"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.



MAINS MASTERY 2026 · GS PAPER II · QUESTION 16 · STUDENT EDITION

Transparency, Accountability and Stakeholder Trust

THE QUESTION, AS SET IN UPSC CSE MAINS 2026

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Directive: Comment | 15 marks | 250 words

Governance: transparency, accountability and participatory governance

1 **PYQ Deep Decode**
Demand, hidden demand, structure, form

2 **PYQ Intelligence**
2014 to 2026: transparency, participation and trust

3 **Additional information**
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4 **Pitfalls and variations**
False distinctions, corrections and changed directives

5 **The model answer**
Three parts, headed points, a comparison and a verdict

6 **Other ways to write it**
Six alternative outlines and when each works

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8 **Write it yourself**
A seven-point self-check

Guranchal Ma'am, Founder, UPSC Gurus · upscgurus.in

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

1 PYQ Deep Decode

Read the statement as a proposition to be judged, not an assertion to be reproduced. The answer must distinguish corruption control from trust-building, show how the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance create legitimate policy processes, and finally test whether the two objectives can actually be separated.

1.1 The demand

The question asks whether **transparency and accountability in governance should be understood less as instruments for controlling corruption and more as means of creating stakeholder trust** in the policy process through the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance. **"Comment"** requires judging this proposed distinction, examining both purposes and explaining their relationship rather than accepting the statement's contrast uncritically. The answer must therefore show **what transparency and accountability do against corruption**, explain **how they make policy processes trustworthy**, and reach a reasoned verdict on whether these purposes are competing or complementary.

Words in the question	What they ask you to do	What goes wrong if you miss them
Comment	Evaluate the proposition, acknowledge what it rightly emphasises, identify its false distinction, and give a reasoned judgment.	Agreeing with the quotation completely, or merely listing governance initiatives without assessing the claim.
Transparency and accountability	Distinguish openness of information and decisions from the obligation to explain, justify and face consequences for official actions.	Using the terms interchangeably or assuming that information disclosure automatically produces accountability.
not about controlling corruption but about	Test the contrast itself. Explain both the anti-corruption and the trust-building functions, then determine whether they can be separated.	Accepting the statement's exclusion of corruption control as a fact.
trust of stakeholders	Examine how citizens, beneficiaries, communities, civil society and other affected interests develop confidence in the fairness, integrity and responsiveness of decisions.	Equating trust with publicity, approval of government, or favourable service-delivery statistics.
policy process	Look beyond implementation to agenda-setting, consultation, formulation, allocation, execution, monitoring and correction.	Restricting the answer to preventing bribery in government offices.
Rule of Law	Examine the credibility of institutions through lawful, non-arbitrary, equal and reviewable exercise of public power.	Reducing the Rule of Law to punishment of corrupt officials.
Participatory Governance	Examine stakeholder voice, inclusive deliberation, access to information, reasoned responses and influence over policy.	Equating participation with elections, attendance at meetings, or one-way public announcements.

THE DEMAND IN ONE LINE

Judge whether transparency and accountability principally prevent corruption or build confidence in policy-making, explain the Rule of Law and participation as mechanisms of trust, and show why credible corruption control is indispensable to that trust.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

1.2 The hidden demand

Is controlling corruption separate from building public trust, or is credible corruption control itself an essential foundation of that trust? This is the question behind the quotation. The statement correctly challenges a narrow understanding in which transparency means exposing scams and accountability means punishing officials. Yet its expression **"not about ... but about"** creates a false separation. Stakeholders cannot reasonably trust a consultative process if contracts are manipulated, benefits are diverted or powerful interests receive preferential treatment. Equally, the absence of detected corruption does not automatically create trust when decisions remain opaque, exclusionary or unresponsive. A mature answer therefore treats **integrity, legality, meaningful voice and corrective action as connected conditions of trustworthy governance**, while preserving the distinction between each.

Use each instrument for the specific governance problem it addresses. The important step is to show how a safeguard against misuse of power also improves the credibility of the policy process.

Instrument	What it makes visible or answerable	Why stakeholders may trust it
RTI Act, 2005, Section 4	Public authorities' functions, decision procedures, budgets, relevant records and proactive disclosures, subject to the Act.	People can scrutinise the grounds of decisions instead of relying only on official assurances.
Independent audit and legislative oversight	The use of public resources, procedural compliance, performance and executive explanations.	Public power is subject to checks beyond the department exercising it.
Gram Sabha social audit	Works, muster rolls, expenditure, records and local complaints. Section 20 and Schedule I of the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 provide a contemporary statutory example.	Beneficiaries can question records, expose irregularities and demand follow-up rather than merely receiving published data.
CPGRAMS and reasoned redressal	Public complaints, departmental responses, appeals and the quality of corrective action.	People can see whether the administration listens when policy or service delivery fails.

WEAK

Transparency prevents corruption, while participatory governance creates trust. Therefore both are necessary for good governance.

STRONG

Under the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, public disclosure of work records and Gram Sabha social audits operate together: disclosure exposes possible diversion, while community scrutiny, explanations and corrective action make expenditure decisions more credible. **Corruption control becomes one mechanism through which institutional trust is earned.**

1.3 The structure

The question contrasts **two purposes** of transparency and accountability. Discuss them in the order in which they appear: corruption control first, stakeholder trust through the Rule of Law and participation second. The hidden demand becomes a **short third part** reconciling the two. The shares below refer to the body between introduction and conclusion. They are a teaching guide, not a UPSC rule.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Introduction	1. Controlling corruption about three-tenths	2. Creating stakeholder trust about half	3. Mutually reinforcing about one-fifth	Conclusion

Part 1 **Transparency and accountability in controlling corruption** about three-tenths

Prevent arbitrary power	RTI Section 4; published decision criteria, procurement records and reasons.
Establish answerability	CAG audit under Articles 148 to 151; legislative scrutiny; public explanation.
Deter and correct	Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988; Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013; investigations, lawful sanctions and remedial action.
Show the limit	Disclosure without investigation, enforcement or correction can reveal wrongdoing without preventing its recurrence.

Part 2 **Stakeholder trust through the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance** about half

Trust in process	Explain policy objectives, evidence, alternatives, trade-offs and decisions before and after consultation.
Rule of Law	Article 14, non-arbitrariness and equal treatment; lawful procedures; independent judicial review and effective remedies.
Stakeholder voice	Article 243A Gram Sabha; participatory planning; social audits; accessible public consultation.
Responsive legitimacy	CPGRAMS; Citizens' Charters; feedback incorporated or rejected with reasons; publicly reported corrective action.

Part 3 **Corruption control and trust as mutually reinforcing objectives** about one-fifth

Why integrity matters	Citizens cannot trust consultation or policy neutrality when bribery, favouritism or capture distort decisions.
Why integrity is insufficient	A procedurally lawful, corruption-free decision may still exclude affected people or fail to address legitimate concerns.
Integrated judgment	Disclosure + answerability + participation + enforcement + reasoned correction = more trustworthy governance.

