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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Deepening Global Corruption — A Mirror for India's Governance Stagnation

 **THE HINDU**

25 March 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**POLITY****GS PAPERS****GS2****GS4****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator •

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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 The Hindu

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GS2

GS4

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MAINS RELEVANCE:

GS Paper 2

GS Paper 4



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India scores 39 on the CPI despite economic growth and digital governance. Is corruption a governance failure or a systemic feature of India's political economy?"

WHY IN NEWS

Transparency International released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025, in which India ranked 91st out of 182 countries with a score of 39/100 — a marginal improvement from 96th rank in 2024, but still below the global average of 42.

The Editorial Argument

The Hindu argues that India's slight improvement in the CPI masks a deeper stagnation. While Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and e-governance have reduced petty "middleman" corruption in welfare delivery, the structural drivers of corruption — opaque political financing, weak whistleblower protections, and compromised institutional independence — remain largely unaddressed.

The Global Picture

The CPI 2025 presents a troubling global landscape:

- **Global average: 42/100** — the lowest in over a decade
- Most countries score **below 50**, indicating pervasive corruption
- The link between **weakening democratic oversight** and **rising corruption** is now empirically established
- Countries with reduced civil liberties and compromised institutions show worsening governance outcomes

India's Paradox

India's score of 39 puts it **below the global average** despite being the world's 5th largest economy. The editorial highlights several contradictions:

AREA	PROGRESS	PERSISTENT GAP
Welfare delivery	DBT, Aadhaar-linked transfers reduced leakage	Political financing remains opaque
E-governance	DigiLocker, UMANG, UPI reduced interface corruption	Whistleblower protection inadequate
Economic growth	6.5-7% GDP growth	Estimated corruption cost: 0.5% of GDP directly, 1-1.5% with indirect effects
Institutional framework	Lokpal appointed in 2019	CVC and CBI perceived as lacking operational independence

Political Financing — The Elephant in the Room

The editorial argues that the **electoral bond scheme** (struck down by the Supreme Court in February 2024) exposed the scale of anonymous corporate donations to political parties. While the scheme was scrapped, no robust replacement ensuring transparency has been implemented. India spends an estimated **\$8-10 billion per general election** — much of it unaccounted.

Whistleblower Protection

The **Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014** has never been operationalised with full rules. Meanwhile, RTI activists and corruption whistleblowers continue to face threats — at least **100 RTI activists have been killed** since 2005 (according to advocacy groups). The CPI report specifically flagged India as “dangerous for journalists reporting on corruption.”

What India Can Learn

The editorial recommends:

- 1 **Full implementation of Whistleblowers Protection Act** with an independent protection mechanism
- 2 **State funding of elections** (as recommended by the Indrajit Gupta Committee, 1998)
- 3 **Strengthening CVC operational independence** through fixed tenure and removal protections
- 4 **Real-time disclosure of political donations** above a threshold
- 5 **Expanding DPI model** — direct benefit transfers reduced leakage from 30%+ to under 5% in some schemes; this approach should extend to procurement and licensing

Constitutional and Institutional Framework

INSTITUTION	ROLE	ISSUE
CVC	Apex vigilance institution	Advisory, not binding powers
CBI	Premier investigation agency	Requires state consent (General Consent) for investigation
Lokpal	Ombudsman for public servants	Established 2019; limited prosecutions so far
CAG	Audit of government expenditure	Reports often delayed; follow-up weak
RTI Act, 2005	Citizen access to government information	Amendments in 2019 weakened CIC independence

UPSC RELEVANCE

CPI 2025 (India rank 91, score 39), Transparency International (HQ: Berlin, est. 1993), CVC, Lokpal, RTI Act 2005, Whistleblowers Protection Act 2014

Anti-corruption institutions and their effectiveness; political financing transparency; role of RTI and whistleblower protection

Ethics in governance; conflict of interest; public service integrity

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

CPI 2025:

India rank: 91/182 (score: 39/100)

Previous rank (2024): 96 (score: 38)

Global average: 42 (lowest in decade)

Top 3: Denmark, Finland, New Zealand

Published by: Transparency International (HQ: Berlin, founded 1993)

Scale: 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)

INDIA'S ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK:

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (amended 2018)

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 (Lokpal appointed 2019)

CVC: Central Vigilance Commission (statutory since 2003)

Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014

RTI Act, 2005

PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), 2002

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Electoral Bond Scheme: struck down by SC in February 2024

Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998): recommended state funding of elections

UNCAC: UN Convention Against Corruption (India ratified in 2011)

Estimated corruption cost: 0.5-1.5% of GDP

Over 90% of journalist killings in countries with CPI below 50

Sources: [The Hindu](#), [Transparency International](#)

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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