

# E-Governance in South Asian Countries: A Study from Administrative Perspective of SAARC Nations

Prof. (Dr.) Pankaj Tyagi<sup>1</sup>; Mohit Kumar Tyagi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor & Head, Department of Law, M.M.H. College Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Law, M.M.H. College Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author Email: [nitintyagigdc@gmail.com](mailto:nitintyagigdc@gmail.com)

**Abstract**— This paper explores the utilization of technology in the governance systems of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. E-governance offers an avenue to address multifaceted challenges including poverty, gender inequality, terrorism, and corruption prevalent in these nations-governance, characterized by efficiency, transparency, global connectivity, innovation, and digitization, reshapes administrative processes and promotes accountability, rule of law, participation, equity, and ethical decision-making. The paper examines each nation's progress in adopting e-governance. India's Digital India program enhances financial inclusion, social security, digital payments, and education. Sri Lanka employs technology for cyber awareness, health, railways, and passport applications. Nepal centralizes services through the National Government Services Portal. Bangladesh advances governance using digital tools, improving accessibility and efficiency. Bhutan focuses on information sharing policies, and Afghanistan enhances administrative efficiency and citizen engagement. The paper underscores the significance of collaborative efforts to address challenges such as terrorism and political instability. The potential of agreements like the UPI transaction between India and Sri Lanka exemplifies regional cooperation.

As technology transforms governance, the paper emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, cybersecurity, and ethics. The journey towards digitally empowered governance is ongoing, promising positive transformations and improved administration across SAARC nations. By embracing e-governance, these countries can pave the way for progress, prosperity, and unity in the region.

**Keywords:** SAARC, E-governance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC headquartered Kathmandu, Nepal, ) was established in 1985 with the primary objective of promoting peace, open trade, mutual cooperation, and preserving composite cultures in South Asia. SAARC consists of the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. These nations share historical, cultural, and social connections that go back centuries. However, despite the rich cultural heritage, many SAARC nations face challenges such as poverty, corruption, gender inequality, terrorism, and religious discrimination. In this paper, we will focus on how technology is being utilized in the governance systems of these countries. Importance of e-governance in Administration is Efficiency and transparency, Global connectivity and Collaboration, Innovation and adaptability and Digitization streamlines administrative process making them more efficient reducing bureaucratic bottleneck.e-governance of electronic government is the use of information and communication technology to improve transparency and accountability of government services . It didn't work the use of digital technologies, automate government process, provide online access to government services and facilities citizen Engagement.

### 1.1) TYPES OF GOVERNANCE-

1. Participatory or Democratic Governance.
2. Global Governance.
3. Corporate or Business Governance.
4. Environmental Governance or Sustainable Concept of Development
5. Good Governance or Transparent Governance.
6. Electronic Governance

### 1.2) Essential Characteristics of Good Governance- Accountability, Transparency,

Rule of Law, Participation, Responsiveness, Efficiency, Equity, Decisions with Morality and Ethics bases, Independent and Competent Democratic Institution, Sustainable Development.

### 1.3) Definitions of E- Governance

#### World Bank's document on Government and Development "(1992) Defined

Governance as "The governance is considered as a process by which the legitimized. power had been exercise for the Utilization of resources of a country for development but not growth."

#### Definition of Governance by Wold Bank

"Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of country's economic and social resources for development."

#### Organization of American State defined e- governance-

"Electronic government (or e-government) is the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to government functions and process with the purpose of increasing efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation."

#### Cambridge University defined e-governance as--1

"The use of the Internet by Government to make it possible for people to use government services and be involved in making decision."

#### World Bank Defined e governance as E- Governance2

1 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/e-governance>

2 World bank" Electronic Government, or E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by Government agencies in order to better manage. relationship with citizens business and other arms of Government."

### I.) India

India, the most developed country in South Asia, has made significant strides in e-governance and governance through its Digital India program. The country has effectively used technology to eliminate hunger, provide financial inclusion by opening bank accounts<sup>1</sup> for 50 crore people, and offer online monitoring of housing schemes for 5 crore beneficiaries. Additionally, social security benefits like pensions, life insurance, health insurance, and accident insurance are provided to citizens through Aadhaar integration. India leads in real-time digital payments, with around 85% of its population using the internet to access government services. Technology has also revolutionized education with online classes and digital libraries.