1.4 How to present it

The directive **"Comment"** requires an evaluative answer, not a catalogue of institutions. Use **three numbered, headed parts** to follow the proposition and a **compact two-column comparison in Part 2** to distinguish the Rule of Law from Participatory Governance. Short, evidence-linked points establish the anti-corruption function; a concluding judgment rejects the false opposition. The ideal presentation makes the reader see both the **difference** between the two purposes and their **dependence** on each other.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Form	Fit here	Reason
Three headed parts, focused points, small comparison table	**Best**	Preserves the question's order; makes the Rule of Law and participation distinct; leaves space for a qualified verdict.
Function, instrument, outcome matrix	Good	Shows causal mechanisms clearly, but a large table can overwhelm a 250-word answer.
RTI, CAG, Lokpal, CPGRAMS as a list	Weak	Names institutions without showing how their functions create trust or counter corruption.
General essay on good governance	Weak	May contain valid principles while avoiding the statement's central distinction.

1.5 The introduction and the conclusion

The introduction serves the whole question. It places transparency and accountability within both dimensions of democratic governance: constraining the misuse of public power and making policy decisions lawful, open to scrutiny, participatory and worthy of stakeholder confidence. It does not begin with a dictionary definition.

The conclusion settles the claim. It agrees that trust-building is broader than exposing corruption, but rejects the exclusion of corruption control. The final judgment is that citizens trust governance when **integrity is protected, their voice matters, decisions follow law and institutions correct failures**.

2 PYQ Intelligence 2014 to 2026

Why governance transparency and public trust were especially relevant before the 2026 examination, how earlier UPSC questions developed the necessary skills, and what connected themes deserve preparation.

2.1 Why the subject was topical in 2026

Several developments before the examination brought together the precise themes in this question: the constitutional importance of information disclosure, digital public consultation, enforceable transparency mechanisms, decentralised social audit, grievance redressal and the persistent difficulty of securing meaningful participation. The Supreme Court's electoral bonds judgment, the Digital Personal Data Protection framework, the new rural employment legislation and official Gram Sabha participation studies make the distinction between **publishing information** and **building accountable public trust** particularly clear. GS Paper II was held on **22 August 2026**. These are documented developments before the paper, **context, not evidence of why UPSC selected the question**.

When	What happened	Why it matters for this question
15 February 2024	In **Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India** (2024 INSC 113), a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court declared the Electoral Bond Scheme unconstitutional. It held that non-disclosure of political funding violated citizens' right to information under Article 19(1)(a); the provision allowing unlimited corporate contributions was also held arbitrary under Article 14.	A direct illustration of why **the openness of information and equality before law matter to public confidence in political and policy processes**. The Court recognised that political contributions can raise concerns about possible exchanges for policy favours.

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When	What happened	Why it matters for this question
26 July 2025	The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology informed the public that consultation on the draft **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025** had received **6,915 inputs** from citizens and stakeholders. PIB reported the figure in its statement on the draft Rules.	Consultation can bring stakeholder views into rule-making. The relevant test is not the number of submissions alone, but how transparently the authority considers and responds to them.
November 2025	The **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025** were notified on 13 November and published on 14 November. The accompanying commencement notification phased provisions of the DPDP Act, 2023. **Section 44(3)**, substituting the personal-information exemption in Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, was among the provisions brought into force immediately.	Transparency must be reconciled with informational privacy. The scope and public-interest operation of information exemptions matter to both accountability and trust; the entire DPDP regime did not commence on one date.
20 to 21 December 2025	The **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025** received presidential assent on 20 December and was published on 21 December. Its provisions include Gram Sabha social audits under **Section 20**, mandatory public disclosure and social audit requirements under **Schedule I**, and grievance redressal under Section 25.	The same framework connects prevention of leakage with citizens' right to inspect records, question expenditure, participate in planning and demand corrective action.
18 March 2026	In a parliamentary reply, DARPG reported **22,78,256 grievances received through CPGRAMS during 2025**. For Central Ministries and Departments, the reported average disposal time was **15 days**, with **82.1%** disposed of within the prescribed 21-day timeline.	Accountability also concerns administrative responsiveness. Grievance volumes and disposal speed are measurable, but they must not be mistaken for proof of satisfactory redressal or public trust.
25 March 2026	The Ministry of Panchayati Raj reported that, as on 18 March 2026, **2,44,175 Gram Panchayats and equivalents**, or **94.37%** of the reported total, had made payments through the eGramSwaraj-PFMS interface during FY 2025-26. It also described Meri Panchayat, Panchayat NIRNAY, AuditOnline and SabhaSaar.	Digital records can support traceability, financial scrutiny and visibility of Gram Sabha proceedings. **Digital adoption does not itself establish participation or public confidence.**
11 May to 1 July 2026	The Union Government notified that the **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025** would commence nationally on **1 July 2026**, replacing MGNREGA. Schedule I requires social audits at least once every six months, weekly public disclosures and village-level display of work information. Its transitional provision applies the 2011 Audit of Schemes Rules to social audits until replacement rules are notified.	A current example of **disclosure, local oversight, grievance redressal and anti-corruption safeguards incorporated in one statutory design**. Distinguish prescribed mechanisms from independently verified implementation outcomes.
30 June 2026	The Ministry of Panchayati Raj released NIRDPR's **National Study Report on Low Participation in Gram Sabha across States and Union Territories**. Its underlying field research covered approximately **7,790 respondents** across around **400 Gram Panchayats** in **26 States and Union Territories**.	A policy process cannot be called participatory merely because a Gram Sabha legally exists. Awareness, inclusion, accessibility and the ability to influence decisions need examination.

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When	What happened	Why it matters for this question
29 July 2026	DARPG's published report on CPGRAMS for June 2026 recorded **1,99,968 grievances redressed by Central Ministries and Departments** during that month. The publication also reported departmental grievance-redressal performance.	Shows the scale of administrative answerability. **The quality, fairness and effectiveness of resolutions** remain as important as the disposal count.
11 August 2026	The Ministry of Panchayati Raj informed the Lok Sabha that NIRDPR's Gram Sabha study identified constraints including limited awareness, livelihood pressures, inadequate communication, weak grievance responsiveness and poor follow-up. For women, it noted household responsibilities, social hesitation and male-dominated discussion.	Formal participation can conceal substantive exclusion. Stakeholder trust requires **voice, inclusion, feedback and visible follow-through**, not attendance alone.
12 August 2026	The Ministry of Panchayati Raj reported that **2,55,251 Gram Panchayats and equivalents** had uploaded their FY 2025-26 Gram Panchayat Development Plans on eGramSwaraj, representing **98.65%** of the reported total. The SabhaSaar tool had been used by **1,35,956** Gram Panchayats and equivalents.	Greater digital documentation offers an opportunity for public scrutiny. Trust depends on whether plans are accessible, intelligible, genuinely discussed and acted upon.

2.2 The skill UPSC keeps testing

Across GS Paper II and GS Paper IV, UPSC has repeatedly examined the relationship between **participation, accountability, information, institutional oversight and the quality of democratic governance**. The progression is instructive: participation and effectiveness (2016), parliamentary oversight (2017), Citizens' Charters and RTI (2018 and 2020), social audits (2021), digital transparency (2023 and 2024), user-centric design (2025), and finally **the relationship between anti-corruption control and stakeholder trust in 2026**. The questions below reproduce the recorded UPSC wording verbatim, including original punctuation.

Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2016 GS II, Q11	"Effectiveness of the government system at various levels and people's participation in the governance system are inter-dependent." Discuss their relationship in the context of India.	Explain the interdependence of public participation and administrative effectiveness.	The same interdependence becomes a question of **trust, legitimacy and accountability** rather than administrative performance alone.
2017 GS II, Q5	Discuss the role of Public Accounts Committee in establishing accountability of the government to the people.	Explain how legislative financial scrutiny creates governmental answerability.	Oversight becomes one element of trustworthiness, alongside openness, lawful decision-making and stakeholder voice.
2018 GS II, Q18	The Citizens' Charter is an ideal instrument of organizational transparency and accountability, but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness of the Citizens' Charter.	Assess an instrument that publicly commits institutions to service standards and redressal.	Published commitments are not enough: stakeholders need **enforceable or effective follow-up and responsive institutions**.
2020 GS II, Q2	"Recent amendments to the Right to Information Act will have profound impact on the autonomy and independence of the Information Commission". Discuss.	Consider how changes to institutional design may affect independent information oversight.	Institutional independence is tied to citizens' confidence that disclosure obligations can be enforced.

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Year	The question as UPSC set it	What it asked of you	What changed in 2026
2021 GS IV, Q6(a)	An independent and empowered social audit mechanism is an absolute must in every sphere of public service, including judiciary, to ensure performance, accountability and ethical conduct. Elaborate.	Connect social scrutiny with ethical conduct and performance accountability.	Social audit illustrates how anti-corruption vigilance and participatory trust-building can operate through one mechanism.
2023 GS II, Q8	e-governance, as a critical tool of governance, has ushered in effectiveness, transparency and accountability in governments. What inadequacies hamper the enhancement of these features ?	Diagnose obstacles that prevent digital systems from delivering governance benefits.	Trust becomes the outcome to assess, rather than the existence of portals and records.
2024 GS II, Q18	e-governance is not just about the routine application of digital technology in service delivery process. It is as much about multifarious interactions for ensuring transparency and accountability. In this context evaluate the role of the 'Interactive Service Model' of e-governance.	Evaluate interactive, two-way service relationships rather than simple digitisation.	The question moves from **interaction** to whether stakeholders perceive institutions and policy processes as legitimate and trustworthy.
2025 GS II, Q7	e-governance projects have a built-in bias towards technology and back-end integration than user-centric designs. Examine.	Assess technology-centred governance against the lived needs of users.	Technical transparency alone cannot secure trust without fairness, access, participation and effective remedies.

Also related, verbatim: 2014 GS IV, Q7: "What does 'accountability' mean in the context of public service? What measures can be adopted to ensure individual and collective accountability of public servants?" 2018 GS IV, Q2(b): "The Right to Information Act is not all about citizens' empowerment alone, it essentially redefines the concept of accountability." Discuss. 2024 GS II, Q8: "The Doctrine of Democratic Governance makes it necessary that the public perception of the integrity and commitment of civil servants becomes absolutely positive. Discuss." 2026 GS II, Q15: "To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests ? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions."

CARRY THIS METHOD TO ANY "COMMENT ON A GOVERNANCE PROPOSITION" QUESTION

1. **Identify** the proposition and the relationship it asserts between two concepts.
2. **Test** the qualifying or exclusionary words: "not", "only", "rather than", "always" and "necessarily".
3. **Distinguish** the functions and outcomes of the concepts rather than treating them as synonyms.
4. **Explain** the institutional mechanisms linking each concept to its claimed outcome.
5. **Demonstrate** the relationship through a carefully matched law, judgment, policy or governance instrument.
6. **Judge** whether the concepts conflict, coexist or reinforce each other, and state the necessary conditions.

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2.3 What to prepare next

INSTITUTIONS, LAWS AND INSTRUMENTS

RTI Act, 2005	Section 3, citizens' right; Section 4, proactive disclosure; Section 8, exemptions and public-interest provisions; appeals and Information Commissions.
Constitution	Articles 14 and 19(1)(a); Article 243A Gram Sabha; Articles 148 to 151, CAG; legislative accountability and judicial review.
Anti-corruption framework	Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, as amended; Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013; oversight, investigation and lawful sanctions.
VB-G RAM G Act, 2025	Commenced 1 July 2026; Gram Sabha social audits under Section 20; disclosure and social audit under Schedule I; grievances under Section 25.
Digital and service tools	eGramSwaraj, Meri Panchayat, Panchayat NIRNAY, AuditOnline, CPGRAMS, Citizens' Charters and Sevottam.

CONCEPTS AND ANALYTICAL DISTINCTIONS

Transparency versus accountability	Information is made visible; actors must then explain, justify, remedy and, where appropriate, face consequences.
Rule of Law versus rule by law	Government constrained by law and equal rights versus using legal instruments merely to exercise authority.
Procedural versus substantive legitimacy	Fair process and meaningful voice versus equitable, effective outcomes. Neither alone is sufficient.
Participation versus consultation	Participation can influence decisions and monitoring; consultation may provide input without transferring final authority.
Trust versus trustworthiness	Public confidence is a perception; institutional integrity, fairness and responsiveness are qualities that can justify it.
Publicity versus disclosure	Promotional communication is selective; meaningful transparency includes records, reasons, trade-offs and adverse findings.

3 Additional information

Tier 1 provides the constitutional principles, mechanisms and evidence needed for this exact question. Tier 2 extends the discussion to the institutional and ethical problems that arise when transparency, corruption control, participation and public trust do not move together.

TIER 1 · ESSENTIAL: CONTROLLING CORRUPTION, CREATING TRUST AND CONNECTING THE TWO

The governing logic: from visible decisions to justified trust

Disclose rules, records, reasons → **Answer** explain and justify → **Participate** hear affected voices → **Correct** review and remedy → **Earn trust** fair, lawful outcomes

A teaching flow, not a statutory procedure or a guarantee that trust will result. Corruption prevention and enforcement operate across the entire sequence. Trust is justified by repeated evidence of integrity, fair treatment, responsiveness and credible correction, not by disclosure alone. The flow draws on the RTI Act, constitutional accountability, Gram Sabha social audits and the OECD's public-trust framework.

