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School of Research Based Learning & Competition

Current Affairs - 14 July 2026

INDIA'S CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM: NEAR-UNIVERSAL COVERAGE OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

India officially recorded over **99% of its estimated births and deaths in 2024**, according to the latest data released by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.

This marks a significant leap in registration coverage over the past decade, signalling India's movement toward a system where every birth and death can be counted, certified, and used to inform public policy.

About Civil Registration System (CRS)

- Data on births, deaths, and stillbirths are recorded under a continuous, compulsory mechanism called the Civil Registration System.
- It serves as a foundational source of India's population data, informing accurate estimation of mortality, fertility, and sex ratio at birth.
- The CRS has been legally operational since 1970 under the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969**, amended in 2023.
- Births and deaths must ordinarily be reported within 21 days. In hospitals, the medical officer in charge or an authorised official reports such events; for home-based events, the household head or a prescribed informant is responsible.

The Journey to Near-Universal Registration

- Registration coverage has improved dramatically over the decades:
 - **Until 2000:** Only 56% of births and 48% of deaths were registered.
 - **By 2014:** Coverage rose to around 86.6% (births) and 72.5% (deaths).
 - **In 2024:** Birth registration reached 99.1% and death registration reached 99.4%.
- Death registration, which historically lagged behind birth registration, has now caught up rapidly.
- In 2024, 18 states and Union Territories achieved 100% birth registration, while 21 states and UTs achieved 100% death registration.

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- **Significance of Near-Universal Registration**

- A complete CRS is one of the most important sources of vital statistics, crucial for:
 - Administrative use and assessing the impact of health and social policies
 - Understanding trends in fertility, mortality, and population change
 - Real-time demographic information, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic, when timely death reporting helped identify high-risk areas
 - Tracking seasonal mortality driven by high temperatures and pollution
 - Decentralised governance, since district and sub-district level data are far more useful for local programme design than national or state estimates
 - Legal identity proof for individuals
- India has traditionally relied on the Census (conducted once every 10 years), the Sample Registration System (SRS), and household surveys for demographic estimates, since these do not provide reliable annual, district-level data.
- A complete CRS fills this critical gap.

The Way Forward

- Future improvements must focus not just on coverage but on quality, including timely registration, accurate records, and responsible use of digital data.
- India could also consider developing a system for recording internal migration to further strengthen administrative planning.

Conclusion

India's near-universal registration of births and deaths marks a genuine administrative achievement, offering a robust foundation for evidence-based governance. However, addressing regional gaps, improving data quality, and ensuring medically certified death records remain essential to fully realise the CRS's potential for policy planning.

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BIOGAS AS A PATHWAY TO INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY

- India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil needs, much of it from West Asia, and supplies were disrupted during the Israel-US-Iran war.
- Although the government has diversified crude oil suppliers, around **90% of India's LPG imports** still transit through the Strait of Hormuz, making any regional instability a direct risk to India's energy security.

Understanding Biogas and Its Potential

- Biogas is a mixture of methane, CO₂, and trace gases produced through anaerobic digestion of organic matter.
- When processed and compressed, it becomes **Compressed Biogas (CBG)**, chemically identical to CNG.
 - CBG is renewable, carbon-neutral, produced from waste, and usable for electricity generation, heating, or cooking.
- India has pursued biogas blending for over a decade to reduce fuel imports, manage agricultural waste, and support rural incomes.

Policy Push and Ground Reality

- **SATAT (2018):** The Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation initiative aimed to establish 5,000 CBG plants by 2023. Only 132 plants were completed as of June 3, 2026.
- **GOBARdhan Scheme:** Launched to boost CBG production under a "waste to wealth" model, offering grants up to ₹50 lakh per district for community biogas plants. ₹564 crore was earmarked for biomass collection machinery and ₹994 crore for pipelines connecting biogas plants to the gas grid.
- **Challenges:** Poor infrastructure, weak private investment, difficulty accessing formal credit, and high upfront technology costs have stalled progress. Financial support, accelerated depreciation, and tax holidays could help attract private players.

