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REPORT ON “DIGITAL ARREST”

WHAT IS “DIGITAL ARREST”?

In the early days of the Internet, most online troublemakers were pranksters who did simple digital vandalism or played harmless jokes. As people started using the Internet more in their daily lives, these pranksters slowly evolved into cybercriminals, taking advantage of new technology for more serious crimes. Fast forward to today, cybercrime has become one of the most significant threats online, surpassing many other dangers. This rapid rise has compelled governments and lawmakers worldwide to revise their laws and implement stricter measures to safeguard online users. However, cybercriminals have consistently outmanoeuvred the laws by exploiting loopholes and leveraging new technologies to scam on the Internet. One scam that has become especially common and hard to avoid is the so-called "**Digital Arrest**" scam.

Digital arrest is not a real legal procedure anywhere in India; it is a clever scam that cybercriminals use to trick innocent people out of their money. The term itself has no basis in any Indian law or criminal law of India, the law that governs the criminal procedure of arrest is the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and no investigative agency in the country has the authority to arrest someone through a phone call or video call, but arrest requires physical custody and due process by Section 43 of BNSS. Moreover, nowhere under any Indian Law is the term 'Digital Arrest' defined or mentioned.

Despite what these scammers claim, there is no provision under Indian criminal law for conducting arrests through digital means.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi clearly stated in his Mann Ki Baat broadcast, the cybercrime of "digital arrests" has affected all sections of society, and he urged people to adopt the mantra of "stop, think and take action" when faced with such scams. There is no system like digital arrest under the law. No government agency will ever contact you via phone or video call for such an investigation, he said. Probe agencies are working with states to address the issue, but emphasized that awareness is crucial in protecting oneself from this

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crime.¹ PM Modi, in his broadcast, also played a recorded example of digital arrest and showcased the seriousness of the scam.

Digital Arrest is an attempt to defraud a victim out of their money by keeping them isolated on a video call or phone call for extended periods and extorting money under the guise of escaping the digital arrest. The scammers have become so advanced that they use sophisticated gimmicks to pull this digital arrest scam, so that even the most educated fall for it.

This scam is particularly vicious and dangerous due to its convincing appearance. So compelling that almost half of these scams are committed against working professionals.

Scammers in digital arrest pose as officials from agencies like the CBI, ED, TRAI, or local police. In many instances, they even dress as police officers and wear the same attire as professional law enforcement officers. The scammers are often part of organized crime networks that operate across borders, with many cases traced back to operations in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia.² They use sophisticated technology and psychological tactics to make their scams appear genuine and official.

The primary reason people fall for this digital arrest scam is **fear**, as they are threatened with legal action. The victim panics and does everything the scammers direct. The scammers manipulate and use social engineering to exploit their victims.

The way these scammers operate is quite systematic and designed to create maximum fear and panic in their victims, wherein sometimes a person may call the victim to tell that charges have been pressed against the victim, it is after this that the victim receives a call from a fake police/law enforcement official who then delineates the charges pressed and establishes the seriousness of the situation. By now, the victim starts to believe that he is in great trouble.

¹ "Awareness essential to protect oneself from 'cyber arrest' scams: PM Modi." Business Standard, October 27 2024, www.business-standard.com/india-news/awareness-essential-to-protect-oneself-from-cyber-arrest-scams-pm-modi-124102700143_1.html.

² Anuj Choudhary, Trapped Virtually: Understanding Digital Arrest Scams, ISACA, July 25 2025, <https://www.isaca.org/resources/news-and-trends/industry-news/2025/trapped-virtually-understanding-digital-arrest-scams>

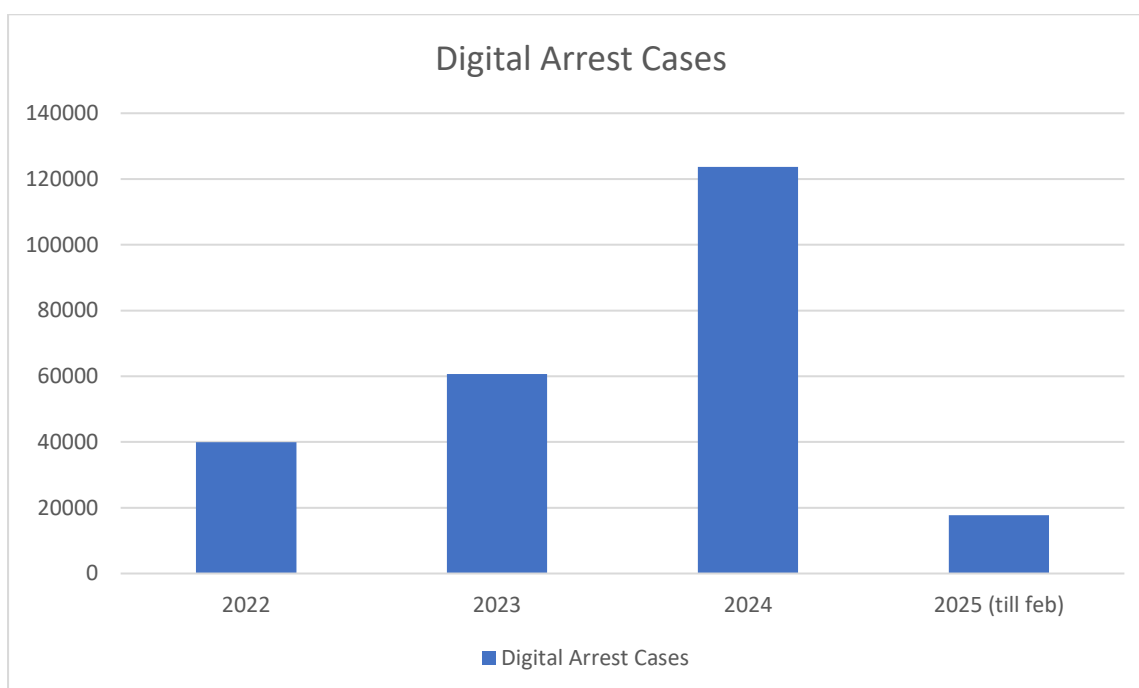
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Furthermore, this feeling of fear is intensified when the scammers present an arrest warrant and ask the victim to stay on a video or phone call; the scammers follow the protocol of arrest very well. After arresting the victim, they most often request bank account details for verification purposes, with the promise that this is the only way for the victim to be released from arrest. The entire process of digital arrest is explained in detail in this report.