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What the two governance principles actually require

Principle	Core requirement and institutional basis	How it addresses the question
FOUNDATIONS: INFORMATION, ANSWERABILITY AND LAWFUL PUBLIC POWER		
Transparency	Accessible, timely and intelligible information about the exercise of public authority. The **RTI Act, 2005** gives citizens a statutory right to information subject to exemptions; **Section 4** requires specified proactive disclosures and promotes reduced reliance on individual applications.	Deters concealment and supports scrutiny. Creates **informed participation**, but disclosure without an avenue to contest a decision may not yield accountability.
Accountability	An obligation to explain and justify conduct, coupled with oversight and the possibility of correction or consequences. It can be **political** (legislature, elections), **administrative** (departmental review), **legal** (courts, statutory bodies) or **social** (community oversight).	Converts information into an obligation to respond. Control of wrongdoing and confidence in public institutions both depend upon credible answerability.
Rule of Law	Public power exercised under law, without arbitrariness, through procedures compatible with fundamental rights. **Article 14** underpins equality and non-arbitrariness; judicial review and constitutional remedies limit executive overreach.	Citizens can expect decisions to be legally constrained and reviewable, rather than dependent on patronage, political access or personal discretion.
Participatory Governance	Affected people can access information, contribute to identifying problems, deliberate on options, influence priorities and scrutinise implementation. **Article 243A** recognises the Gram Sabha and leaves its functions to State legislation.	Stakeholders become participants in decisions affecting them. This improves information quality, inclusion, local ownership and procedural legitimacy.
Public trust	Reasonable confidence that authorities will act competently, lawfully, fairly, honestly and responsively. The **OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust** identifies reliability, responsiveness, integrity, openness and fairness as central governance drivers.	Trust is an outcome of **demonstrated trustworthiness**, not a substitute for scrutiny or a requirement that citizens approve every policy.

Part 1: How transparency and accountability control corruption

Mechanism	How it operates	Indian instrument and answer value
Prevent arbitrary exercise of power	Published eligibility conditions, procurement criteria, budgets, selection methods and reasons narrow the opportunity for undisclosed favouritism. Officials know their decisions can be examined against identifiable standards.	**RTI Section 4** and publicly accessible procurement and programme records. The anti-corruption benefit begins before any offence is detected.
Establish answerability and oversight	Departments must account for public expenditure, explain variations, respond to audit findings and justify administrative choices. Independent or external scrutiny reduces dependence on internal self-certification.	**CAG under Articles 148 to 151**; legislative financial committees such as the Public Accounts Committee; departmental review. An audit identifies and reports findings but does not itself constitute a criminal conviction.
Enable detection	Access to records permits comparisons between sanctioned expenditure and actual works, eligible beneficiaries and payments, or official reasons and objective criteria.	Village-level work disclosures, muster rolls and **Gram Sabha social audit** under the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025. Detection is strengthened when original records are available and verifiable.

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Mechanism	How it operates	Indian instrument and answer value
Create deterrence	Realistic prospects of scrutiny, investigation and lawful sanctions raise the expected cost of bribery or dishonest public action. Mere publication is insufficient when enforcement institutions are ineffective.	**Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**, including amended bribery offences; **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, providing a framework to inquire into corruption allegations against specified public functionaries.
Secure corrective action	Findings should lead, where justified, to recovery, changes in eligibility or allocation, disciplinary action, prosecution and revision of defective procedures. Different remedies require their respective legal processes.	**VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, Schedule I** provides for recovery of misappropriated amounts and follow-up mechanisms; grievance redressal is separately provided under Section 25 and Schedule I.
Guard against policy capture	Disclosure of relevant interests, financial links and reasons enables scrutiny of whether decisions favour a particular interest at the expense of public purposes.	**Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2024)**: the Supreme Court treated information about political funding as constitutionally relevant to voters' ability to assess potential policy influence.

Important distinction: The Prevention of Corruption Act addresses specified criminal wrongdoing. Transparency and administrative accountability operate more broadly against arbitrariness, conflicts of interest, procedural unfairness, waste and non-performance, not all of which amount to criminal corruption.

Part 2: How the Rule of Law and participation create stakeholder trust

Trust-building channel	The causal mechanism	Evidence or institutional illustration
TRUST IN THE POLICY PROCESS		
Transparent agenda-setting	Publishing the problem, evidence, alternatives and likely consequences allows stakeholders to see what the government seeks to achieve and what interests may be affected.	Consultative rule-making, policy papers, public consultation documents and reasoned disclosure of policy choices. Transparency concerns the **process of choice**, not merely the announcement of a final scheme.
Predictability of public decisions	Stable, public and consistently applied criteria make official decisions less dependent on personal access. Citizens can understand expectations and anticipate how comparable cases should be treated.	Service standards, public eligibility rules and legally reviewable administrative procedures. Predictability is a foundation of justified confidence even where an individual receives an unfavourable decision.
RULE OF LAW AND INSTITUTIONAL CREDIBILITY		
Equality and non-arbitrariness	Authorities must apply lawful criteria fairly and cannot favour a person merely because of wealth, identity or influence. **Article 14** constrains discriminatory and arbitrary State action.	The Supreme Court's **15 February 2024 electoral bonds judgment** links information disclosure and constitutional equality to the integrity of the electoral process.

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Trust-building channel	The causal mechanism	Evidence or institutional illustration
Independent oversight and remedies	Affected persons need mechanisms outside the immediate decision-maker to challenge unlawful action. An impartial forum, reasons for decisions and effective remedies increase the credibility of public commitments.	Judicial review, information appeals, statutory oversight, legislative scrutiny and departmental appeal mechanisms. **Access to a remedy** is stronger than an assurance of administrative goodwill.
Constitutional limits on openness	Disclosure also operates within legal protections for privacy and other legitimate interests. Trust requires decisions about withholding information to be made under lawful criteria, with relevant public-interest provisions and available review.	**RTI Act, Sections 8 and 19**; DPDP Act, 2023 and its phased commencement. The 2025 substitution of RTI Section 8(1)(j) makes precise knowledge of current exemptions necessary.
PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER VOICE		
Participation before decisions	Consultation can identify local needs, unintended consequences and alternatives that may be absent from departmental files. **Opportunity to influence choices** is more consequential than an opportunity merely to listen.	Gram Sabha deliberation, Gram Panchayat Development Plans, community consultation and stakeholder submissions to draft rules.
Inclusive representation	Women, disadvantaged communities, persons with disabilities and people with limited time or digital access need realistic opportunities to participate. Otherwise, formally open processes can reproduce existing inequalities.	**NIRDPR's 2026 Gram Sabha participation study** documented low participation and barriers including household responsibilities, livelihood constraints and male-dominated discussions.
Public scrutiny after decisions	Stakeholders compare declared policy goals with actual expenditure and outcomes, identify discrepancies and demand explanations. Participation thereby becomes an accountability instrument.	**VB-G RAM G Act, Section 20** and Schedule I: community social audits, access to relevant expenditure records and mandatory disclosure mechanisms.
RESPONSIVENESS AND LEGITIMACY		
Feedback and reasoned response	Institutions should indicate which suggestions were accepted, rejected or deferred and why. A participant need not obtain the preferred result to recognise that the process was fair.	Consultation summaries, action-taken reports and documented follow-up on Gram Sabha decisions. This is a **standard for effective participation**, not a claim that every consultation already satisfies it.
Effective grievance redressal	Complaints reveal gaps between policy promises and lived experiences. A fair resolution, explanation, appeal and corrective action demonstrate that institutions can learn from failure.	**CPGRAMS** and the DARPG grievance-redressal framework; the March 2026 parliamentary reply reported 22,78,256 grievances received in 2025.
Visible and equitable results	Continued service delivery consistent with public rules and expressed community needs gives stakeholders evidence of institutional competence. Trust is strengthened when promises are verifiably fulfilled.	Published service standards, progress records, audit follow-up and outcome evaluation. Counts of resolved cases or uploaded plans should be paired with quality and inclusion measures.

