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# India Chairs Common Criteria Development Board (2026-2028)

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**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

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# India Chairs Common Criteria Development Board (2026-2028)

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## Why in News

India has assumed the **Chair of the Common Criteria Development Board (CCDB)** – the technical arm of the international **Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA)** – for a two-year term from **April 2026 to April 2028**. The decision was confirmed at the **1st Quarter Meeting of the CCRA held in Tokyo from April 14-16, 2026**, with the chairmanship formally vesting in officials of India’s **STQC Directorate** under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). Press coverage through **mid-to-late May 2026** has framed the elevation as India moving from a *rule-taker* to a *rule-maker* in the global cybersecurity standards architecture.

## WHAT IS THE CCRA AND THE CCDB?

The **Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA)** is an **international multilateral agreement** under which signatory countries **mutually recognise certifications** of Information Technology (IT) security products evaluated against the **Common Criteria** standard. Once a product is certified by an authorised national scheme of any member country, it is treated as certified across the arrangement – eliminating duplicative evaluations and reducing time and cost of cross-border procurement.

BODY	FUNCTION
CCRA	Political-administrative arrangement; admits members; mediates the mutual-recognition framework
CCDB (Common Criteria Development Board)	Technical core; maintains the Common Criteria standard and the Common Evaluation Methodology; manages the work programme
CCMC (Common Criteria Management Committee)	Oversight body of authorising nations

## Underlying Standards

STANDARD	SUBJECT
<b>ISO/IEC 15408</b>	Common Criteria for Information Technology Security Evaluation
<b>ISO/IEC 18045</b>	Common Evaluation Methodology (CEM) — how an evaluator actually conducts the assessment

## Membership Structure

The CCRA presently comprises **38 member nations**, divided into two tiers:

TIER	COUNT	RIGHT
Certificate Authorizing Nations	20	Issue CC certificates recognised across the CCRA
Certificate Consuming Nations	18	Accept (consume) certificates issued by Authorizing Nations

**Authorizing Nations include:** USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, Malaysia, Singapore, and **India**.

## INDIA'S CCRA JOURNEY

YEAR	MILESTONE
<b>September 16, 2013</b>	India joined CCRA as a <b>Certificate Authorizing Nation</b>
2013 onward	<b>STQC Directorate</b> operates the Indian Common Criteria Certification Scheme (IC3S)
April 2026	India assumes <b>Chair of the CCDB</b> for the 2026-2028 term

## STQC — India's Nodal Body

The **Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate** functions under MeitY as the **National Certification Body** for the CC scheme. STQC operates the **Indian Common Criteria Certification Scheme (IC3S)**, conducts **CC evaluations** at its labs at Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Delhi, and certifies products against Protection Profiles and Security Targets.

– DRDO is **not** the certifying body for the Common Criteria scheme in India. The body is **STQC under MeitY**, not DRDO.

## COMMON CRITERIA — TECHNICAL ARCHITECTURE

The CC framework rests on three core artefacts and a graded assurance ladder.

### Core Artefacts

ARTEFACT	PURPOSE
<b>Protection Profile (PP)</b>	An implementation-independent statement of security requirements for a <i>class</i> of products (e.g., firewalls, smartcards, mobile OS, network devices)
<b>Security Target (ST)</b>	A vendor's claim of how a <i>specific</i> product meets a PP (or its own bespoke requirements)
<b>Evaluation Technical Report (ETR)</b>	The evaluator's confidential report supporting the certificate

### Evaluation Assurance Levels (EALs)

The CC defines **seven Evaluation Assurance Levels** of increasing rigour.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL USE
EAL1	Functionally tested	Lowest assurance; consumer products
EAL2	Structurally tested	Low-risk environments
EAL3	Methodically tested and checked	Moderate-risk commercial
<b>EAL4</b>	Methodically designed, tested, reviewed	<b>Highest level cost-effective without speciality engineering — commercial workhorse</b>
EAL5	Semi-formally designed and tested	Specialised high-assurance
EAL6	Semi-formally verified design	High-value government / military
<b>EAL7</b>	Formally verified design and tested	<b>Maximum assurance — used in nuclear command, classified comms</b>

## SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA'S CHAIRMANSHIP

### Strategic Rationale

- 1 Standards diplomacy:** Chairing the CCDB places India in the same standards-leadership cohort as the USA, UK, Germany, and Japan — a meaningful elevation in the *tech standards* arena that includes ITU-T, IEEE, 3GPP, ISO/IEC JTC 1, and IETF.
- 2 Domestic certification capacity:** Chairmanship strengthens **STQC's voice** in shaping Protection Profiles for product classes where India has emerging vendor depth — telecom equipment, digital identity, IoT, automotive electronics.
- 3 Cybersecurity sovereignty:** India will help author rules under which products entering its **government, defence, and critical-infrastructure** procurement chain are evaluated — narrowing supply-chain risk windows.
- 4 Indo-US iCET alignment:** The **initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET, 2022)** explicitly identifies cybersecurity standards harmonisation as a sub-track. CCDB chairmanship operationalises that intent.

