
DIGITAL TRANSPARENCY LAWS AND E-GOVERNANCE: FIGHTING CORRUPTION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Sumesh Bhagwati, School of Legal Studies, LNCT Vidhyapeeth University, Indore, MP

ABSTRACT

This research paper investigate into the progressively significant role that digital transparency laws and e-governance mechanisms play in combating corruption and fostering sustainable development, particularly within the Indian context. “In an era marked by rapid technological advancements the integration of legal frameworks with digital innovation has become a crucial strategy for governments seeking to improve governance and public service.”¹ India, as one of the world’s largest democracies, faces persistent challenges related to bureaucratic incapability, corruption, and unequal access to public services. Recognizing these complications, the Government of India has launched a range of legislative and technological action aimed at promoting transparency, enhancing institutional accountability, and promising greater civic engagement.

The paper explores how the coaction between legal mandates like the Right to Information Act and digital platforms like MyGov, DigiLocker, and the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has redesigned the partnership between the state and its citizens. These means empower citizens with access to information, setup real-time supervision of government processes, and reduce the need for mediator that often serve as centre for corrupt practices. At the same time, technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and big data analytics are being tested for their capacity to expose fraud, prevent misuse of digital information management and ensure the purity of public records.

However, the paper also critically appraise the practical challenges faced in applying such reforms issues for example the gap between those who have access to internet and technology and those who do not, cyber fragilities, institutional resilience, and privacy concerns act as significant obstacles to realizing the full capability of digital governance. Through all-inclusive

¹ Shiyovych, S. Ya. (2023). Impact of digital transformation on public services: Experience of the European Union. *Analytical and Comparative Jurisprudence*, (6), 539–543. <https://doi.org/10.24144/2788-6018.2023.06.94>

analysis of existing policies, successful case studies, and identified research gaps, this study offers policy suggestions intended at strengthening digital transparency and ensuring that e-governance becomes a sustainable, inclusive, and transformative force in India's development journey. Ultimately, the paper argues for ethical, tech-driven leadership as a foundation of long-term governance reform.

Research Question:

How effective are digital transparency laws and e-governance initiatives in India in reducing corruption and promoting sustainable development?

Hypothesis:

The implementation of digital transparency laws and e-governance initiatives in India significantly reduces corruption and fosters sustainable development by increasing accountability, efficiency, and citizen participation in governance.

Introduction:

Corruption is a deep-rooted issue in India. It slows down growth, weakens trust in the government, and wastes public money. But now, with digital technology, things are changing. India is becoming more digitally active, and online systems are being used to provide public services. This reduces human interference and chances of bias. People can now access services directly, without middlemen. For example, schemes like Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) send money straight into people's bank accounts, cutting out corruption and delays. Digital land records using satellite images and blockchain make ownership clear and prevent fraud.

"This transformation is driven by the growing need for responsive, citizen-centric governance that leverages digital tools to automate administrative functions, enhance decision-making, and improve the overall quality of public service."² Technology is also helping monitor government work better. Online systems track budgets, delays, and wastage. They generate real-time data and reports, helping decision-makers act fast. People can now see how money is being used and ask questions. This builds pressure on the system to act honestly. More than just making

² Sharmin, S., & Chowdhury, R. H. (2025). Digital Transformation in governance: The impact of e-governance on Public Administration and transparency. *Journal of Computer Science and Technology Studies*, 7(1), 362–379. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jcsts.2025.7.1.27>

things faster, technology is making the government more open, accountable, and fair. It helps meet big global goals like justice, peace, and strong institutions. Tools like blockchain and data analytics are helping make rules clearer, actions traceable, and governance smarter.

Digital reforms are more than just tech upgrades. They are changing how institutions behave when citizens can see everything like reports, contracts, spending. It creates a sense of power. It builds a closer bond between people and the government. This openness stops misuse of power and brings in fairness. In the long run, technology can help create a culture of honesty, trust, and better public service. If used well, it can transform India into a fairer, stronger, and more equal society for all.

Legal framework

Digital Transparency Laws: These are legal rules that require governments and public bodies to disclose information openly in digital formats. They include laws related to open data, digital records, online financial disclosures, and public procurement transparency.

E-Governance: Use of digital tools (websites, portals, mobile apps) to provide government services. It aims to make administration faster, more accessible, and less human-dependent reducing opportunities for bribes or manipulation.