**Nation e-Governance Plan 2006 :** This plan was adopted to make Indian Administration corruption free, transparent, efficient, and responsive.

There were two main aspect of this plan- Firstly central government initiative as mission mode project (MMP).

(i) e-office

(ii) Immigration, visa, and foreign registration & tracking

(IVRFT).

**Secondly :** State mission mode project :

<sup>1</sup> Linking Aadhaar With PDS Has Left Some of India's Most Marginalized Hungry. (n.d.). The Wire.

<https://thewire.in/rights/aadhaar-welfare-scheme-jharkhand>

In-Text Citation: (Linking Aadhaar With PDS Has Left Some of India's Most marginalized Hungry, n.d.)

[www.ijsssr.com](http://www.ijsssr.com)

1. Use of technology in advancement in municipalities.
2. Crime & Criminal tracking networking system made for efficient policing for citizens.
3. Perfect Public distribution system.
4. Improving Health System.
5. e-Panchayat
6. e-District

### **Thirdly Integrated MMPs e-biz, e-court, e-procurement, India Portal.**

The Digital India program proved to be the most dangerous weapon against corruption in India's history<sup>2</sup>. While on the one hand, the poor got their rights, on the other hand, the loot in the name of the poor was stopped and the government reached your doorstep with the help of no middleman. If we look at some of the reforms that have come through Digital India in India, the following points come to the fore.

(i) Today, about 50 crore people are taking advantage of mainstream and government services by opening Jan Dhan bank accounts. Whether to take a loan from the government or profit is important in both. In India Mudra Loan Startup Standup etc schemes are prime examples of this.

(ii) Many services for the welfare of women such as Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, exemption for women for business, distribution of sanitary pads, education, health, and treatment to women in rural areas have been facilitated by the e-governance program.

(iii) UPI (Unified Payment Interfor) has achieved record breaking success and today 46% of the world's real time digital payments take place in India. India is today the first in the world in digital payment systems<sup>3</sup>.

(iv) Today, villages in India have more internet connections than cities.

(v) Today about 85% people in India are using the Internet. More than 98% people have mobile phones and more than four lakh villages have been connected through fiber connection.

(vi) A new era of major reforms has begun in the judiciary, the principle of speedy justice has been promoted through e-court, e-committee, e-court fee payment system.

(vii) 10 crore people (ix) Many mobile applications, websites, etc. With the availability of government services on the portals, people have saved both time and money.

have got the opportunity of direct consultation with doctors through the e-Sanjivani mobile app.

## **II.) Sri Lanka**

Population of Sri Lanka is near about 22 million, there are several culture and languages exist together, as far as area of Sri Lanka is Concerned it is 656102 square km ; Currency is Sri Lankan rupee and capital is Colombo. Sri Lanka is Located in southern part of India and closely tied culturally with India; Sri Lanka faced an economic crisis recently. E government for electronic refers to the use of digital technologies especially the Internet and information communication technology and streamline various aspect of government public administration and service delivery place crucial role in modernizing government operations and improving the interaction between government and citizen police the importance of government can be understood from several just practice but it has made progress through administrative reforms and digitization. The government introduced UPI payment, inspired by India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Full Citation: Dani, R. (2022, September 24). Digital India is a global success story. Times of India Blog. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/thedanispst/digital-india-is-a-global-success-story/>

In-Text Citation: (Dani, 2022)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371350699\\_UPI-India's\\_Masterstroke\\_for\\_Digital\\_Payments](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371350699_UPI-India's_Masterstroke_for_Digital_Payments).

<sup>4</sup> Upi: India's UPI to now work in one more country - Times of India. (n.d.). The Times of India. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/gadgets-news/indias-upi-to-now-work-in-one-more-country/articleshow/102018889.cms>

In-Text Citation: (Upi: India's UPI to Now Work in One More Country - Times of India, n.d.)

**Online government services in Sri Lanka**<sup>5</sup> Passport application, banking system, Cyber security, Cyber awareness, e-commerce, online job portal, online health information, online municipality services, online electricity bill payment system. **Mobile application**<sup>6</sup> related to government services in Sri Lanka **Food Gate**, (Food price Information) **ICTA** (Railway information.), **CB Care** (Railway reservation), **DMT** (Sri Lanka vehicle information.) **Heritage** (UNESCO sites) **24 Emergency Directory** etc. **Government websites and portal** Department of export Agriculture, Sri Lanka electricity, Department of Agriculture website, Research and training institute Sri Lanka National water supply and, electricity Department, open data portal Sri Lanka.

**Legislation to regulate issues relating to e-Governance**<sup>7</sup> The Computer crime Act No. 24 of 2007, (to prevent a note price access to computer to prevent password identity theft etc.) Electronic Transaction Act No. 19 of 2006,( to protect electronic transactions, to protect online system, to provide safety and security to all digital services.), The Intellectual Property Act No. 30 of 2006,(To protect right relating to copyright trademark patents and research design.), The Electronic transaction Act No. 19 of 2006, The Electronic transaction act number 19 of 2006(to protect people of Sri Lanka credit card debit card transactions and provide penalties for Cyber-criminal), The Personal data protection act number 9 of 2022. Sri Lanka is signatory of Budapest convention on cybercrime; it is an international treaty which is for cooperation in cyber-criminal matters internationally by individual country.

### III.) Nepal

Nepal, with shared borders with Indian states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, has a close cultural connection with India. Nepal has implemented information technology in various administrative functions, making services like school fee payments, air ticket booking, municipal services, electricity, water, and income tax accessible through online platforms. Eagle governance in Nepal to reform in Administrative work for example :to increase efficiency in administrative works, cost saving, top improved administrative activity to enhance data storage and accessibility, healthcare advancement, Reduce Administrative burden, Better customer experience and faster decisions,

#### National Government Services Portal<sup>8</sup>

Online Services Contact the cyber beuru Cyber bureau, (to inform cyber-crime) email,( Cyber Complaint) visit to website <http://nepalpolice.gov.in>, Helpline Number- 014219 244

Nepal.gov.np is the official portal of government of Nepal, ministry of foreign affairs Nepal, National data portal Nepal immigration, Nepal trade information portal, <https://nepaltradeportal.gov.np> National Information Technology Center (NIC)

#### Mobile applications for government services in Bhutan

Nagarik app, Nepal passport, legal aid, Nepal law app

#### Legislation to regulate issues related with e-governance in Nepal.

The Radio Act, 1967, The communication corporation Act, 1972, The National Broadcasting Act 1993, The tele Communication Act 1997, The Electronic Transaction Act 2008, The Foreign Investment Technology and Transparent 1992, The Information Technology Rules,

### IV.) Bangladesh

Bangladesh was the part of India until 1947, Bangladesh retains its cultural ties and language, lifestyle with India. Bangladesh has made progress in adopting information technology for governance and has a better economy compared to Pakistan. However, challenges in women's empowerment and education persist. Bangladesh is using information and technology in government governance, or digital governance, has become increasingly important in modern society policy, it involves the integration of digital tools information system and communication technology to enhance the efficiency transparency and Effectiveness of

<sup>5</sup> Sri Lanka Government official electronic information and services (eservice's) delivery portal. (n.d.). Sri Lanka Government Official Electronic Information and Services (eservice's) Delivery Portal. <https://www.gov.lk/>

In-Text Citation: (Sri Lanka Government Official Electronic Information and Services (eservice's) Delivery Portal, n.d.)

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> Information and Communication Technology Agency | ICTA. (2015, November 9). [ශ්‍රී ලංකා තොරතුරු හා සන්නිවේදන තාක්ෂණ නියෝජිතායතනය - ICTA. https://www.icta.lk/](https://www.icta.lk/)

In-Text Citation: (Information and Communication Technology Agency | ICTA, 2015)

<sup>8</sup> *Nepal Government National Portal* | नेपाल सरकारको आधिकारिक पोर्टल | Nepal. (n.d.). Nepal Government National Portal | नेपाल सरकारको आधिकारिक पोर्टल | Nepal. <https://nepal.gov.np/>

In-Text Citation: (*Nepal Government National Portal* | नेपाल सरकारको आधिकारिक पोर्टल | Nepal, n.d.)

government operations and service delivery policy here are some key ways in which information and technologies are used in government in Bangladesh. Governance has a broad scope that encompasses various aspects of government citizen interaction and internal process. Its advantages include improved efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and citizen engagement, which collectively contribute to the modernization and effectiveness of government services and operations.