THE ALARMING RISE IN 2024-2025



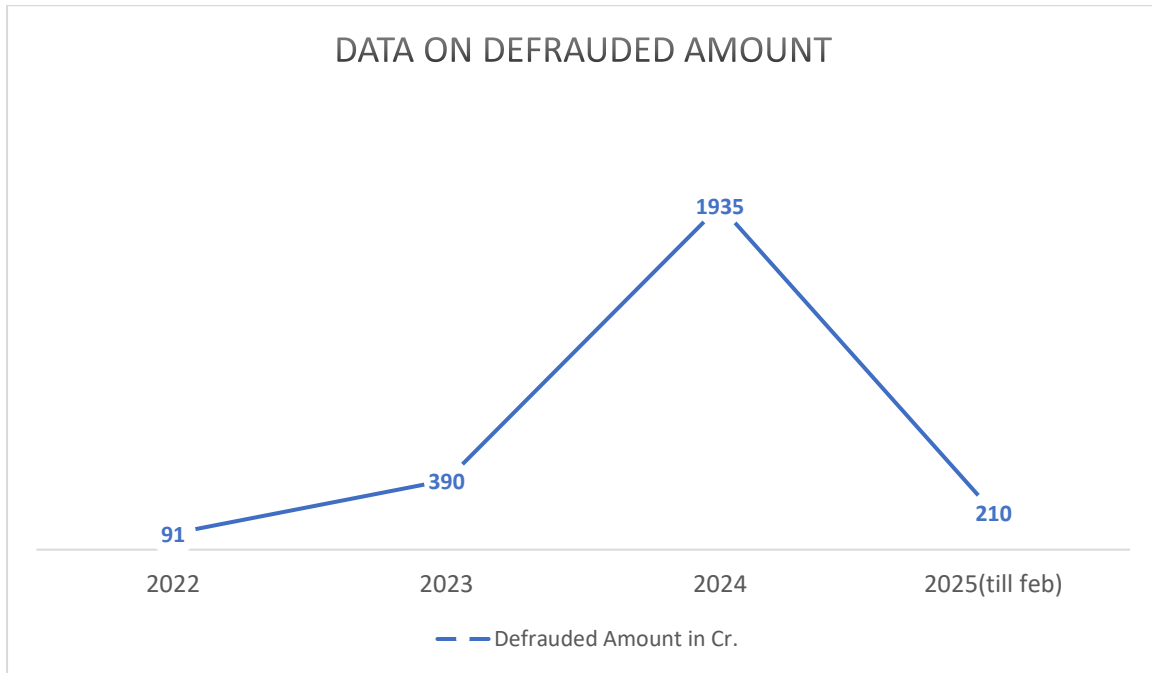
This table shows the constant rise in digital arrest cases over the period of three years, all these numbers were quoted by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha., the statistics were obtained from the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal(NCRP) and the data can be accessed through the data.gov.in website.³

³ Year-wise Number of Incidents of Digital Arrest Scams and Related Cyber Crimes Reported on National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal from 2022 to 2025, RAJYA SABHA SESSION - 267 UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1505, Published on May 30 2025. <https://www.data.gov.in/resource/year-wise-number-incidents-digital-arrest-scams-and-related-cyber-crimes-reported-national>.

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After studying this data, a significant amount of money can be seen to be lost to scammers in this new type of scam known as Digital Arrest, in the year 2022. Although this amount may seem meagre, a total of 91 Crores was lost.

