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Registration of Births and Deaths Amendment Bill, 2026: Strengthening India's Civil Registration System for Better Governance and Legal Identity

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Recent Developments:

- The **Lok Sabha** has passed the **Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026** to amend the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969**.
- The amendment seeks to strengthen provisions relating to **delayed registration** of births and deaths, improve verification mechanisms and ensure greater accuracy, transparency and reliability in civil registration.
- The legislation aims to encourage timely reporting of vital events while reducing fraudulent or unsupported delayed registrations through enhanced administrative and judicial oversight.

Registration of Births and Deaths Framework:

Meaning, Objectives:

- **Birth and death registration** is a mandatory legal process that provides official recognition of vital life events and establishes an individual's legal identity.
- The **Civil Registration System (CRS)** serves as India's continuous and compulsory mechanism for recording births, deaths and stillbirths across the country.
- The system supports demographic planning, evidence-based policymaking, public service delivery and preparation of reliable population statistics.
- Accurate registration strengthens governance by facilitating welfare delivery, legal documentation and demographic assessment.

Institutional Framework:

- The **Civil Registration System (CRS)** functions under the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India**, functioning under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- The legal framework is governed by the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969**, which came into force in **1970** and was substantially amended in **2023**.
- Births and deaths are ordinarily required to be reported within **21 days** of occurrence.
- In healthcare institutions, reporting responsibility lies with the medical officer or authorised official, whereas for home events the responsibility generally rests with the head of the household or another prescribed informant.

Key Provisions of the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026:

Delayed Registration of Births and Deaths:

- Registration reported after **one year** but within **two years** may be permitted only with the approval of the **District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate** or an **Executive Magistrate** authorised by the District

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Magistrate.

- Registration sought after **two years** may be permitted only on the order of a **Judicial Magistrate First Class**, thereby introducing stronger judicial scrutiny for highly delayed cases.

Mandatory Verification Mechanism:

- The designated authority must verify the authenticity of the reported birth or death before granting permission for delayed registration.
- The provision seeks to minimise fraudulent claims, forged records and misuse of delayed registration for obtaining legal or financial benefits.

Administrative Significance:

- The amendment promotes timely registration while ensuring greater credibility, transparency and legal certainty in official records.
- Enhanced verification is expected to improve the overall quality of India's civil registration database.

Status of Civil Registration in India:

Progress in Registration Coverage:

- India has witnessed substantial improvement in registration coverage over the past two decades.
- Birth registration increased from nearly **56%** until **2000** to around **86.6%** in **2014**, ultimately reaching **99.1%** in **2024**.
- Death registration similarly increased from approximately **48%** until **2000** to around **72.5%** in **2014**, reaching **99.4%** in **2024**.
- In **2024**, **18 States and Union Territories** achieved **100% birth registration**, while **21 States and Union Territories** achieved **100% death registration**.

Reasons for Improved Registration:

- Greater institutional deliveries supported by government health programmes have significantly improved birth registration.
- Birth certificates have become essential for school admissions, identity documents, welfare schemes, passports and other public services.
- Expansion of health insurance coverage and improved healthcare access have increased institutional reporting of deaths.
- Death certificates are increasingly required for pensions, inheritance, insurance claims, property transfer, banking procedures and other legal transactions.
- Digital governance initiatives and reforms introduced through the **Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023** have improved accessibility and efficiency of civil registration services.

Significance of an Efficient Civil Registration System:

Governance, Public Administration:

- Reliable registration data supports evidence-based policymaking by accurately measuring fertility, mortality, population growth and demographic transitions.
- High-quality civil registration enables governments to evaluate the effectiveness of health, nutrition and social welfare programmes.
- District-level demographic information strengthens decentralised planning and improves local governance.

Public Health, Disaster Management:

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- Timely mortality data helps monitor disease outbreaks, seasonal mortality, environmental risks and public health emergencies.
- Reliable vital statistics strengthen epidemiological surveillance and improve disaster preparedness and health resource allocation.
- Expansion of **Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD)** can further improve disease surveillance and health planning.

Legal Identity, Citizen Services:

- Birth registration establishes legal identity and facilitates access to education, healthcare, banking, passports, voting rights and social protection schemes.
- Death registration provides legal certainty for inheritance, succession, insurance settlement and closure of financial liabilities.

International Commitments:

- Universal birth registration contributes directly to **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9**, which seeks to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.
- Comprehensive civil registration also supports demographic monitoring required for achieving several health and development-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Challenges in the Civil Registration System:

Administrative, Regional Challenges:

- Significant disparities continue in the completeness and quality of registration across States, districts and rural-urban regions.
- Delayed reporting reduces the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of demographic statistics.

Data Quality Issues:

- Many registered deaths are not supported by medically certified causes of death, limiting their usefulness for public health research and policymaking.
- Weak record management, incomplete verification and inconsistent reporting standards continue to affect data quality.

Governance Challenges:

- The absence of a comprehensive mechanism for recording internal migration limits evidence-based planning for urbanisation, welfare delivery and public infrastructure.
- Expansion of digital databases requires stronger safeguards relating to privacy, cybersecurity and responsible use of personal information.

Way Forward:

Strengthening Civil Registration:

- Improve public awareness, simplify registration procedures and strengthen last-mile administrative outreach to ensure universal and timely registration.
- Expand **Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD)** coverage while improving medical reporting standards and regular data audits.
- Bridge regional disparities through capacity building, digital infrastructure development and stronger monitoring of underperforming districts.

- Integrate secure digital governance, inter-departmental data sharing and migration-related information to create a more comprehensive population database while ensuring adequate safeguards for data protection and privacy.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Organisations:

- Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (ORGI).
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Civil Registration System (CRS).
- Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD).

Important Acts:

- Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.
- Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023.
- Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Important Concepts:

- Civil Registration System (CRS).
- Vital Statistics.
- Legal Identity.
- Stillbirth Registration.
- Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD)