She is passionate about evidence-based, citizen-centric reform and views trust as a key variable in governance.

Anasuya Amsa Avadhanam

Anusuya Amsa Avadhanam is a second-year Economics undergraduate at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics with a strong interest in institutional frameworks, political economy, and interdisciplinary research. She has explored India's welfare policies, liberalisation reforms, and rural development through academic and field-based research. Founder of her campus philosophy club, Darbaar, she blends economics with insights from philosophy and politics.

Animesh Sabat

Animesh Sabat is a first-year Economics undergraduate at Hindu College, University of Delhi, with a deep interest in institutional economics, public law, and political theory. His work explores the intersection of classical liberal thought, moral philosophy, and quantitative analysis. Passionate about trust-based governance and legal reform, he aims to develop alternatives to criminalisation through civil liability and restorative models.

Ankit Shubham

Ankit Shubham is a law student at the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, passionate about research, public policy, and legal studies. Hailing from Chatra, Jharkhand, and an alumnus of DAV Public School, Hazaribagh, he pursued his undergraduate degree at the University of Delhi. A national-level quiz winner and an avid researcher, Ankit hopes to examine socio-legal and policy issues through a bottom-up approach encompassing dignity, empathy and freedom.

Chetna Anjali

Chetna Anjali is a gender studies scholar currently pursuing her Master's at IIT Delhi, with a Bachelor's in Social Sciences from TISS. Her interdisciplinary foundation spans political science, sociology, and economics, with a focus on feminist critiques of law and policy. Through research and her podcast Gendering Climate, she challenges dominant policy narratives, centering care, justice, and structural critique in governance discourse.

Chetna Rani

Chetna Rani, a Political Science graduate from Hindu College, Delhi University, currently pursuing a Master's at JNU, is deeply passionate about gender studies, local governance, and social equity. With experience in journalism and teaching, she has authored civic-focused articles for Youth Ki Awaaz, interned at Mojo Story, and volunteered with Teach For India. Her research spans feminist critiques and digital justice. Skilled in qualitative methods and digital content creation, she aims to pursue a career in academia and policy, grounded in empathy, rigour, and trust-based governance.

Gunter Daniel Dass

Gunter Daniel Dass is a postgraduate scholar in Public Policy and Governance at Amity University, with a strong foundation in international relations, development, and governance reform. His experience spans corporate sustainability at Nestlé, a policy hackathon at IIT Delhi, and UPSC preparation. With interests in conflict resolution, institutional delivery, and global cooperation, Gunter aims to bridge the gap between research and real-world application-contributing to inclusive, evidence-based policymaking across public, private, and international platforms.

Harshali Sreenivas Benny

Harshali Sreenivas Benny is pursuing a BSc in Economics at the Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics, where her interests bridge artificial intelligence and trade economics. Curious and intellectually agile, she brings a data-informed yet human-centric lens to policy research. Through her research, she remains eager to explore the intersections between liberalism, decriminalisation and civil society.

Ishant Kumar Sharma

Ishant Kumar Sharma, a recent graduate from RGNUL Punjab with a specialization in Constitutional Law, blends legal expertise with interdisciplinary research. He has interned with top firms and policy think tanks like Vidhi, contributing to projects on decriminalization and compliance. A published writer and SOCH Fellow, Ishant explores themes of rights, justice, and urban heritage.

Jigyasa Chaturvedi

Jigyasa Chaturvedi is a second-year student at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, with strong interests in political economy, sustainable development, and evidence-based policymaking. Her research spans sanitation, agrarian policy, and historical census data. She is actively involved in rural education initiatives and academic discourse through UTBT and blends grassroots engagement with scholarly inquiry.

Kaushiki Ishwar

Kaushiki Ishwar is an interdisciplinary scholar in history, philosophy, and sociology, a Miranda House graduate, and currently a YIF scholar at Ashoka University. She represented India at the Commonwealth Youth Parliament in New Zealand and has mentored thousands through the Indian Debating League. Founder of Critikal & Theorie, she combines research, activism, and publishing. Her work spans feminist theory, digital economies, and decriminalization.