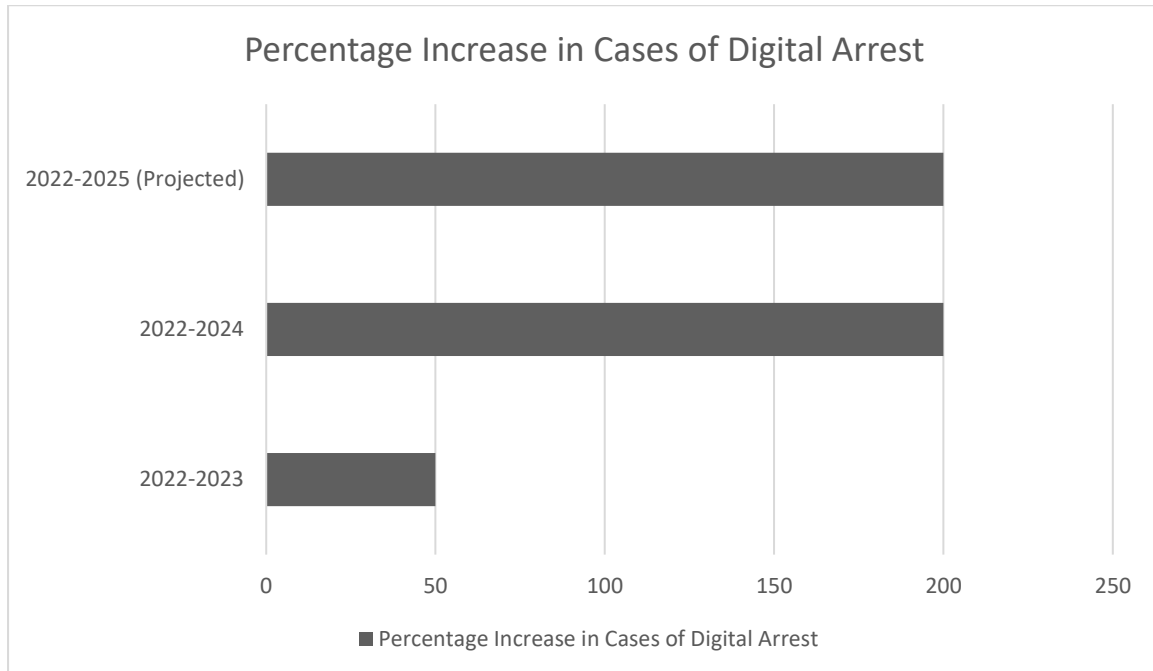
In 2023, an amount of 390 Crore was swayed of different victims, that of a stunning 1,935 Crore in 2024 and 210 Crore in just two months of 2025.⁴

⁴ Ibid.

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The instances of digital arrest have been increasing at almost double the speed. The data for 2022, as reported on the NCRP, shows that cases of digital arrest were close to 40,000.

A more than 50% increase over the previous year is seen in the reported cases of digital arrests in 2023.

A sudden chill descended in 2024, accompanied by a notable increase in digital arrests, which surpassed 120,000 reported cases. This rise requires urgent attention, as it represents a 100% increase over 2023 and a more than 200% increase over 2022.

The Real Picture Of 2025

Looking to the present, 2025 requires significant consideration, particularly in light of the data published by the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal. In just two months, close to 20,000 cases of digital arrest have been reported.

The dire straits of 2025 can be seen more profoundly in the percentage increase table; the data for the first two months of 2025, i.e., January and February, already match the pace of the year 2024.

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If this trend continues, the projected total for **2025 will be equal to $10,000 \times 12 = 1,20,000$** , which would match 2024's alarming figures.

However, unlike previous years where increases happened over full years, **2025 is already matching 2024 in just two months**, suggesting the danger is **far more immediate**.

There is no doubt that digital arrest cases have increased significantly each year. In 2024, 1,20,000 cases were recorded in 12 months. In 2025, we are on track to hit the same number **in a fraction of the time**, i.e., in two months. Therefore, it is factually correct that at this speed, we will eventually reach the exact numbers as those of the previous year.

The imminent danger is in the fact that the year has just started and already it is on the path to match the pace of 2024, because there are some months in a year when a boom of cybercrimes has always been seen, If the pace accelerates even slightly **the year-end total could hit 1,44,000, a 20% rise over 2024**.

It can also be seen that, in terms of the defrauded amount, 2025 is already on a path to surpass every other year's statistics. According to the data provided by the government, in the very **first quarter of 2024**, i.e. from January-April, a loss of **120 Crores** was recorded, whereas in just the first two months of 2025, **210 Crores** have been lost to scamsters.

If we take the average for a single month of 2024 and 2025, it comes out to be 30 Crores and 105 Crores per month, respectively. Comparing these two, a difference of 75 crores is already evident, with more being lost in one month than in the previous year. Converting this data into a percentage, the one month in 2025 has seen a 2.5 times or 250% increase in the defrauded amount.

Thus, the real picture for 2025 is bleak, as it has already surpassed the previous year and is growing to set new records in digital arrest scams.

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Analysing the Targets

Digital Arrest scams, as mentioned earlier, involve a complex process and can only be inflicted with complete preparation. The scamsters may allege that the victim is engaged in a high-profile money laundering case and is to be digitally arrested, or that there is a parcel in the victim's name containing various illegal substances.

Upon analyzing multiple reported cases, a clear trend emerges: people across all walks of life have fallen victim to this scam. However, a deeper look reveals that vulnerability often varies significantly by age group.

For this study, the population has been categorized into three age brackets to understand susceptibility and vulnerability to digital arrest scams more accurately:

- **Senior Citizens:** Individuals aged 60 and above, as defined by the *National Policy for Senior Citizens*.⁵
- **Youth:** Those between the ages of 15 and 29, in line with the definition provided by the *National Youth Policy, 2014*.⁶
- **Adults:** Citizens aged between 30 and 59, falling outside the youth and senior categories.