### **Online website and portals relating to government services in Bangladesh**

Mobile applications relating to government services in Bangladesh<sup>9</sup>

Legislation to regulate information technology e-governance Cyber-crime related issues in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act 2000, The Bangladesh information and communication technology (ICT) Act 2006, The Penal Code 1860 of Bangladesh,

Judicial responses to information technology e-Governance cyber-crime etc. in Bangladesh

### **V.) Bhutan**

Bhutan, located in northeastern India, shares a deep cultural connection. Though specific information on Bhutan's e-governance initiatives is missing, the country is admired for its tourism, power generation, and eco-friendly practices.

**Online government services of Bhutan :** No particular law related to e-governance and cyber-crime but The Royal Government of Bhutan has framed policy related to cyber-crime.

### **Legislation to regulate information technology e-governance cyber-crime etc. in Bhutan.**

a) The Information and communication technology policy and strategy in 2009

b) The Policy guidelines on Information sharing of Bhutan 2016

c) Information and media policy

### **Websites and web Portal for Government services in Bhutan**

You can apply for license and permissions related passport census housing audit clearance online payment transport vehicle services rural timer permit marriage certificate. The royal Bhutan police has separate cyber-crime unit, Interpol National Central bureau website portal, citizen service portal royal government of Bhutan,

Ministry of finance The Royal Government of Bhutan, Ministry of foreign affairs and external trade, Ministry of health, Ministry of education, E-library website policy, Government to citizen business government to citizen The Royal Government of Bhutan

**Mobile application GTPay, 22c Bhutan health, MRSTA. Bhutan made, BT call signature, Bdbl- epay, Bhutan app for information of National, Bhutan all in one social app.**

### **VI.) Afghanistan<sup>10</sup>**

Afghanistan shares borders with Pakistan and Jammu & Kashmir and has historical ties to India. The country faces political instability and lack of democracy, and challenges due to the Taliban's presence. The use of technology in governance is essential to address issues such as corruption and women's rights. drug trafficking, Afghanistan is party to The Convention on Judicial International Corporation within Europe union and the council of Europe.

### **Online government facilities of Afghanistan government**

National online project Afghanistan government agency, Ministry of foreign affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of defence, Ministry of borders and tribal affairs, Ministry of Education online services providing authority.

### **Websites and government services in Bhutan**

Mobile applications for government services, WhatsApp Facebook telegram etc. are banned. Mpesa application is a mobile money system.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/>. (n.d.). <http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/>

In-Text Citation: (<http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/>, n.d.)

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. (n.d.). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. <https://mfa.gov.af/en/home-2/>

### Legislation relating to information technology and e-Governance

The Cyber-crime code of Afghanistan 2017 not enforced yet due some internal issues. The Convention on Judicial International Corporation within Europe union and the council of Europe. Provisions under the conventions are Article 155 reservation of specific data, Article 156 expedite Reservation of traffic Data, Mutual assistant regarding the real time collection of data Article 158 interceptions of store data article 159.

### VII. Pakistan

Administration of Pakistani government is divided into following divisions: Government of Gilgit Baltistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Government of Baluchistan, Government of Khyber Pakhtunva, Government of Punjab, Government of Sindh.

#### Online Services in Pakistan-<sup>11</sup>

Application for passport, Application for Visa online, Immigration related matters (application for citizenship dual citizenship policy), Family and children registration, all services of Pakistan railways like online ticket booking train times train schedule etc., Emergency services specially in cases of disaster., Judicial services like payment of court fees cause list online judgement publication etc. New Taxpayer registration digital document verification investment facilities e-billing consumer grievance redressal mechanism electric supply information stock market information etc.