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One practical comparison: the two foundations of stakeholder trust

Question	Rule of Law	Participatory Governance
Who constrains authority?	The Constitution, law, legal procedures, independent institutions and judicial review.	Affected citizens, Gram Sabhas, community bodies, civil society and structured consultation processes.
What is the safeguard?	Legality, equality, non-arbitrariness, reasons and remedies.	Information, voice, inclusion, deliberation and monitoring.
What question is answered?	**Was public power exercised lawfully and fairly?**	**Were affected interests heard and considered meaningfully?**
What failure does it prevent?	Unlawful discretion, discriminatory treatment and decisions without effective remedies.	Exclusionary policy design, ignored local knowledge and unresponsive implementation.
Why both are necessary	Participation cannot legitimise unlawful or rights-violating action.	A legally valid decision may still lack public ownership if affected stakeholders were excluded.

This distinction is conceptual. The two principles overlap in practice: participation can itself be legally guaranteed, and legal accountability may provide the means to enforce meaningful participation.

Part 3: Why corruption control and trust cannot be separated

Proposition	The reasoning	How to use it
Corruption control is necessary for trust	Unpunished bribery or favouritism makes assurances of fairness and public consultation less credible. People may perceive decisions as influenced by private advantage rather than public reasons.	Use the Prevention of Corruption Act, external audits and the electoral bonds judgment to show why public integrity supports institutional legitimacy.
Corruption control is not sufficient for trust	A decision can be free from proven corruption yet remain inaccessible, paternalistic, discriminatory in effect, poorly explained or detached from community needs.	Use the 2026 Gram Sabha participation findings to show that institutional openness must produce real opportunities for voice and response.
Participation can strengthen integrity	Citizens and beneficiaries may possess information unavailable to internal auditors. Their scrutiny can reveal ghost entries, inadequate work, inconsistent beneficiary selection or misleading completion claims.	Use social audit as the connecting instrument: community voice improves detection; legitimate correction improves confidence.
Credible accountability completes both goals	Disclosure followed by silence may increase disillusionment. A transparent investigation, lawful outcome, recorded response and remedy make the process more trustworthy.	Conclude with **integrity + inclusion + answerability + effective correction**, rather than choosing corruption control or public trust.

Why the quoted distinction is partly right. Governance cannot be judged by how many irregularities it detects. Stakeholders also need confidence in decision procedures, equal treatment, institutional competence, opportunities to influence policies and willingness to remedy mistakes. A narrow anti-corruption approach misses these wider democratic functions.

Why its exclusion of corruption control fails. Trust cannot be sustained through consultation or communication when misuse of public resources and unequal influence go unchallenged. Effective anti-corruption safeguards make the government's claims of fairness credible. Conversely, participation and disclosure can help expose misconduct. **The objectives reinforce rather than displace one another.**

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

TIER 2 · EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING: THE WHOLE TOPIC AROUND IT

What makes public institutions trustworthy?

1. **Reliability:** institutions deliver expected services and commitments consistently, including under difficult conditions.
2. **Responsiveness:** complaints, evidence and stakeholder feedback produce an intelligible response and, where needed, policy correction.
3. **Integrity:** decisions serve public purposes rather than private gain, conflicts of interest or improper influence.
4. **Openness:** relevant records, evidence, criteria and explanations can be accessed and questioned.
5. **Fairness:** individuals and communities are treated according to lawful, equitable standards.

These five governance drivers follow the **OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, 2024 Results**. The framework is useful for analysis; OECD survey percentages must not be presented as measurements of Indian public trust.

Why good instruments may still fail

1. **Disclosure without usability:** data are published but too technical, fragmented or inaccessible for citizens to scrutinise.
2. **Participation without influence:** meetings occur but decisions are settled beforehand, or suggestions receive no response.
3. **Oversight without follow-up:** audits and complaints identify problems but do not produce justified corrective action.
4. **Digital exclusion:** systems favour people with devices, connectivity, literacy, accessible formats and administrative knowledge.
5. **Elite capture:** better-resourced or socially dominant stakeholders crowd out less influential groups.
6. **Outcome-only reporting:** dashboards count cases closed without checking whether complainants received fair and effective remedies.

The accountability architecture beyond the narrow anti-corruption frame

Type	Who holds whom answerable?	Why it matters for trust
Vertical accountability	Citizens hold elected representatives answerable through elections, representative institutions and public political scrutiny.	Links public authority to democratic consent and the possibility of political change.
Horizontal accountability	Constitutional and statutory institutions scrutinise other branches or agencies of public authority, within their mandates.	Reduces exclusive reliance on an institution judging its own conduct.
Administrative accountability	Departments supervise conduct, apply standards, audit processes and handle complaints and appeals.	Connects public commitments to day-to-day delivery and corrective responsibility.
Social accountability	Citizens, beneficiary groups, Gram Sabhas and civil society scrutinise records and implementation.	Brings local knowledge and affected interests into oversight and can make failures visible earlier.
Judicial and legal accountability	Courts and legally authorised bodies review or adjudicate specified actions and disputes.	Provides an independent route to challenge unlawful action and seek appropriate remedies.

A complete policy-process lens

Policy stage	What transparency should reveal	What accountability and participation should add
Problem identification	Evidence of the problem, affected groups and competing explanations.	Community evidence; opportunity to challenge assumptions and identify overlooked needs.
Policy formulation	Objectives, options, costs, trade-offs and consultation proposals.	Inclusive feedback; reasoned consideration of alternatives; scrutiny of conflicts of interest.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Policy stage	What transparency should reveal	What accountability and participation should add
Allocation	Eligibility, budgets, selection criteria, procurement decisions and expenditure plans.	Fair, legally reviewable criteria; public scrutiny of priorities and possible favouritism.
Implementation	Beneficiaries, works, payments, timelines, service standards and responsible authorities.	Local monitoring, accessible grievances, administrative review and social audits.
Evaluation and revision	Performance findings, shortcomings, complaints and independent assessments.	Explanation of failures, corrective action and demonstrable use of stakeholder feedback.

Important contemporary connections

Connection	What a serious answer should understand
Right to information and privacy	Both serve constitutional values. Transparency concerns public scrutiny of official conduct; privacy protects legitimate personal interests. Under the **DPDP Act, 2023**, Section 44(3) substituted the personal-information exemption in RTI Section 8(1)(j), with its commencement notified in November 2025. Do not rely on the former wording without acknowledging the change. The RTI Act's other provisions, including Section 8(2) concerning public interest, must be read in the current statutory framework.
Electoral and policy transparency	The **electoral bonds judgment (2024 INSC 113)** demonstrates why information about political finance may be relevant to voters' judgments about possible influence on policy. It does not establish that every political donation is corrupt.
Digital platforms and democratic control	eGramSwaraj makes planning and financial records accessible; Meri Panchayat provides citizen-facing information; Panchayat NIRNAY supports Gram Sabha meeting processes; SabhaSaar supports documentation. These are administrative capabilities. The further question is whether users can understand, challenge and influence what is recorded.
Social audit after July 2026	**MGNREGA was replaced by the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 with effect from 1 July 2026.** Section 20 and Schedule I of the new Act address social audit, public records and transparency. Under its transition clause, the 2011 Audit of Schemes Rules continue to apply to social audits until new rules are notified. Historical MGNREGA examples remain relevant but should not be presented as the unaltered current legal position.
Consultation and administrative discretion	Participation does not mean every stakeholder acquires a veto. An authority can reasonably decline proposals if it explains its decision, respects legal rights and genuinely considers relevant evidence. **Fair process does not require unanimity.**
Citizens' Charters and Sevottam	DARPG's Sevottam guidelines describe Citizens' Charters as public service commitments with standards and grievance avenues. Such charters are generally **not independently enforceable in court merely because they are charters**; specific legal rights or State service-guarantee laws may create separate remedies.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Two debates worth knowing

Should transparency yield to privacy?

