

**Saturday 20 August 2011
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INDIAN CORRUPTION AND TECHNOLOGY DISCUSSED AT EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Two authors discussed the future technological advancement of India today at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, highlighting the rise of e-governance in the second most populated country in the world.

Author of *Geek Nation*, Angela Saini, explained how technology is being harnessed in India as a way to end corruption and cut the infamous bureaucracy of the country whilst simultaneously encouraging a huge growth in the economy.

'India is floating in a sea of paper,' said Saini who travelled to Lavasa in western India, to see for herself the country's first privately planned hill city and witness the digital revolution taking hold. 'In the UK the digitisation of the NHS medical records was not particularly successful, however in India these government schemes work very well' she argued.

The explosion of common service centres, an electronic one stop shop similar to an ATM, in Rajasthan has meant that time spent paying utility bills has been greatly reduced, 'I could pay five bills in two minutes, I couldn't do that here', said Saini.

Indian writer Siddhartha Deb, author of *The Beautiful and the Damned: Life in the New India*, also welcomed the advancement of e-governance as a way of cutting widespread low-level corruption in his home country. 'If we pay for things electronically then there is less chance of somebody taking a bribe,' explained Deb who advocates the expansion of the mobile phone e-commerce in a country with low broadband penetration but over 500 million cell phone connections.

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THE WORLD, IN WORDS

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The event, which was sponsored by the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust, was sold out and is part of the *India: Growing Pains* strand of the Book Festival which looks at the rise of one of the world's 21st century heavyweights as a producer, consumer and investor.

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