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CBI Launches ABHAY: AI Helpbot to Counter Digital Arrest Scams

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CBI Launches ABHAY: AI Helpbot to Counter Digital Arrest Scams

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WHY IN NEWS:

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) launched **ABHAY (AI-based Helpbot for Authentication of CBI Notices)** on **May 15, 2026** at the 22nd D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture, with sustained coverage through May 22–24. The real-time notice-verification system is designed to protect citizens from “digital arrest” scams in which impersonators pose as CBI/ED/CBDT officers. **Chief Justice of India Surya Kant** termed the move “pivotal and opportune.”

ABOUT ABHAY

ABHAY — AI-based Helpbot for Authentication of CBI Notices — is the country’s first AI-driven, citizen-facing verification system for central agency notices.

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Launched	May 15, 2026
Occasion	22nd D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture
Mechanism	Citizen uploads scanned notice on CBI website → OTP authentication → AI verifies → returns ‘genuine’ or ‘suspicious’ verdict
QR Integration	All CBI notices from May 1, 2026 carry an embedded QR code linking to ABHAY
Access	CBI website; mobile-friendly interface

How verification works

- 1 Citizen receives a notice claiming to be from the CBI (physical, e-mail, or messaging app).
- 2 The citizen scans the QR code or uploads the notice on the ABHAY portal.
- 3 ABHAY authenticates the user via OTP, then cross-checks the notice against the CBI’s notice-issuance database.
- 4 The system returns a verdict — **genuine** or **suspicious** — in real time.

DIGITAL ARREST SCAM ECOSYSTEM

Modus operandi

- Caller, impersonating CBI/ED/CBDT/Customs/police, claims the victim is implicated in serious crimes — drug parcels, money laundering, fake passports.
- Demands “verification” via video call; a uniformed scammer threatens arrest.
- Demands ransom in cryptocurrency or transfers to “escape” arrest.
- Victim is kept on prolonged calls (“digital custody”) to prevent consultation with family.

Scale of fraud

INDICATOR	VALUE
Indians’ loss to digital arrest scams (2024)	₹2,140 crore (I4C)
PM Modi “Mann Ki Baat” coverage	October 2024
Deepfake-enabled impersonation	Accelerating risk

ABOUT THE CBI

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Full form	Central Bureau of Investigation
Established	April 1, 1963
Statutory basis	Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946
Parent Ministry	Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Ministry of Personnel, PG & Pensions
Headquarters	New Delhi
Current Director	Praveen Sood (since May 2023)
Mandate	Anti-corruption, economic offences, special crimes

Constitutional and statutory backdrop

- The **DSPE Act, 1946** grants the CBI its investigative powers.
- **Section 6, DSPE Act** requires **state consent** for CBI investigations within a state’s territory (general consent doctrine).

- States that have **withdrawn general consent**: West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Kerala (and at various points, others).

ABOUT D.P. KOHLI

- **First Director of the CBI** (April 1963 – May 1968).
- The D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture is instituted in his honour; the **22nd lecture** was delivered on May 15, 2026.

OTHER CYBER-FRAUD ARCHITECTURE

MECHANISM	DETAIL
I4C (Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre)	Established 2018 under the Ministry of Home Affairs
National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal	cybercrime.gov.in
1930 helpline	Financial fraud reporting
Sanchar Saathi (DoT)	Telecom-side intervention; Chakshu sub-portal for fraud reporting
TRAI CNAP	Calling Name Presentation for trusted number identification
DigiLocker / e-Sign	Document verification rails

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- **IT Act, 2000** (as amended) — Sections 65–67 (cyber offences), Section 70B (CERT-In).
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023** — Sections 318, 336 (cheating, forgery), Section 109 (criminal conspiracy).
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**.

TRUST-ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Places **verification power in the hands of the citizen** rather than gating it behind agencies.
- Aligns with India Stack ethos — open, modular, citizen-facing.
- Real-time, OTP-secured, friction-light.

Limitations

- Voluntary verification depends on citizen awareness.
- **Rural and elderly cohorts** — primary victims of digital arrest scams — are least likely to use ABHAY.
- Limited to CBI notices; ED, NIA, CBDT, DRI notices are outside scope at launch.

WAY FORWARD

- 1 Integrate ABHAY with **DigiLocker** for cross-agency authentication.
- 2 Mandate QR-coded notices for all central agencies (**ED, NIA, CBDT, DRI**).
- 3 Strengthen telecom-side intervention — **Sanchar Saathi, TRAI CNAP**.
- 4 Awareness campaigns in regional languages targeting rural and elderly populations.
- 5 Train state police to coordinate with the CBI on digital arrest cases.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 2** — Governance, transparency, accountability; citizen-centric e-governance.
- **GS Paper 3** — Cyber security, internal security challenges, role of technology.
- **Essay** — “Trust architecture in the digital republic.”

FACTS CORNER

ABHAY — AI-based Helpbot for Authentication of CBI Notices

Launched: May 15, 2026 at the 22nd D.P. Kohli Memorial Lecture

CBI established: April 1, 1963

CBI statutory basis: DSPE Act, 1946

CBI parent ministry: DoPT

CBI Director: Praveen Sood

D.P. Kohli — first CBI Director (1963–1968)

DSPE Act Section 6 — state consent for CBI investigations

I4C established: 2018 under MHA

1930 — financial fraud helpline

Digital arrest losses 2024: ₹2,140 crore (I4C)

CBI QR codes on all notices: from May 1, 2026

Sources: [PIB](#), [CBI](#), [MHA](#)

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