One view emphasises citizens' right to scrutinise public decisions and possible conflicts of interest; broad exemptions can conceal decisions affecting public resources. Another stresses that indiscriminate disclosure of personal information can expose individuals to harm and undermine legitimate privacy. The constitutional task is neither unlimited secrecy nor unlimited disclosure: **apply the current RTI provisions, lawful exemptions, public-interest requirements and available review mechanisms**. The DPDP-related amendment to RTI Section 8(1)(j) makes the precise statutory position important, rather than a slogan that either right always prevails.

Does greater participation always produce trust?

One view holds that consultation and community oversight improve policy quality, inclusion and legitimacy. The other notes that forums can be dominated by vocal or powerful interests, raising expectations without improving decisions. NIRDPR's 2026 Gram Sabha study makes this concern concrete. The resolution is **meaningful rather than ceremonial participation**: accessible information, representation of affected groups, opportunity to challenge proposals, transparent reasons and follow-up. Trust must be earned through procedural fairness and delivery, not assumed from attendance.

4 Pitfalls and variations

Six common analytical mistakes, claims that must be avoided, and the changes required when the directive or focus of the question changes.

4.1 Six pitfalls, each with its correction

Accepting the false choice

~~Transparency and accountability are meant for trust-building, not corruption control.~~

Acknowledge trust as the wider democratic objective while showing **corruption control as one necessary condition of trustworthy governance**.

Writing only about corruption

~~RTI, CAG, Lokpal and vigilance are the whole answer.~~

Keep corruption control to about three-tenths; give the Rule of Law, stakeholder voice and responsive legitimacy the larger share.

Confusing transparency with accountability

~~Publishing a dashboard makes officials accountable.~~

Disclosure supplies information; answerability requires explanation, scrutiny, correction and consequences where justified.

Reducing the Rule of Law to punishment

~~The Rule of Law means strict action against corrupt public servants.~~

Include **equality, non-arbitrariness, lawful procedures, institutional limits, independent review and effective remedies**.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Treating participation as attendance

~~Gram Sabha meetings and online consultations prove that all stakeholders are represented.~~

Ask who attends, who speaks, whose inputs matter, what barriers remain and whether action follows. Use NIRDPR's 2026 participation study.

Trust asserted, never explained

~~Transparency automatically increases public trust and good governance.~~

Trace the mechanism: **accessible information, fair rules, meaningful voice, impartial oversight and credible correction** can earn trust, but do not guarantee it.

4.2 Never write these

- "Transparency and accountability have nothing to do with controlling corruption."
  Preventing concealment, enabling scrutiny and establishing answerability are important anti-corruption functions.
- "The Rule of Law and the rule by law mean the same thing."
  The Rule of Law constrains public authority through legality, equality and protection against arbitrariness; mere use of legal instruments does not establish those conditions.
- "Every Citizen's Charter creates legally enforceable service rights."
  DARPG's Sevottam guidelines distinguish a Charter's service commitments from independently enforceable statutory rights.
- "More RTI disclosures automatically mean more accountability."
  Information is a prerequisite for many forms of scrutiny; effective answerability also needs review, remedies and justified corrective action.
- "The Supreme Court declared all corporate donations corrupt in the electoral bonds case."
  The 2024 judgment invalidated the scheme and specified statutory amendments on constitutional grounds; it did not make such a finding about every donation.
- "MGNREGA remains the operative rural employment statute in August 2026."
  The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 commenced nationally on 1 July 2026 and replaced MGNREGA; its own social audit and transparency provisions must be used for the contemporary position.
- "The RTI personal-information exemption still has its original 2005 wording."
  Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, 2023 substituted Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act and was brought into force under the November 2025 commencement notification.
- "The 2,55,251 Gram Panchayat Development Plans uploaded by August 2026 prove meaningful public participation."
  The figure, reported on 12 August 2026 for FY 2025-26, measures plan uploads; it does not independently measure the inclusion or influence of stakeholders.
- "CPGRAMS disposed of 22,78,256 grievances in 2025."
  DARPG reported this as the number received during 2025, not the number disposed of. Do not confuse receipts with resolutions.
- "The OECD's trust-survey percentages describe Indian citizens."
  The OECD survey covers its specified participating countries; use its conceptual trust drivers without attributing its findings to India.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

4.3 If the question changes

If it asks	The structure becomes	What must change
Discuss transparency and accountability as tools against corruption	Information disclosure; institutional oversight; detection and deterrence; enforcement and gaps; reforms	Anti-corruption mechanisms become the main body. Trust is a consequence, not an equally weighted demand.
Examine the Rule of Law as a foundation of good governance	Constitutional basis; equality and non-arbitrariness; checks and remedies; practical limitations; improvements	Constitutional safeguards and lawful exercise of discretion become central. Participation is supporting material.
Critically evaluate Participatory Governance in India	Forms of participation; democratic gains; elite capture and exclusion; implementation gaps; corrective reforms	Give a balanced institutional assessment with Gram Sabha evidence and meaningful participation criteria.
Role of **social audits** in accountability	Legal framework; public records; community verification; hearings and findings; corrective follow-up; challenges	Use VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, Sections 20 and 25 and Schedule I; distinguish earlier MGNREGA arrangements from the position after 1 July 2026.
Transparency versus privacy in digital governance	Right to information; privacy protections; current legal exemptions; institutional safeguards; proportional and accountable disclosure	Bring the DPDP-related RTI amendment and its commencement to the centre. Do not treat either right as absolute.
How **e-governance** builds public trust	Information accessibility; interactive services; grievance resolution; data protection; inclusion; human oversight	Assess user experience and verified outcomes, not portal adoption alone.
Comment on whether corruption-free governance necessarily enjoys public trust	Integrity as a necessary foundation; exclusion, incompetence and opacity as other sources of distrust; conditions for trust; verdict	Reverse the original question's emphasis: explain why absence of corruption is insufficient, without minimising integrity.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

5

The model answer

One model answer, written to the UPSC Gurus house range of 250 to 253 words (**252 words including all headings, labels and table cells**; UPSC's printed limit is 250 words). It follows the question's three-part demand: corruption control, stakeholder trust through the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance, and a final judgment on their mutual reinforcement. Three compact anti-corruption points establish the first function; a two-row comparison distinguishes the two foundations of trust; the final part resolves the statement's false contrast. The introduction addresses the whole question, and the conclusion delivers a qualified verdict.