Sustainable Development: Development that meets today's needs without harming future generations. Fighting corruption is key here because resources wasted through corruption could otherwise be used for education, healthcare, infrastructure, and the environment.

How These Concepts Work Together: Digital transparency laws set the ground rules. E-governance tools implement them. Together, they help identify and reduce corruption. For example:

- a. Online RTI (Right to Information) requests make government more answerable.
- b. E-tendering and online auctions stop middlemen and favoritism.
- c. Real-time dashboards and data portals let people track government spending.

This leads to efficient use of funds, better public services, and stronger trust — all essential for

sustainable development.

International Perspective:

Globally, countries have taken steps to link digital governance with anti-corruption:

Estonia: Known for digital government, where almost all public services are online.

South Korea: Its OPEN system (Online Procedures Enhancement for Civil Applications) reduced corruption by making application processes fully visible.

Organization and economic cooperation and development and united nation development program: Encourage digital public infrastructure and legal frameworks for transparency. Conventions like the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) also push for digital reforms as part of anti-corruption strategies.

Indian Perspective

Digital India Mission: “The digital India project provides a huge opportunity to use the latest technology to redefine India the paradigms of service industry. A digitally connected India can help in improving social and economic condition of people living in different geographical area.”³ Digital India made things simple. Services went online less paperwork, fewer middlemen. Payments became direct, so no bribes. Records went digital, easy to track. Citizens got access, officials became accountable. It cut delays, saved resources. Cleaner processes mean smarter growth. That’s how tech helped fight corruption and build sustainable progress.

E-Governance Portals: E-Governance portals changed how we deal with the government. No long queues, no running around. Services are just a click away. Forms, payments, status updates—it's all online quick, clear, and traceable. It made things smoother, reduced corruption, and built trust. A simple shift, but a big step forward.

RTI Online and Public Financial Management System (PFMS): “The Right to Information Act, (RTI Act), 2005, was enacted with the aim to promote transparency and accountability in government. The objective of making information available in the public domain is also to

³ Dr. Giridhari Mohanta, Dr. Sathya Swaroop Debasish, & Dr. Sudipta Kishore Nanda. (2017). Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies, 02(07), 727–731. <https://doi.org/10.21276/sjbms>

ensure that the people are aware of the facts so that they can make informed decisions.”⁴ RTI Online made asking questions easy. No need to visit offices. Just file it from home. It pushed officials to stay transparent. PFMS tracks how public money moves. Every rupee spent is recorded. No hidden flow, no shady deals. Together, they built a system of trust. Clean money, Clear answers, Better governance. These tools help people know, ask, and hold the system accountable. That’s real progress, powered by tech.

International Legal Framework

United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), 2003:

It is the most comprehensive global legal instrument to combat corruption. Articles 9, 10, and 13 stress transparency in public administration, access to information, and use of modern technology. Countries are encouraged to adopt digital tools for procurement, records management, and citizen participation. “It is the first comprehensive global instrument to fight corruption and great hopes are pinned on this convention. The article recalls why corruption is a serious problem and that the various cultural and legal backgrounds make it difficult to come up with a common definition. Hence the States are not equally ready to commit themselves to anti-corruption laws.”⁵

Organization and economic co-operation and development (OECD) Guidelines on Digital Government Strategies: The OECD guidelines are like a smart map for digital governance. They help governments plan better. Go digital, but with purpose. It’s about openness, trust, and easy access. Services should be simple, connected, and people-friendly. No tech for the sake of tech. Real impact matters. These guidelines push nations to use digital tools for transparency, efficiency, and fairness a balanced mix of tech and policy for better public service and accountability.

G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plans: The G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plans push world leaders to act. Not just talk. They focus on clean systems, fair practices, and digital tools. The idea is simple cut the red tape, track the money, and stop the bribes. Countries share methods,

⁴ Jaswani, D. (2023). RTI Act and Financial Institutions Altercation: An Anathema to Progressive Democratic Regime. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 69(4), 940-947. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00195561231166848> (Original work published 2023)

⁵ Weilert, A. K. (2016). United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) – After Ten Years of Being in Force. *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law Online*, 19(1), 216-240. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18757413-00190008>

set goals, and review progress. It's a joint effort. Tech plays a big role. Transparency becomes real. These plans help build trust, both in government and in global partnerships

World Bank and UNDP Policies: The World Bank and UNDP don't just fund projects—they guide change. Their policies focus on fighting corruption with strong systems and clear rules. They promote e-governance, transparency, and citizen participation. Tech tools, audits, and open data are key. The goal is simple—cleaner governments and fair development. No shady deals, just honest work. These global efforts help countries grow with integrity, making sure every resource is used the right way.

