Chapter VII
E–Governance:
Tool for E–Democracy and Citizen Empowerment in the Horizon of Information Technology Era in Developing Society in India, Nepal and Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The chapter introduces information communication technology and its importance with respect to digital divide. Digital divides is the connotation of three terms global divide, social divide, democratic divide. Further, it discusses the role of United Nations and United Nation's Millennium Development Goals for bridging digital divide amongst the under develop and developing nations. It also relates e-democracy with citizen empowerment. Some projects related to e-governance in developing society in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh have been discussed. The Library and Information Centres have been given utmost priority to maintain the e-governance projects so that these projects can better be maintained with proper information and become more citizen-centric.

INTRODUCTION

Science and technology have undergone revolutionary changes in past century. Only a few decades ago, all telecommunications services were delivered over copper wires. More recently, the world has witnessed the exponential growth of mobile telephony and the widespread com-

mercial deployment of the Internet. Today, the dazzling array of new technologies, services and applications has led to a digital age of information communications technology (ICT) in which access has become a key component of peoples' lives. These changes hold so much promise. The convergence of technologies, its rapid rate of change and its importance in the development of the economic, social, financial and educational sectors, is opening new opportunities from e-commerce & e-governance to Tele-education and Tele-medicine.

The alarming rate of development of ICT the world is being changed into information oriented. The country which is rich in information is regarded as rich in every aspect. Information communication technologies (ICT) can eliminate many of the obstacles of time and space and help overcome gaps in regional development. However the arrangement of advantages brought by ICT is uneven, and this is what gives rise to the phenomenon of a "digital divide".

The concept of the digital divide grows more complex as the phrase becomes shorthand for every conceivable disparity relating to online access. The multi-dimensionality of the concept has been framed by Norris (2000) into three distinct aspects:

a. **Global divide:** Divergence of Internet access between industrialized and developing countries;
b. **Social divide:** Gap between information rich and information poor in each nation; and,
c. **Democratic divide:** Difference between those who do and those who do not use the new technologies to further political participation (Norris, 2000).

The worry internationally is that a widening digital divide between countries could lead to a widening economic divide. In fact, the economic considerations driving the concerns about the digital divide underlie most of the concerns within a country as well as between countries. As economists have observed, however, we are in such early stages of the communications revolution that evidence on the question of the economic impact of differences in connectivity worldwide is very inconclusive.

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION, WSIS AND UNITED NATIONS AND E-DEMOCRACY

International Telecommunication Union is the only international organization whose primary focus is communications. Telecommunication operators make up ITU's core constituency. While today's economy has witnessed a boom in Internet start-up companies—many of which have joined ITU—traditional telecommunication operators remain the world's most important Internet backbone providers and Internet Service Providers. ITU has a unique opportunity to work with these key Internet players. Moreover, one of the main purposes of ITU is to promote the extension of the benefits of the new ICTs to all the world's inhabitants. ITU is mandated to foster and offer technical assistance to developing countries and to promote the mobilisation of the material, human and financial resources needed to implement these goals. Some of the countries that have become today's leading global telecommunications players—Malaysia, Korea and Singapore—were beneficiaries of ITU technical co-operation programmes. ITU's mandate further includes promoting international co-operation and partnerships between government Members and the growing number of private sector members who have joined ITU. ITU Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries (EC-DC) programme, is a shining example of the benefits such partnerships bring to the world's poorest economies. ITU has been playing a leadership role in bridging the

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