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Digital Transformation of Panchayati Raj Institutions

Published On: 07-04-2026



The Government of India has highlighted significant progress in strengthening digital governance at the grassroots level through platforms like eGramSwaraj and the AI-enabled SabhaSaar tool, aimed at improving transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

eGramSwaraj Platform: Enhancing Financial Transparency

The eGramSwaraj portal serves as an integrated digital solution for Panchayats, enabling online planning, budgeting, accounting, and fund tracking. With coverage extending to nearly all 2.6 lakh Panchayats across India, the platform has facilitated transactions worth over ₹3 lakh crore, ensuring real-time monitoring of public funds. This initiative reduces leakages, strengthens audit mechanisms, and aligns with the broader objectives of the Digital India Programme and e-Governance reforms.

SabhaSaar: AI for Participatory Democracy

The introduction of SabhaSaar, an AI-powered voice-to-text application, marks a major step towards inclusive governance. It enables automatic generation of Gram Sabha meeting minutes, attendance records, and resolutions. With support expanded to 23 Indian languages, the tool ensures greater accessibility and encourages active participation of rural citizens, thereby strengthening the concept of direct democracy at the village level.

Significance for Governance and Development

These initiatives play a crucial role in deepening grassroots democracy by empowering Panchayats with digital tools. They enhance transparency in fund utilization, improve administrative efficiency, and support the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, they foster citizen engagement and promote accountability in rural governance.

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Challenges and Concerns

Despite these advancements, several challenges persist, including the digital divide in rural areas, limited digital literacy among Panchayat officials, and concerns related to cybersecurity and data protection. Additionally, the incomplete devolution of powers to Panchayats, particularly regarding the 3Fs (Funds, Functions, and Functionaries), continues to hinder effective decentralization.

Way Forward

To maximize the impact of these initiatives, there is a need to expand rural internet connectivity under projects like BharatNet, enhance digital training for local officials, and further improve AI tools to support regional dialects. Strengthening data protection frameworks and ensuring full devolution of powers to PRIs will be essential for achieving holistic rural governance.

Key Constitutional and Static Facts

The Panchayati Raj system was granted constitutional status through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, incorporated under Part IX (Articles 243–243O) of the Constitution. The Gram Sabha (Article 243A) forms the foundation of direct democracy in rural India. Additionally, initiatives like the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project and Public Financial Management System (PFMS) complement digital governance by enabling efficient fund tracking and service delivery.