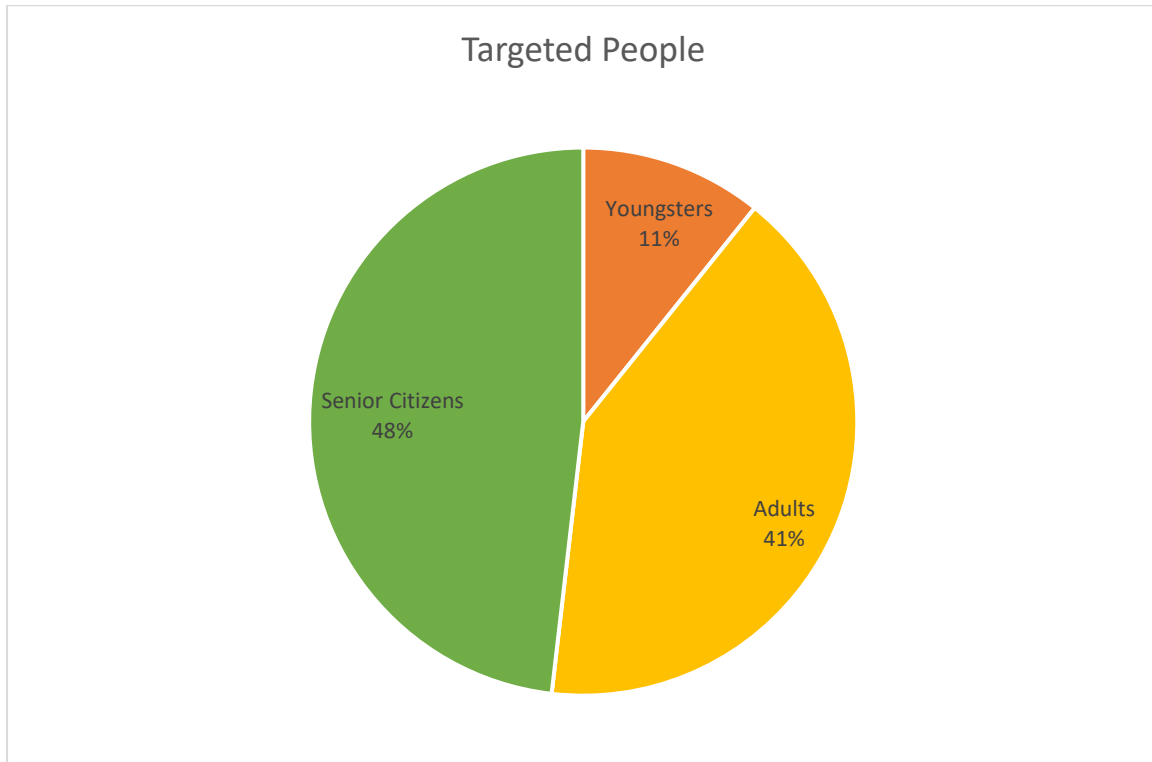
⁵ Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, National Policy for Senior Citizens, March 2011, <https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/dnpssc.pdf>

⁶ Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, National Youth Policy, 2014, https://www.rgniyd.gov.in/sites/default/files/pdfs/scheme/nyp_2014.pdf

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The pie chart above illustrates a striking pattern in the demographic spread of digital arrest scam victims in India. **Senior citizens (aged 60 and above)** make up the largest share, accounting for **48%** of the total cases studied. This suggests that fraudsters often view this age group as easy targets, likely due to limited digital literacy and unfamiliarity with cybercrime tactics.

Following closely, **adults aged 30–59 years** represent **41%** of the victims. This suggests that, although this group is generally more active online, they are also not immune to these scams, possibly falling prey due to busy lifestyles, stress, or an over-reliance on technology without sufficient caution.

Young individuals (aged 15–29 years) form the remaining **11%** of the sample. Although they are considered more tech-savvy and digitally literate, the increasing number of cases among them reflects the growing sophistication of these scams, which can now deceive even the digitally literate.

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This data highlights a crucial insight that **digital awareness alone is not always a safeguard against digital arrest scams**. However, a clear trend shows that individuals with lower digital literacy, particularly senior citizens, are at a **higher risk**, making age a significant factor in assessing vulnerability. Therefore, the trend of senior citizens falling prey to more digital arrest scams can be attributed to this reason.

Changing Trends In The Targets

The 11% and 41% numbers for Youngsters and Adults, respectively, are a significant concern. While the above position that Senior Citizens are less tech-savvy and therefore more likely not to understand the complexities of the scam is true.

The victims are no longer just the elderly and less tech-savvy, as it can be seen that even the youngsters, who are often completely technologically aware and hard to scam, are falling for the scam in significant numbers.

In October 2023, a 23-year-old woman from Faridabad fell prey to a complicated digital arrest scam and was forced to stay on a video call for **17 long days, essentially under digital arrest**.⁷

A disturbing trend is evident, where professionals from all spheres are being targeted. A 28-year-old woman **techie** lost money in a drug parcel scam,⁸.