Kritika Sharma

Kritika Sharma is a postgraduate student in Actuarial Economics at the Madras School of Economics with a strong interest in evidence-based, human-centered policy. Skilled in data analysis tools like R, STATA, and EViews, she blends statistical rigor with narrative insight. Her work spans economic research, content leadership, and mental health advocacy.

Lavanya Mitra

Lavanya Mitra is a postgraduate in Political Science and International Relations from JNU with field experience in urban nutrition, disability rights, and inclusive governance. Her work spans parliamentary research, assistive tech policy, and youth development, especially among Dalit, Adivasi, and migrant communities. Through her work, she remains curious about examining how policing and municipal bylaws perpetuate exclusion, and to co-develop community-based solutions for the marginalized urban youth.

Manan Singh

Manan Singh pursued a B.A.(Hons.) Liberal Arts and Humanities with a major in History from O.P. Jindal Global University. With a deep interest in public policy, youth empowerment, and education, he has gained hands-on experience through roles at NITI Aayog and with Members of Parliament. Founder of the youth-led initiative Young Minds, he is also a certified Youth Educator and recipient of several prestigious fellowships.

Neehra Sharma

Neehra Sharma is a Political Science student with aspirations in International Development and inclusive policymaking. With experience as a policy research intern in a Member of Parliament's office and as Editor of the Ramjas Political Review, she blends academic rigor with real-world engagement. Her interests span intersectionality, gendered perspectives on public health, and climate change. As a CPL Fellow and founder of Project Patchwork, she fosters discourse on identity and policy.

Nikita Bhandari

Nikita Bhandari is a Master's student in Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics with a background in History from Miranda House. Her research focuses on space, technology, and marginality, explored through qualitative methods and fieldwork. She brings experience in editorial leadership, digital content, and collaborative research on media overstimulation.

Rimmon Dass

Rimmon Dass is an economics undergraduate at St. Stephen's College with a keen interest in governance, institutional trust, and inclusive development. Her academic and field-based experiences have shaped her focus on participatory governance and context-sensitive policy. She explores themes like behavioral economics, healthcare access, and decriminalization as trust-building reform. Through interdisciplinary engagement, she aims to contribute to justice-oriented, evidence-based policy that empowers rather than penalizes marginalized communities.

Sakshi Niranjan

Sakshi Niranjan is an Economics undergraduate with a growing interest in public policy, particularly its impact on women-led micro-enterprises. Her research centers on understanding why formal credit schemes like CGTMSE often fail to reach women entrepreneurs, despite progressive policy design. With a strong foundation in development economics and a commitment to field-based inquiry, she seeks to bridge the gap between policy intent and on-ground realities.

Shashank Acharya

Shashank Acharya holds a Bachelor's in Economics from Christ University and a Master's in Political Science from the University of Delhi. A UGC Junior Research Fellow, he has published in reputed journals and worked on psephological research with the Centre for Global Studies. His academic interests span political economy, governance, and misinformation in electoral processes. With hands-on experience in community work and stakeholder research, Shashank seeks to deepen his policy expertise and contribute meaningfully to evidence-based governance and reform.