Model answer ## Headed points and a compact comparison **252 words**

Transparency and accountability open public decisions to scrutiny and require officials to justify their conduct. They restrain corruption, but also enable stakeholder confidence in lawful and participatory policy-making.

1. Controlling corruption

- **Prevention:** RTI Section 4 disclosure of clear criteria, budgets and decisions reduces opportunities for concealed favouritism and arbitrary allocation.
- **Oversight:** CAG audits, legislative scrutiny and social audits expose discrepancies and oblige officials to account for public expenditure.
- **Deterrence:** Independent investigations, lawful sanctions under the Prevention of Corruption Act and recovery of diverted funds make scrutiny consequential.

2. Creating stakeholder trust

Trust depends on **how policies are formulated and corrected**, not merely whether misconduct is punished.

Rule of Law	Article 14's equality and non-arbitrariness, published criteria, judicial review and effective remedies make decisions predictable and constrain discretion.
Participatory Governance	Gram Sabha deliberations, inclusive consultations and social audits allow affected communities to question priorities and monitor implementation. The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 provides statutory social-audit arrangements.

- **Openness:** Publishing evidence, alternatives, trade-offs and reasons makes decisions intelligible, including to stakeholders who disagree.
- **Responsiveness:** CPGRAMS, timely reasoned replies and verifiable corrective action demonstrate that grievances and feedback matter; disposal figures alone cannot establish trust.

3. Mutually reinforcing objectives

Community scrutiny can reveal leakage; credible enforcement demonstrates equal treatment. Conversely, corruption-free administration without genuine participation may remain distant and untrusted. Neither objective substitutes for the other.

Thus, the statement rightly broadens accountability beyond policing corruption but wrongly separates the two purposes. Trust is earned when integrity, lawful power, meaningful voice and correction operate together.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

DEMAND
Judge whether transparency and accountability primarily control corruption or build stakeholder trust through the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance, explaining both purposes and their relationship

HIDDEN DEMAND
Credible corruption control is an essential foundation of public trust, while corruption-free administration without meaningful participation and responsiveness may remain untrusted

STRUCTURE
About three-tenths on controlling corruption, half on creating stakeholder trust through law and participation, and one-fifth on their mutually reinforcing relationship

BALANCE
Introduction 28 words, conclusion 28 words; 252 words in all

Why it works: the introduction establishes both the anti-corruption and trust-building functions without reducing the question to definitions. Part 1 covers prevention, answerability, oversight, deterrence and correction through legally grounded instruments. Part 2, the largest, distinguishes **the Rule of Law**, which constrains arbitrary authority, from **Participatory Governance**, which gives affected stakeholders voice, and adds the essential mechanisms of openness and responsiveness. Its contemporary statutory illustration is the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, which commenced on 1 July 2026. Part 3 answers the hidden demand: public scrutiny can expose corruption, credible enforcement can strengthen trust, and corruption-free administration without genuine participation may still lack public confidence. The conclusion delivers the required qualified judgment rather than accepting the quotation's exclusionary wording. Every heading, label and table cell is included in the verified count of **252 whitespace-separated words**.

6 Other ways to write it

The model answer above remains the preferred answer. These alternatives show how the same demand can be addressed through different forms of organisation without losing the evaluative judgment required by "Comment". Each preserves the relative emphasis on corruption control, stakeholder trust and their mutual reinforcement.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Function-to-trust matrix	Three columns: governance mechanism, corruption-control function, trust-building effect. Rows for RTI, CAG, Gram Sabha social audits, independent review and grievance redressal. Finish with a short judgment showing that the two effects are connected.	When you want to demonstrate **how the same institution can serve both objectives**. Particularly effective if the mechanisms are explained rather than merely named.
Policy-process life cycle	Agenda-setting: publish evidence and alternatives. Formulation: consult affected interests. Allocation: apply transparent and lawful criteria. Implementation: disclose records and enable social audits. Evaluation: resolve grievances, explain outcomes and correct failures. Conclude with integrity as a necessary condition throughout.	When you want to emphasise the question's phrase **"trust of stakeholders in the policy process"**. It is useful for showing why trust is not restricted to service delivery.
Constitutional foundations	Begin with Articles 14 and 19(1)(a). Explain equality, non-arbitrariness, information rights and institutional review; then connect Article 243A and local participation to democratic legitimacy. Add RTI, social audit and CPGRAMS as operating mechanisms. Conclude on the complementarity of integrity and trust.	When the answer needs a stronger **constitutional and institutional foundation**. Ensure the discussion does not become a general essay on fundamental rights.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

Approach	How it is built	When it works
Social-audit illustration	Use the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 as a connecting example: public records allow scrutiny; Gram Sabha participation allows beneficiaries to question implementation; audit findings create opportunities for explanation and correction. Explain separately why lawful sanctions and institutional follow-up remain necessary.	When you want **one contemporary Indian example running through the entire argument**. Avoid claiming that statutory provisions prove successful implementation.
Claim, qualification, synthesis	**Claim:** trust-building is broader than corruption control. **Qualification:** integrity, deterrence and enforcement remain indispensable. **Synthesis:** legality, transparency, stakeholder voice and effective remedies reinforce one another. Use an institutional example under each stage.	When the directive is explicitly **"Comment"** and you prefer a tightly argumentative structure. The risk is losing the clear visibility of the three approved parts.
Open with a constitutional case	Start with the Supreme Court's 2024 electoral bonds judgment, showing why information about political financing matters to citizens' political choices. Move to scrutiny of public authority, the Rule of Law, participation and responsive governance. End by distinguishing disclosure from genuinely accountable institutions.	When you want a **precise legal illustration of transparency and institutional credibility**. Do not let political finance displace the wider policy-process demand.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

7 Quick recall and Prelims crossover

Sixteen verified constitutional, statutory and institutional facts for rapid revision. Learn not only the names and numbers but also the precise function each provision serves in transparency, accountability, corruption control or participatory trust-building.

1. **Right to Information Act, 2005:** Section **3** gives citizens the statutory right to information, subject to the Act.
2. **RTI Section 4:** proactive disclosure obligations concerning public authorities' organisation, decisions, procedures, budgets and prescribed records.
3. **Article 14:** equality before the law and equal protection of the laws; constitutional foundation for challenging arbitrary State action.
4. **Article 19(1)(a):** freedom of speech and expression; the Supreme Court has recognised a constitutional right to relevant political information under it.
5. **Article 243A:** constitutional provision for the **Gram Sabha**, whose village-level powers and functions are determined by State legislation.
6. **CAG:** constitutional office under **Article 148**; Articles **149 to 151** address duties, accounts and audit reports.
7. **Electoral bonds judgment: 15 February 2024**, **2024 INSC 113**; non-disclosure violated Article 19(1)(a), and unlimited corporate contributions were held arbitrary under Article 14.
8. **Gram Sabha participation study:** NIRDPR, released **30 June 2026**; approximately **7,790** respondents, around **400** Gram Panchayats and **26** States and Union Territories.
9. **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:** Act **49 of 1988**; key bribery and corruption offences appear in Chapter III, as amended.
10. **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:** Act **1 of 2014**; provides the statutory framework for Lokpal and Lokayuktas.
11. **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025:** Act **36 of 2025**; presidential assent on **20 December 2025**.
12. **VB-G RAM G commencement: 1 July 2026**; the same date on which MGNREGA stood repealed under the notified transition.
13. **VB-G RAM G Section 20:** Gram Sabha monitoring and social audit; **Schedule I** requires social audits at least once every six months.
14. **DPDP Rules, 2025:** notification dated **13 November 2025**, published on **14 November**; consultations received **6,915** inputs.
15. **CPGRAMS: 22,78,256** grievances received during **2025**; the figure is receipts, not disposals (DARPG parliamentary reply, 18 March 2026).
16. **CPGRAMS, June 2026: 1,99,968** grievances redressed by Central Ministries and Departments (DARPG report released **29 July 2026**).