### Use-Case Footprint of CC-Certified Products in India

DOMAIN	USE OF CC CERTIFICATION
Defence procurement	Cryptographic modules, secure routers, COMSEC equipment
Critical Information Infrastructure (CII)	Notified by NCIIPC under Section 70A of the IT Act, 2000
Telecom	TSDSI standards alignment; trusted source designations
Digital identity	Aadhaar authentication ecosystem; eSign and DigiLocker security modules
Banking & payments	UPI infrastructure security elements; HSMs and smartcards

## INDIA'S CYBERSECURITY INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

BODY	ACRONYM	YEAR	PARENT	BASIS
Computer Emergency Response Team – India	<b>CERT-In</b>	2004	MeitY	Section 70B, IT Act, 2000
National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre	<b>NCIIPC</b>	2014 (operational)	NTRO	Section 70A, IT Act, 2000
Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre	<b>I4C</b>	2018	MHA	Administrative scheme
Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification	<b>STQC</b>	1980	MeitY	Administrative
National Cyber Security Coordinator	<b>NCSC</b>	2014	PMO / National Security Council Secretariat	Administrative
Data Protection Board of India	<b>DPB</b>	2023-24 (post-DPDP Act)	MeitY	Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

## WHY THE CHAIR MATTERS RIGHT NOW

Three converging policy currents make 2026 a pointed moment for India to lead the CCDB.

### 1. Domestic Legislative Architecture

The **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** introduced the concept of the **Significant Data Fiduciary (SDF)** – entities designated by the Board on the basis of data volume, sensitivity, and risk. SDFs face heightened audit and security obligations for which CC-evaluated products are a natural compliance vehicle.

### 2. Semiconductor and 5G/6G Push

The **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** under MeitY, with a corpus of approximately **₹76,000 crore**, anticipates Indian-fabricated chips serving sensitive markets (defence, automotive, telecom). Those markets increasingly demand CC certification at EAL4 and above. The **Bharat 6G Alliance**, launched in **2023**, similarly contemplates CC-aligned trust frameworks for next-generation telecom.

### 3. Post-Quantum Readiness

CCDB working groups are drafting **Protection Profiles for post-quantum-cryptography (PQC) primitives** following the **NIST PQC standardisation** announcements. India's chair lets STQC shape PQC PPs that align with domestic cryptographic priorities (e.g., **CCA-led indigenous algorithms** for government use).

#### UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 2 – International Relations:** India and international institutions, agencies, and fora – their structure and **mandate**; bilateral, regional, and global groupings affecting India's interests; effect of policies and politics of other countries on India.
- **GS Paper 3 – Internal Security:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks; basics of cyber security; role of standards and certifications in protecting critical information infrastructure.
- **GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology:** Awareness in the fields of IT, computers, and **indigenisation** of technology; standards and intellectual property in emerging technologies.
- **Essay linkage:** "Digital sovereignty" – the role of standards bodies in shaping the geopolitics of technology.

#### Facts Corner

- **CCRA full form:** Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement – international IT security product certification mutual-recognition framework.
- **CCDB full form:** Common Criteria Development Board – technical arm of the CCRA.
- **India's CCDB chairmanship tenure:** April 2026 – April 2028.
- **Confirmation venue:** 1st Quarter CCRA Meeting, Tokyo, April 14-16, 2026.
- **India joined CCRA:** September 16, 2013 as a **Certificate Authorizing Nation**.
- **Indian nodal body:** **STQC Directorate** under MeitY (NOT DRDO).
- **Indian scheme name:** Indian Common Criteria Certification Scheme (IC3S).
- **Underlying standard:** **ISO/IEC 15408** (Common Criteria).
- **Evaluation methodology standard:** **ISO/IEC 18045** (Common Evaluation Methodology / CEM).
- **CCRA membership:** **38 nations** – 20 Authorizing + 18 Consuming.
- **Evaluation Assurance Levels:** **EAL1 (lowest) to EAL7 (highest)**; EAL4 is the commercial workhorse.
- **CERT-In:** established **2004**; under MeitY; Section 70B, IT Act, 2000.

- **NCIIPC:** under **NTRO**; Section 70A, IT Act, 2000.
- **I4C:** under **MHA**; established **2018**.
- **DPDP Act: 2023** — created the Data Protection Board.
- **Indo-US iCET:** launched **2022** — has a cybersecurity sub-track.
- **India Semiconductor Mission corpus:** ~₹76,000 crore.
- **Bharat 6G Alliance:** launched **2023**.

Sources: [Press Information Bureau](#), [MeitY](#), [STQC](#)

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## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari](#) →<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/21/india-ccdb-chair-cybersecurity-2026/>

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