Indian Legal Framework

Right to Information Act, 2005: It mandates public authorities to proactively disclose information. Section 4 promotes computerization of records and online access to data. It empowers citizens to demand transparency.

Information Technology Act, 2000: This act provides legal recognition to electronic records, digital signatures, and cyber processes. It lays the foundation for digital governance and data security.

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988: While not directly digital, this law supports the use of electronic evidence in corruption cases and encourages transparency in public administration.

Digital India Policy: This is a policy framework, not a law, but it pushes for digitization of services, paperless governance, and e-participation, helping reduce human discretion and corruption. "The foundation of this initiative is a program of e-literacy, capacity building, and installation of ubiquitous broadband-enabled computer kiosks based on entrepreneurial public-private partnerships. The best example of this is the Akshaya Centres project in Kerala, a potential model for the rest of India and other developing nations."⁶

Public Procurement Policies and Portals:

Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP), and e-

⁶ Prasad, Kiran. (2012). E-Governance Policy for Modernizing Government through Digital Democracy in India. *Journal of Information Policy*. 2. 183-203. 10.5325/jinfopoli.2.2012.183.

Tendering guidelines aim to bring transparency in purchases and tenders.

Data Protection Framework:

Though still evolving, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (replacing earlier drafts) sets out how public authorities must handle citizens' data. It ties in with digital trust and secure e-governance. "Constitutional rights cannot be claimed against private individuals or organizations. They can be claimed only against the state or state-owned enterprises. The Information Technology Act, 2000 contains provisions against cyber contraventions under section 43(a) to (h) and cyber offences under sections 65 to 74. The cyber contraventions comprises of gaining unlawful access and extracting data from computer systems or networks. Such contraventions can lead to civil prosecution in India. The cyber offence includes interfering with computer source code, hacking with intention to damage the system, and breach of privacy and secrecy. These cyber offences lead to criminal prosecution under IT Act. The IT Act also provides penalties against these offences (The Information Technology Act, 2000)."⁷

Supporting Mechanisms

Central Vigilance Commission (CVC): The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) keeps a close watch on corruption in public offices. It's like the integrity guardian. With digital tools, it tracks complaints, monitors tenders, and checks delays. Less paper, more proof. It guides departments to stay fair and alert. No silent bribes, no hidden deals. The CVC builds a culture of honesty. In the digital age, it's not just about catching the corrupt—it's about preventing it smartly.

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Audits: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) plays watchdog in the digital era. It audits government spending with tech tools tracks every rupee and Spots leaks, flags misuse. No more hiding behind paperwork. Digital records make checking faster and sharper. Reports go public, so everyone sees. CAG's role is simple keep things clean, honest, and on record. In today's digital system, it's a key force fighting corruption and boosting financial accountability.

⁷ Singh, Harman. (2018). Data Protection and Privacy Legal-Policy Framework in India: A Comparative Study vis-à-vis China and Australia. 2. 24-29.

Supreme Court Judgments: The Supreme Court has played a big role in shaping digital India. It stood up for privacy and digital rights, like in the Puttaswamy case⁸. It pushed for transparency and accountability in public systems. Digital records, online disclosures, and clean governance got legal support. Corrupt acts faced stricter checks. Through key judgments, the Court made sure that tech is used not to exploit, but to protect people and promote honest governance.

Challenges and suggestions

Lack of digital literacy: just having internet is not enough. People must have knowledge about how to use it properly. They do not have proper education about it lack of which makes them an easy target for scammer. Many government officials also lack digital literacy and they are not well trained to handle new system.

Weak cyber-security: When intention is to govern through digital technology it becomes really important to insure cyber security against external cyber-attack and a small mistake on part of government may lead to big risk. Loosing personal information and data may cause a serious setback not only to government but to citizen also. “National security and economic security are intertwined. India cannot remain in its current global standing without a strong and stable economy. However, elements including trade imbalances, energy insecurity, and financial fraud pose a threat to economic security. India's trade routes, energy sources, and financial institutions must be protected from both physical and cyber threats in order to maintain its economic interests.”⁹

Resistance to change: “Bureaucratic inertia and a lack of training among government employees hinder the full-scale implementation of e-governance initiatives. The adoption of new technologies often faces delays due to the reluctance of officials to shift from traditional methods to digital platforms”¹⁰

Lack of coordination among department: Different departments use different system that doesn't talk to each other. This leads to duplication data gaps and user frustration need

⁸ AIR 2017 supreme court 4161

⁹ Singh, Dr & Dwivedi, Nilanshu. (2024). RECENT TRENDS OF CYBER SECURITY THREATS IN INDIA. 2582-5208. 10.56726/IRJMETs61652.