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Global Lessons: The Cultivation Trap

- Biogas development remains uneven globally, with **Europe, China,** and the US accounting for **90%** of world production.
- **Germany**, a leader in Europe, incentivised biogas through its 2000 Renewable Energy Sources Act, guaranteeing producer income and encouraging small-scale plants.
- **Denmark offers an alternative model**
 - Denmark, which is targeting to use only biomethane in its gas system by 2030, offers a solution.
 - The government discouraged the use of crops as feedstock, and the primary source is livestock manure and agricultural waste.

Government's Action Plan

- In 2023, **National Biofuels Coordination Committee** approved a mandatory CBG blending obligation for gas distributors, starting at 1% in FY26 & rising to 5% by FY29.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in her February 2024 Budget speech that **phased CBG blending** in CNG (transport) and Piped Natural Gas (domestic use) will be mandated.
- As per government data (August 2025), only 36 medium-sized biogas plants were installed under the MNRE's Biogas Programme over three years.
- The comparison being drawn is with India's ethanol blending success: from just 1.5% blending in 2014 to 20% by December 2025, achieving the target five years ahead of the original 2030 deadline, raising the question of whether similar momentum can be replicated for CBG.

Conclusion

Biogas holds genuine promise for India's energy security, but replicating the ethanol success story will require overcoming infrastructure gaps, ensuring adequate incentives, and learning from Germany's cultivation-pattern mistakes by prioritising waste-based feedstock over food crops to safeguard both energy and food security.

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PRADHAN MANTRI FORMALISATION OF MICRO FOOD PROCESSING



Pradhan Mantri
Formalisation of
Micro Food
Processing
Enterprises
Scheme

ENTERPRISES SCHEME

- It was launched on 29 June 2020.
- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** that focuses on the **growth and formalisation of micro food units** across the country.
- The scheme is part of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan** and supports the **Vocal for Local vision** in the food processing sector.
- It provides financial, technical and business assistance to entrepreneurs for setting up new units or upgrading existing ones.
- **Financial Outlay & Time Period:**
 - The scheme runs from **2020-21 to 2025-26** with an outlay of **10,000 crores**.
 - The expenditure under the scheme is to be shared in **60:40 ratio** between **Central and State Governments**, in **90:10 ratio** with **North Eastern and Himalayan States**, **60:40 ratio** with **UTs with legislature** and **100%** by the **Center** for other UTs.

Features of PMFME Scheme:

- **Support to Individual / Group Category Micro Enterprises:** Credit-linked capital subsidy @35% of the eligible project cost, maximum ceiling **10 lakh per unit**;
- **Support to SHGs for seed capital:** It provides seed capital of **40,000/- per member** of SHG engaged in food processing for working capital and purchase of small tools subject to maximum of **Rs. 4 lakh per SHG Federation**.
- **Branding and Marketing Support:** Grant upto 50% for Branding and Marketing to groups of FPOs/ SHGs/ Cooperatives or an SPV of micro food processing enterprises.

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UMANG PORTAL

- UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) is a single unified platform to access government services offered by Central, State, and Local bodies—anytime, anywhere.
- It is part of **Digital India** initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- **Aim:** UMANG aims to make it easier for the people to access important services from Government departments, Local bodies.
- **Features:**
 - It provides a **unified approach** where you can install one application to avail multiple government services on multiple channels like mobile application, web, and authorized partners centers, which can be accessed through smartphones, tablets and desktops.
 - UMANG web and app supports **23 Indian languages**, including English and Hindi in 21 other regional languages.



KEY FACTS ABOUT INDIAN GIANT FLYING SQUIRREL

- The Indian giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista philippensis*), also known as the **large brown flying squirrel** or **common giant flying squirrel**, is a **type of rodent** in the **Sciuridae** family, which includes squirrels.
- It is capable of **gliding flight** using a **skin membrane**, the **patagium**, stretched between front and hind legs.
- **Habitat and Distribution:**
 - It can be found only in **Southeast and South Asia** and **southern and central China**.
 - In **South Asia** they have a patchy distribution in **Sri Lanka and India**, primarily concentrated in the **Himalayan Mountains** and **northeast regions**.

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- They live in **dry deciduous and evergreen forests**, usually at higher elevations.
- They can also be found in **plantations**.
- **Features:**
 - It is **one of the largest flying squirrels**.
 - It is **nocturnal**
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: **Least Concern**



KEY FACTS ABOUT GULF OF MANNAR

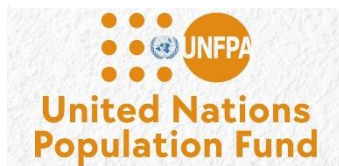
- It is a **vast shallow bay** that forms part of the **Laccadive Sea** in the **Indian Ocean**.
- It is located **between southeastern India** and **western Sri Lanka**.
- It is **bounded** to the **northeast** by **Rameswaram (island)**, **Adam's (Rama's) Bridge** (a chain of shoals), and **Mannar Island**.
- It is **connected to the Palk Bay** in the north through the **Palk Strait**.
- It receives several **rivers**, including the **Tambraparni (India)** and the **Aruvi (Sri Lanka)**.
- The **port of Tuticorin** is on the Indian coast.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - Endowed with **three distinct coastal ecosystems** (**coral reefs**, **seagrass beds**, and **mangroves**), it is considered **one of the world's richest regions** from a marine biodiversity perspective.
 - **Sea Turtles**, **sharks**, **dugongs**, and **dolphins** are regular visitors to the Gulf, and **species of hard coral** have been recorded here.
 - The Gulf became a protected national park in 1986, earning the name **Gulf of Mannar National Park**.
 - It was designated as a **Biosphere Reserve** in 1989, the **first such marine conservation area** in **India** and the **South Asian region**.

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UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND



- It is an **international development agency** created in 1967 to support the execution of projects and programmes in the area of **population and sexual and reproductive health**.
 - It was originally called the **United Nations Fund for Population Activities**.
 - In 1987, it was officially renamed as the **United Nations Population Fund** but the original **abbreviation UNFPA** (United Nations Fund for Population Activities) was retained.
- **Funding:** It is **entirely supported by voluntary contributions** of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations, the **private sector and foundations and individuals**, not by the United Nations regular budget.
- It funds assistance, research, and advocacy programs in three major areas:
 - **Reproductive health**, including family planning, safe motherhood, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases,
 - The **population problems** of developed and developing countries and possible strategies for addressing them.
 - **Issues related to the status of women**, including the gender gap in education.
- **Headquarters:** New York.

SWAYAAN INITIATIVE



SwaYaan Initiative

- It was **launched in 2022**.
- It is a National Initiative by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** to develop and **strengthen the UAS/Drone ecosystem in India**.
- The vision is in line with the Government of India's initiative to make India a global Drone hub by the year 2030.

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- The project is implemented through a network of **30 premier Academic and R&D institutions**, including IIT, IISc, IIIT, NITs, IIITDM, C-DAC, and NIELIT Centres.
 - In addition, Skill councils and Industrial bodies like FICCI, ESSCI, TSSC, DFI, HAL, etc., are integral parts of Project mentoring and supervision teams.
- **Five key work themes guide the project:** Drone Electronics, GNC Algorithms Simulation, Aeromechanics, Drone Applications, and Allied UAS Technologies—ensuring specialized focus areas.

JODHPURI MOJARI



- It is handcrafted **traditional footwear** from Jodhpur, **Rajasthan**.
 - It is crafted primarily by the **members of a Jinagar community**.
 - The community adopted **shoemaking some 250 years ago**. They made jeen (saddle) and myaan (leather sheaths for swords and daggers) for the armies.
- Once patronised by the royals, the Mojari gradually evolved into a distinctive craft.
- **Key Features of Jodhpuri Mojari:**
 - The mojaris are entirely handmade, using **only leather from camel, goat, cow and buffalo**.
 - It is airy, easy to walk on long distances, tough and flexible, and easy to take off at homes and temples.
 - Mojari, **worn by both men and women**, suited the hot climate of Rajasthan.

Key Facts about Geographical Indication Tag

- It is a **sign used on products** that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- This is typically used for **agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts and industrial products**.
- This GI tag is **valid for 10 years** following which it can be renewed.