**Mobile applications for government services in Pakistan-** Pm citizen portal, mobile application passport fees, constitution mobile app, **Website send portals in Pakistan for government services** Pakistani citizen portal, motor registration checker device verification system, government job Pakistan,

#### Legislation relating to e-Governance and information technology in Pakistan.

Electronic transactions ordinance 2002, (to regulate e-commerce, cyber-crime, digital signatures and other offence related to information technology, Prevention of electronic crime ), Cyber-crime ordinance 2007, (to prevent and protect type terrorism cyber stocking data that identity have privacy etc.) The Prevention of electronic climate 2016, (unlock full data access hacking protection for electronic forgery). Pakistan Penal code, Pakistan Evidence Act, Pakistan Criminal Procedure Code etc.

### VIII. Maldives

Maldives is a very small country and there is a very little work on legislation done in the field of Information technology so far. Maximum government website is individually providing services to them. **Website** of President, Ministry of foreign affairs, Ministry of higher education, Ministry of tourism, Ministry of food, Mobile application for transactions are bill mobile banking go prime etc. Digitization in governance is reshaping the relationship between governments and citizens, fostering transparency, efficiency, and engagement. While challenges persist, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. As governments continue to embrace digital transformation, they must prioritize inclusivity, cyber security, and ethical considerations. The journey towards a digitally empowered governance model is a dynamic and ongoing process that has the potential to reshape societies for better administration.

## II. CONCLUSION

E-Governance has shown immense potential in improving administrative efficiency and addressing various challenges faced by SAARC nations. By leveraging technology effectively, these countries can overcome poverty, gender discrimination, corruption, and other socio-economic issues. It is crucial for each country to prioritize the adoption of technology in governance to usher in a new era of progress and prosperity for the people of South Asia. India has taken significant steps to combat with poverty, Corruption, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment etc. with help of information technology. Digital India Program is very successful program today PDS (Public Distribution System). Use of information technology to work with transparency, eradicate corruption, poverty and hunger. It helps a lot. India has grown rapidly in South Asia. Hunger is about to be completely eradicated and the work of eradicating poverty is also going on at a fast pace. Women education, child development, social welfare, better health services, and corruption in government services have been released. India is moving fast on the path to development. The Indian Economy has become the fifth largest economy. Information technology is also used by other SAARC countries as well, they have provided many facilities. But there's still much work to do. in Bangladesh, Nepal, Smugglers<sup>12</sup> from countries like

<sup>11</sup> <https://pakistan.gov.pk/>

<sup>12</sup> *Mann Ki Baat | India created record by destroying 10 lakh kg of drugs: PM Modi.* (2023, July 30). Mann Ki Baat | India Created Record by Destroying 10 Lakh Kg of Drugs: PM Modi - the Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/mann-ki-baat-india-has-destroyed-10-lakh-kgs-of-drugs/article67138076.ece>

In-Text Citation: (*Mann Ki Baat | India Created Record by Destroying 10 Lakh Kg of Drugs: PM Modi, 2023*)

Afghanistan<sup>13</sup> often carry out their activities even today. Illegal arms, drugs, fake currency,<sup>14</sup> children and women trafficking<sup>15</sup> by sea or land in India continues to meet. Terrorism and smuggling from Pakistan are also banned in India. Sri Lanka is facing a severe economic crisis. The economic situation in Bhutan is also normal Therefore, I suggest that all these South Asian countries work together with mutual brotherhood. The overall development of the region is possible. Agreement for Transaction by UPI between India and Sri Lanka. Talks are on with other countries as well. Therefore, all SAARC countries should come together. Problems need to be solved.

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<sup>13</sup> *Afghan Nationals With Drugs Worth Rs 1,200 Crore Arrested In Delhi: Cops.* (2022, September 6). NDTV.com. <https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/2-afghan-nationals-with-drugs-worth-rs-1-200-crore-arrested-in-delhi-cops-3321300>

In-Text Citation: (2 Afghan Nationals With Drugs Worth Rs 1,200 Crore Arrested in Delhi: Cops, 2022)

<sup>14</sup> *Bihar: Wanted smuggler supplying counterfeit currency in India arrested.* Organiser. <https://organiser.org/2023/08/01/187010/bharat/bihar-wanted-smuggler-supplying-counterfeit-currency-in-india-arrested/>

In-Text Citation: (DESK, 2023)

<sup>15</sup> *Human rights in Afghanistan.* (n.d.). Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

In-Text Citation: (*Human Rights in Afghanistan*, n.d.)