A 34-year-old **software engineer** lost his money due to the threat of digital arrest,⁹ a 29-year-old **woman lawyer**, using the modus operandi of drugs in parcels,¹⁰ A 70-year-old

⁷ Faridabad woman duped of Rs 2.5 lakh, 'arrested digitally' by cyber criminals, The Print, November 3, 2023, <https://theprint.in/india/faridabad-woman-duped-of-rs-2-5-lakh-arrested-digitally-by-cyber-criminals/1830020/>

⁸ Woman loses Rs 4 lakh to cyber scammers impersonating Mumbai police, Deccan Herald, August 15, 2023, <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/woman-loses-rs-4-lakh-to-cyber-scammers-impersonating-mumbai-police-2648894>

⁹ Fraudsters use an IPS officer's name to dupe a Pune-based software engineer of Rs 19 lakh, The Indian Express, January 30, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/pune-fraud-ips-officer-name-dupe-software-engineer-9134173/>

¹⁰ FedEx scam: Bengaluru woman made to strip by scammers posing as govt officers, loses ₹15 lakh, Live Mint, April 10, 2024, <https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/fedex-scam-bengaluru-woman-made-to-strip-by-scammers-posing-as-govt-officers-loses-rs-15-lakh-11712715816543.html>

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Industrialist threatened with ED arrest lost 95 lakhs,¹¹ a **doctor**,¹² a **businessman**,¹³ a **religious figure**,¹⁴ **Indian defence officers**,¹⁵ highly **educated professionals**,¹⁶ **journalists**,¹⁷ **political leaders**,¹⁸ **Actors**.¹⁹

Categorization based on Place.

After analyzing the age-wise targeting patterns, particularly the alarming trend of senior citizens being the primary victims, a more profound and more insightful picture begins to emerge when we examine the **geographical distribution** of these scams. Understanding which regions report the highest number of digital arrest cases can provide valuable context in identifying potential hotspots or hubs for such cybercrimes.

This regional data becomes crucial not only from a law enforcement perspective but also in shaping **awareness campaigns**. When communities are made aware of the local prevalence of

¹¹ 70-year-old industrialist duped of Rs 95 lakhs with threat of 'ED arrest', The Indian Express, June 11, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/pune-elderly-industrialist-duped-with-threat-of-ed-arrest-9386330/>

¹² Doctor from Secunderabad loses ₹5.80 lakh to parcel scam, The Hindu, 25th Jun, 2024, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/doctor-from-secunderabad-loses-580-lakh-to-parcel-scam/article68327910.ece>

¹³ Fraudsters dupe Dadar businesswoman of Rs 5.88 crore with fake drug parcel story, The Indian Express, July 16 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/fraudsters-dupe-dadar-businesswoman-with-fake-drug-parcel-story-9455160/>

¹⁴ Vishnu Varma, Kerala bishop duped of ₹15 lakh by cyber fraudsters, case filed, The Hindustan Times, August 9, 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/kerala-bishop-duped-of-15-lakh-by-cyber-fraudsters-case-filed-101723144808182-amp.html>.

¹⁵ Jagdeep Singh Deep, Scamsters target retired IAS officer, dupe him of Rs 76 Lakh, The Indian Express, October 4, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/cyber-fraud-retired-ias-officer-dupe-him-of-76l-9602864/>

¹⁶ J Sam Daniel Stalin, Tamil Nadu Professor Placed Under Digital Arrest, Duped of Rs 10 Lakh, NDTV, September 21, 2024, <https://www.ndtv.com/tamil-nadu-news/tamil-nadu-professor-placed-under-digital-arrest-duped-of-rs-10-lakh-6616223>

¹⁷ Richa Mishra, I thought it was a scam call until I wasn't: Journalist's digital arrest ordeal, India Today, October 8, 2024, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/cyber-fraud-fake-phone-call-unknown-number-digitally-trapped-for-hours-victim-account-2612768-2024-10-07>.

¹⁸ Fake CBI sleuths demand Rs 15 cr from BJP leader Vakati Narayana Reddy after 'self-imposed custody', New Indian Express, October 9, 2024, https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2024/Oct/09/fake-cbi-sleuths-demand-rs-15-cr-from-bjp-leader-vakati-narayana-reddy-after-self-imposed-custody?utm_source=website&utm_medium=related-stories

¹⁹ MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav Announces Reward For 3 Cyber Cops Who Foiled 'Digital Arrest' Fraud Targeting Dubai-Based Businessman, The Free Press Journal, November 12, 2024, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/bhopal/mp-chief-minister-mohan-yadav-announces-reward-for-3-cyber-cops-who-foiled-digital-arrest-fraud-targeting-dubai-based-businessman>.