Shubhangi Yadav

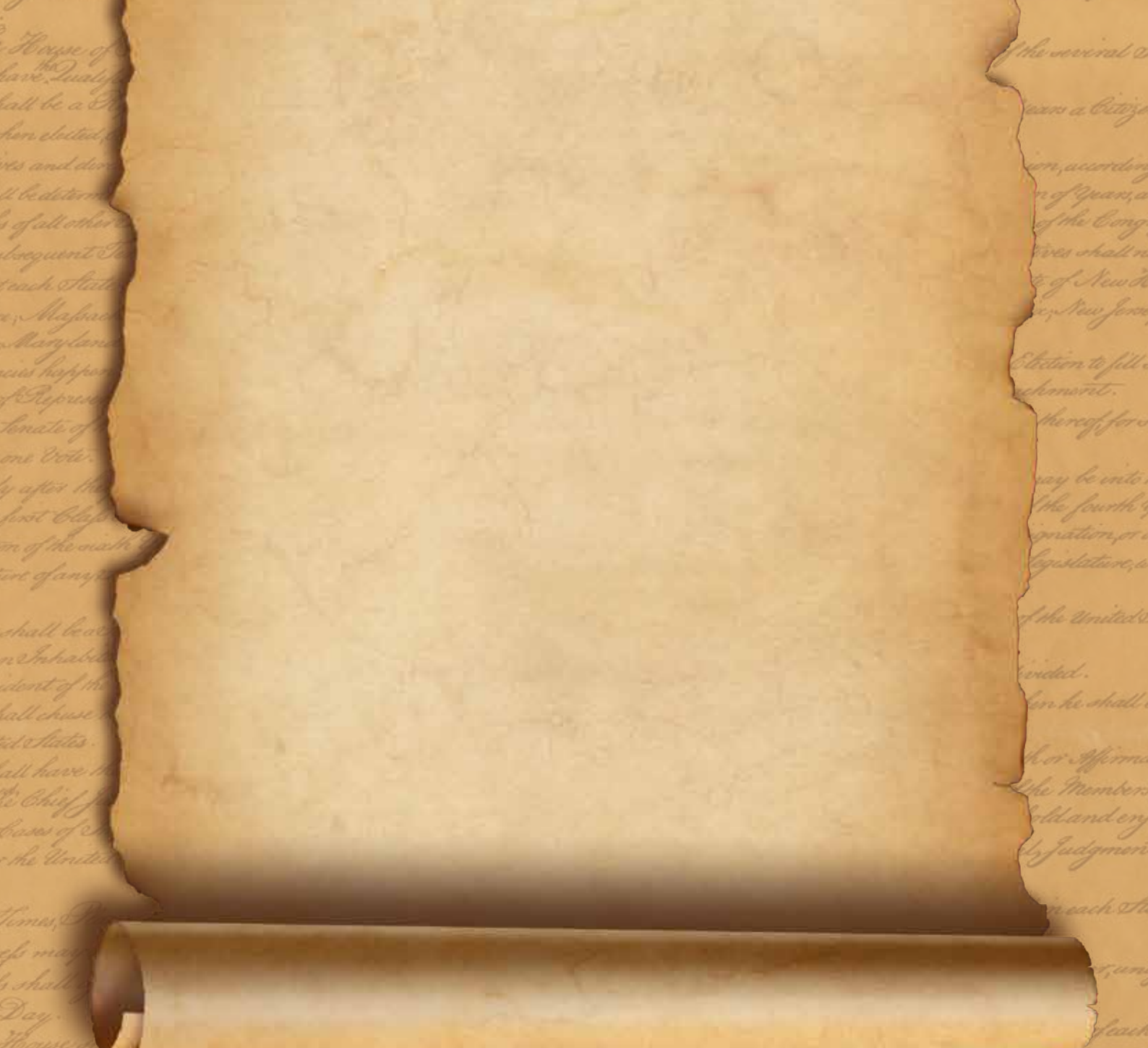
Shubhangi Yadav is an Economics undergraduate at Hindu College, University of Delhi, with a strong interest in public policy, development economics, and visual storytelling. Actively involved in forums like TEDx and Caucus, she balances academic curiosity with compassion-evident in her work with campus dogs and her empathetic worldview. With design skills and research experience at the Centre for Civil Society, she aims to merge creativity with policy thinking, striving for change rooted in sincerity, quiet leadership, and human dignity.

Swikruti Mohanty

Swikruti Mohanty, a B.B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) graduate from National Law University Odisha (2024), has cultivated a strong interest in competition law, tech policy, and structural legal reform. With internships at law firms and think tanks like Vidhi and DAKSH, she has developed a focused portfolio in antitrust regulation and regulatory policy. Her research explores legal frameworks, power asymmetries, and governance reform. Passionate about simplifying commercial laws and fostering fair compliance, she aims to shape an inclusive regulatory landscape.

Tapasya Srivastava

Tapasya is an Electronics and Communication Engineering graduate from Jaypee University, Madhya Pradesh with a deep passion for public policy and development. After six years of preparing for the Civil Services Examination, she transitioned to policy research, completing certificate programs with CCS and YLAC. With a growing interest in entrepreneurship, she also manages marketing for her family business.



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