¹⁰ Khan, Irshad & Haider, Muzammil. (2025). E-governance in India and Its Role in Modern Governance: A Conceptual Overview. Volume 10. a698-a714.

integration and collaboration.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen digital infrastructure, especially in rural areas:** “The widespread implementation of e-governance requires significant investments in digital infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity, hardware, and software. Many regions, especially rural areas, still lack the necessary infrastructure to support widespread e-governance initiatives.”¹¹
2. **Enact comprehensive data protection and cyber security legislation:** India is emerging as a state which provides e-governance to its citizen to provide benefits of different schemes but every change comes with challenges. Since a huge part of people of India do not have access to internet and some of those are not aware of cyber threat therefore Indian people has become an easy target for individual and state sponsored cyber threat.
3. **Promote digital literacy and capacity building among citizens and officials:** To protect citizen of India against international or domestic cyber-attack. It becomes very necessary to make them aware about digital risk. It becomes a duty of governing body to make them aware about online privacy violation and safer use of technology. “In twenty first century, technology place vital role in every sector. In order provide good governance to public, government is taking actions towards digitalization of all public services which boost our economy. If Public are well aware of digital literacy, then only public can effectively benefited out of digitalization”¹²
4. **Foster citizen engagement through transparent and interactive platforms:** Use of digital technology in governance is only possible with the support and active engagement of people. To foster direct engagement of people it is important to provide transparent and interactive platform. “Digital participation platforms provide an accessible way to involve citizens in the design of public infrastructure projects, ensuring better alignment with their

¹¹ Khan, Irshad & Haider, Muzammil. (2025). E-governance in India and Its Role in Modern Governance: A Conceptual Overview. Volume 10. a698-a714.

¹² V, Maruthi & Sarvamangala, R. (2023). a study on digital literacy among rural citizens on digital india. paripex indian journal of research. 122-124. 10.36106/paripex/7107180.

needs”¹³

Conclusion:

Institutionalize transparency through legal mandates, audits, and oversight Legislation addressing digital transparency and e-governance will revolutionise governance in India in responding to corruption, enabling service delivery, and allowing for sustainable development. A tested combination of important laws and policies, i.e. the Right to Information Act, proposed privacy or data protection legislation, anti-corruption legislation, relevant online enabling technologies like e-procurement (for public tendering), real-time e-dashboards (for public sector performance), online grievance and complaint systems (for public service delivery), and appropriate policy instruments, can set an environment seen as accountability enhancing legitimacy and trust Digital governance tools create an opportunity to engage citizens with good information and public insight into government action. All that said, a few longstanding issues just refuse to disappear. Poor internet access, low digital skills, weak cyber security, and slow-moving bureaucracy all of these hold us back. They stop us from truly using what technology can offer.

We must strike this on all fronts. Not one silver bullet solution. Multi-pronged that's the ticket. First Seal the digital divide. Nobody left behind. Broadband should reach everywhere — even remote villages and marginalized areas where cables usually don't go. They need it most. Secondly, frequent training and capacity building of government officials, across all levels would reduce bureaucratic aversion to change, strengthen digital engagement; moreover, bountiful legislation surrounding information communication technology and independent oversight agencies are needed to deal with ethical concerns when monitoring and regulating the use of information. Finally, enhancing public engagement through both e-governance channels and open data will further strengthen democratic accountability.

Fair governance is the foundation the starting point for every tech policy. It should rest on that. Not just shiny tools. Not just fast systems but fairness. Rights need guarding always. And tech It should lift people. All people Make growth inclusive. Make it equal. Make it last. Mapping technology innovation and integrity with public good can create transparent, fair, and resilient

¹³ Klütsch, Jennifer & Nießen, Inga & Böffel, Christian & Schlittmeier, Sabine. (2025). Enhancing citizen acceptance and engagement: The role of appreciation and transparency in negative feedback messages on digital platforms.

institutions ready for the future. A commitment to the future will be fundamental to sustainable development that is inclusive and free of corruption in the long run.