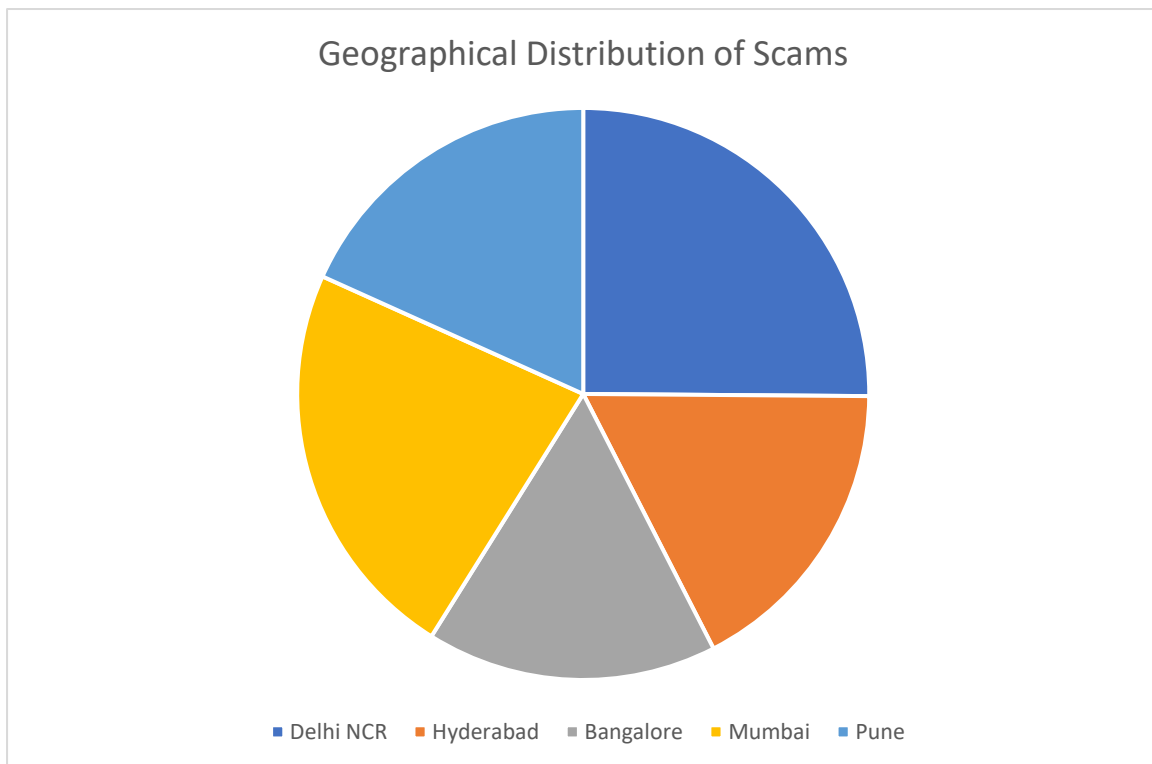
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such scams, they are more likely to stay vigilant. People living in high-risk areas must be especially cautious and informed, as they are more frequently targeted by fraudsters who claim the victim is linked to serious criminal allegations, such as involvement in money laundering operations or receiving parcels containing illegal drugs.

By pinpointing the areas most affected, preventive measures can be deployed where they are needed most, and residents can already be prepared, even when provided with so-called compelling evidence, ultimately building stronger community resistance against this growing digital menace.



In this Pie Chart, the top five states are listed based on a sample taken from all over India for the study.

Delhi and Mumbai bear the most number of digital arrest cases, followed by **Hyderabad, Pune and Bangalore**. Although this list is not exhaustive, upon scrutinizing the data, it is evident that the states with the highest incidence of digital arrest cybercrimes are these.

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Scammers are often seen as more interested in duping people from these states, whether through fair means or foul. A digital arrest scam is designed to be so complicated and well-orchestrated that even police officials and law enforcement agencies may be swayed.

People from these five states must be especially cautious, meaning they should be vigilant about any call that might allegedly be from a public authority or involve parting with money

immediately.

Modern scammers now leverage digital tools, such as AI-generated audio and video deepfakes, as well as realistic forged documents, to present convincing, highly legitimate evidence. False but authentic-looking documents, certificates, and references are meticulously crafted to mimic genuine communications, deceiving even trained professionals and tech-savvy individuals. Scams are now organized and methodical, supported by technology that enables fraudsters to scale their efforts and adapt quickly to detection strategies.

Employment of modern techniques and evolving ways can be understood by looking at various real-life examples,

- In one case involving a woman from Mumbai, scammers connected with the victim via **video calls, wearing police uniforms**, and also presented crucial documents, such as **arrest warrants**.²⁰
- Ankush Bahuguna, a famous influencer, lost his money after being contacted by scammers from an **international automated call**. He was instructed to press zero on the dial pad and speak to customer care, after which he was scammed by being put in digital arrest for 40 hours.²¹

²⁰ Mumbai woman loses Rs 1.5 crore in cyber scam after ordering food online for daughter, Business Today, January 3, 2024, <https://www.businesstoday.in/technology/news/story/mumbai-woman-loses-rs15-crore-in-cyber-scam-after-ordering-food-online-for-daughter-459412-2025-01-03>.

²¹ Mumbai influencer Ankush Bahuguna describes 'digital arrest' cyber fraud: held hostage for 40 hours, Live Mint, January 5, 2025 <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/hostage-for-40-hours-social-media-influencer-ankush-bahuguna-describes-experience-of-cyber-fraud-lost-money-11736073631723.html>.

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- In another case, **forged letters** purportedly from the **Supreme Court of India**, even bearing the **seal of the Hon'ble Court**, were sent, ultimately causing the victim to lose one crore.²²
- An **authority letter** for money transfer, **bearing the emblem of the Reserve Bank of India**, led a victim into transferring 32 lakhs in a fake digital arrest scam involving money laundering.²³
- A woman was looted of her money via a fake **CBI confidentiality agreement**, and the **Directorate of Enforcement, Arrest and Freezing Orders**. Moreover, she was asked to maintain a diary of all her financial accounts and send a photo for verification purposes.²⁴
- SP Oswal, chairman and managing director of the textile manufacturer Vardhman, was defrauded by conducting a **fake virtual court hearing** with a digital **impersonation of the Chief Justice of India**, DY Chandrachud, as the judge.²⁵
- A man from UP was scammed when fraudsters escalated the deception by **impersonating a judge** and conducting **fake virtual hearings** through WhatsApp for almost **a month**.²⁶
- 4.33 lakh was defrauded from an IIT Delhi student, and then immediately, **USDTs, a cryptocurrency**, were bought and sold at higher prices so that the money can never be returned, showing the technological upper hand of the scammers.²⁷

²² Siolim woman falls prey to digital arrest, Herald Goa, December 29,

2024 <https://www.heraldgoa.in/goa/siolim-woman-falls-prey-to-digital-arrest/417782>

²³ 4 arrested for providing bank accounts to cyber frauds Hindustan Times January 10, 2025,

<http://hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/4-arrested-for-providing-bank-accounts-to-cyber-frauds-101736447056144.html>

²⁴ Threatened with 'digital arrest', Pune senior citizen loses Rs 4.37 crore in cyber fraud, The Indian Express, January 28, 2025, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/threatened-with-digital-arrest-pune-senior-citizen-loses-rs-4-37-crore-in-cyber-fraud-9804443/>

²⁵ What are digital arrests, the newest deepfake tool used by cybercriminals? Al Jazeera, February 11, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/11/what-are-digital-arrests-the-newest-deepfake-tool-used-by-cybercriminals>

²⁶ UP Man Loses Over Rs 1 cr in 'Digital Arrest' Fraud Involving Fake Court Hearings." The Week, July 2 2025, <https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2025/07/02/des68-up-digital-arrest.html>.

²⁷ Digital arrest: Cyber fraudster arrested for duping IIT student of Rs 4.3 lakh, The Indian Express, November 20, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/digital-arrest-cyber-fraudster-iit-student-9821741/>

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THE SCAMMER’S PLAYBOOK

Step 1- The Panic Call

The scam always begins the same way: you get an unexpected call, the caller sets the ground for the fraud by saying that your SIM will be deactivated or any other kind of danger suggesting urgency, then comes a video call from someone claiming to be a law-enforcement officer from the CBI, the ED, TRAI, or the local, dressed in proper uniform and even carrying an ID card.²⁸ They tell you that your name has come up in a money-laundering investigation or that a package addressed to you, carrying illegal items, has been seized; they tell you FIRs have been registered against you. To make their story seem real, they even show you doctored court orders or fake arrest warrants created with AI. By the time they finish, you’ve been convinced you’re in serious trouble.

With your fear and seriousness, the scammers are now ready to trap you in the next step that follows.

Step 2- The Digital Arrest

After the initial scare, things quickly take a darker turn. The scammer tells you there’s no way out, that if you don’t follow their instructions, you’ll end up in jail. To make it look official and formal, they instruct you to stay on a video call for the entire ‘investigation’ and not to speak to anyone else. This is how the term ‘digital arrest’ comes into play.

Under pressure, victims are made to remain isolated for days or even weeks, always on camera. The scammers make it clear you can't share what's happening with anyone, supposedly because the case is under investigation. All of this is a means to control the victim through fear and prolong the scam for as long as possible.

²⁸ NDTV, "Retired School Principal Duped Of Rs 1.02 Crore In A Digital Arrest." NDTV, June 2 2025, <https://www.nd.com/india-news/retired-school-principal-duped-of-rs-1-02-crore-in-a-digital-arrest-8565347>.

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In such cases, the scamsters essentially use the initial scare to get the victim to stay on a video call, exploiting the victim from within.

The timeline for which a person is kept isolated and in digital arrest is shocking. One such case has recently happened, a 74-year-old woman was digitally arrested, isolated from everyone for almost **a month**²⁹, losing 78 lakhs in the process. In another horrific case, an elderly couple was kept in digital arrest for **three whole months**.³⁰ Losing almost five crore. Then comes the final nail in the coffin,

Step 3- The Payment

In the final stage of the scam, after the victim has been isolated and pushed to the edge mentally, the scammers make their ultimate move: they start demanding money. They often have different ways of doing this. Sometimes they ask for a ‘security deposit’, claiming the money is just for safekeeping and will be returned after the investigation. At other times, they impose fake fines or outright request the victim's bank details, quickly draining any money from the account.

Once the scammers obtain the money, they don't waste any time. The stolen funds are usually converted into cryptocurrency, making them harder to track, or the money is spread across multiple accounts to conceal their tracks.

While the primary goal of these scams is usually to steal money, there have been cases that reveal an even darker side. In one shocking incident, a 26-year-old woman was forced to strip on a video call while being kept under "digital arrest," turning the scam into an act of

²⁹

Older woman kept under digital arrest for 1 month, robbed of Rs 78 lakh in Bengaluru, The Times of India, July 25, 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/elderly-woman-kept-under-digital-arrest-for-1-month-robbed-of-rs-78-lakh-in-bengaluru/articleshow/122911730.cms>

³⁰ "Elderly couple duped of Rs 4.79 crore in 'digital arrest' scam, two arrested." The New Indian Express, June 11, 2025, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2025/Jun/11/elderly-couple-duped-of-rs-479-crore-in-digital-arrest-scam-2-arrested>.

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sextortion as well.³¹ This case showed that the intention behind digital arrest isn't always limited to financial fraud, but sometimes it involves blackmail and sexual abuse, too.

In another shocking incident, this scam was responsible for taking lives as well. A Bangalore employee committed suicide after being mentally tortured and losing money after being digitally arrested by scamsters.³²

Table Showcasing Details of Digital Arrest Scam.