THE ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY OUT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Transparency opens public decisions, accountability makes power answerable, and trust is earned when lawful institutions prevent corruption, hear stakeholders and correct their failures.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

8 Write it yourself

Write the answer in 250 words without looking back. Then assess whether it follows the quotation's exact demand, distinguishes the relevant governance concepts, uses evidence accurately and reaches a qualified judgment.

	Check	Yes / No
1	Does the introduction cover **both corruption control and stakeholder trust** rather than defining transparency and accountability in isolation?	
2	Does Part 1 explain **prevention of arbitrary power, answerability and oversight, and deterrence or corrective action**, supported by relevant institutions or laws?	
3	Is **Part 2 the largest part**, clearly explaining trust in the policy process, not merely public satisfaction with service delivery?	
4	Are the **Rule of Law** and **Participatory Governance** treated distinctly, with equality and remedies on one side and meaningful stakeholder voice on the other?	
5	Does the short final part answer the **hidden demand**: corruption control is an essential foundation of trust, but cannot by itself guarantee trust?	
6	Does the conclusion give a **qualified judgment on the quoted proposition**, at roughly the length of the introduction, rather than a generic appeal for good governance?	
7	Is the answer **250 words or a little over**, counting headings, numerals, labels and table cells, with no inaccurate claim identified in section 4.2?	

Sources

- **Constitution of India:** Articles 14 and 19(1)(a) on equality and freedom of expression; Article 243A on Gram Sabhas; Articles 148 to 151 on the Comptroller and Auditor-General. Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice, Constitution of India, as amended.
- **India Code, Ministry of Law and Justice:** Right to Information Act, 2005 (Act 22 of 2005), particularly Sections 3, 4, 8 and 19. Read Section 8(1)(j) with the amendment made by Section 44(3) of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, brought into force in November 2025. Official repository: www.indiacode.nic.in.
- **India Code, Department of Personnel and Training:** Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (Act 49 of 1988), as amended, including Chapter III on offences and penalties; and Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 (Act 1 of 2014). Prevention of Corruption Act, official India Code record.
- **Supreme Court of India:** Association for Democratic Reforms and Another v. Union of India and Others, judgment dated **15 February 2024**, **2024 INSC 113**, concerning the Electoral Bond Scheme, Article 19(1)(a), disclosure of political funding, unlimited corporate contributions and Article 14. Official judgment. See also the Supreme Court's order dated 11 March 2024 in MA 486/2024 summarising the judgment and its directions.
- **Ministry of Rural Development and Gazette of India:** The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin): VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, **Act 36 of 2025**, presidential assent 20 December 2025, publication 21 December 2025. Section 20 provides for Gram Sabha social audits; Schedule I specifies disclosure, minimum social-audit frequency, recovery provisions and transitional application of the 2011 Audit of Schemes Rules. India Code Act record.
- **Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Rural Development:** "Historic Commencement of Viksit Bharat-G RAM G Act Across Rural India from July 1st 2026", **11 May 2026**, release **2259703**. Confirms nationwide commencement and repeal of MGNREGA from 1 July 2026. Official release.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

- **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology:** Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, Gazette notification G.S.R. 846(E), dated **13 November 2025**, with staggered commencement. The accompanying Act commencement notification includes Section 44(3), amending the personal-information exemption under the RTI Act. Official Gazette notification of the Rules.
- **Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology:** "Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 Receive 6,915 Inputs from Citizens and Stakeholders", **26 July 2025**, release **2148944**; and "DPDP Rules, 2025 Notified", **17 November 2025**, release **2190655**. These identify the consultation figure and publication of the final Rules. Consultation release.
- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj and NIRDPR:** National Study Report on "Low Participation in Gram Sabha Across States and Union Territories", released **30 June 2026**. The Ministry's announcement dated 29 June 2026, PIB release **2278735**, provides the scope of approximately 7,790 respondents, around 400 Gram Panchayats and 26 States and Union Territories. Parliamentary reply "Low Participation in Gram Sabha Meetings", **11 August 2026**, PIB release **2297557**, discusses barriers to participation, including livelihood constraints, inadequate communication, limited responsiveness and gendered obstacles. Official parliamentary reply.
- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj:** Parliamentary reply on digital Panchayati Raj initiatives, **25 March 2026**, PIB release **2244927**, describing eGramSwaraj, Meri Panchayat, Panchayat NIRNAY, AuditOnline and SabhaSaar; and Rajya Sabha reply of **12 August 2026**, PIB release **2298159**, reporting 2,55,251 GPDP uploads and 1,35,956 Gram Panchayats and equivalents using SabhaSaar for FY 2025-26. These are digital adoption figures, not measures of the quality of participation. Official August reply.
- **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances:** "Digital Grievance Redressal Through Central Platforms", parliamentary reply dated **18 March 2026**, PIB release **2241740**. Reports 22,78,256 grievances received through CPGRAMS during 2025, a 15-day average disposal time for Central Ministries and Departments, and 82.1% disposal within the prescribed 21-day timeline. Official parliamentary reply.
- **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances:** 50th CPGRAMS Monthly Report for Central Ministries and Departments, June 2026, released **29 July 2026**, PIB release **2290925**. Records 1,99,968 grievances redressed in June 2026 and describes the grievance-redressal and review mechanisms. Official monthly report release.
- **DARPG:** Guidelines for Implementing Sevottam, September 2011. Describes Citizens' Charters, service standards and grievance redressal; explicitly distinguishes Charter commitments from independent enforceability in a court of law. Official guidelines.
- **OECD:** OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions: 2024 Results, especially the framework identifying **reliability, responsiveness, openness, integrity and fairness** as five public-governance drivers of trust. Used as a comparative conceptual framework, not as a source of Indian trust-survey statistics. OECD publication.
- **Union Public Service Commission:** Civil Services (Main) Examination, official previous-question-paper archive, upsc.gov.in/examinations/previous-question-papers. Relevant papers consulted: GS Paper II (2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2023 to 2026) and GS Paper IV (2014, 2018 and 2021). Questions are identified by year, paper and question number in section 2.2.

"Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance." Comment.

YOUR NEXT STEP

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