Scam Element	Description	Impact on Victims	Duration
False Authority	Impersonation of law enforcement agencies like CBI, ED, Police	Loss of ability to distinguish real from fake authority	Throughout the entire scam period
Fake Documentation	AI-generated court orders, arrest warrants, and official documents	Belief in the legitimacy of fabricated legal documents	Initial and middle stages
Technology Abuse	Misuse of video calling platforms for fake surveillance	Feeling constantly monitored and under surveillance	Continuous during "digital arrest"
Psychological Pressure	Creating intense fear through threats of imprisonment	Severe mental stress, anxiety, and decision impairment	Escalates throughout the process
Isolation Tactics	Forcing victims to cut off contact with family and friends	Complete social disconnection and vulnerability	Can last from days to months
Financial Exploitation	Multiple methods of extracting money from victims	Significant financial losses ranging from thousands to crores	Final stage of the scam
Evidence Destruction	Converting stolen funds to cryptocurrency to avoid tracing	Difficulty in recovery and legal recourse	Immediately after the money transfer

³¹ "Digital Arrest: Mumbai Woman Made To Strip, Duped Of Rs 1.7 Lakh In 'Digital Arrest' Shocker." NDTV, December 2 2023, www.ndtv.com/india-news/digital-arrest-mumbai-woman-made-to-strip-duped-of-rs-1-7-lakh-in-digital-arrest-shocker-7145284.

³² "Digital Arrest Horror: Man Transfers Rs 11 Lakh To Scammer, Dies By Suicide." NDTV, July 25 2025, <https://www.ndtv.com/bangalore-news/rs-11-lakh-fraud-and-harassment-man-dies-by-suicide-fearing-digital-arrest-8883614>.

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HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

There is a single golden rule that promises protection against this digital arrest scam. Law enforcement agencies have never requested money for security deposits; moreover, an arrest cannot occur over a video or voice call. Arrest, according to Indian Law, in Section 43 of the BNSS³³ It requires **physical force and actual touch** by a police officer, that too, if a person is not complying, no provision allows anyone to arrest someone digitally.

Furthermore, it must be noted that under the BNSS, Indian Criminal Law, whenever an arrest is made,

- the perpetrator is always given a chance to inform his/her family members³⁴ Moreover, while arresting,
- the arrest warrant requires the signature of the officer.³⁵
- There always has to be a presence of one witness while arresting an offender, who shall be a member of the family of the accused or a respectable member of the locality.³⁶
- Right to consult and meet an advocate of your choice while being interrogated.³⁷

Arrest in India is a physical process with extensive legal safeguards; no genuine police officer or court will ever use WhatsApp, video, or phone calls to arrest or extort money from you.

Immediate Steps

If you ever find yourself caught up in a digital arrest scam, it's essential to act quickly and calmly. Here are a few steps you can take right away:

- Disconnect immediately / Hang up right away – If you're on a call with someone who is threatening or demanding personal information, it's best to end the call immediately.

³³ Section 43. Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Government of India.

³⁴ Section 36(c). Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Government of India.

³⁵ Section 36(b)(ii). Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Government of India.

³⁶ Section 36(b)(i). Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Government of India.

³⁷ Section 38. Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. Government of India.

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- Do not pay any money – Regardless of how convincing or persistent the caller appears, do not transfer any money or share your banking details.
- Talk to someone you trust – Scammers often pressure you to stay silent. Instead, reach out to a trusted friend or family member and let them know what happened. They might offer helpful advice or support.
- Report the scam immediately – Finally, the most crucial step of all: ensure that you report the call and the attempt to the authorities. File a report at your nearest police station or use an official government helpline. Reporting helps protect not only you but also others from being scammed.

Keeping these guidelines in mind can not only save you from scams like digital arrest but also from any new adaptations of such scams. Remember, you're not alone, and following these steps can make all the difference.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE A VICTIM

The First Crucial 24 Hours

The moments immediately after discovering a digital arrest scam are critical. The single most important step is to act quickly by reporting the fraud to the police or the national cybercrime helpline (1930) or visiting cybercrime.gov.in, which should be your top priority. The window for the best chance at recovering the funds that you have lost is incredibly short, experts and investigators stress that the first 24 hours, and especially the first 4 hours (the "**golden hour**"), are when you have the highest likelihood of your money being traced and frozen before it is moved through multiple accounts or withdrawn by scammers.

Unfortunately, many victims hesitate due to shock, fear, or embarrassment, often waiting several days before they finally report what happened. This delay dramatically reduces your chances of recovering lost funds, as fraudsters quickly transfer stolen money through complex networks or convert it to cryptocurrency.

Where To Report the Crime?

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For reporting the crime of digital arrest or any cybercrime to that effect, there is a single easy-to-remember cyber helpline number and a website: -

- Helpline- 1930.
- Website- www.cybercrime.gov.in

In a recent case, the 1930 helpline number helped save a senior citizen after he was duped out of his money by scammers. The police were able to return almost 1.29 crores to the senior citizen after he contacted the helpline within the crucial first 24 hours.³⁸

THE WAY FORWARD

Government Action

India is a republic and a welfare state, which means it has an elected government responsible for the economic and social well-being of all its citizens. It's also the government's job to fight and stop scams like digital arrest, which can ruin people's lives. The authorities have been working hard to put an end to these dangerous scams.

One example of their efforts is the many awareness campaigns they organize. Through these, people learn there's no such thing as a "cyber arrest" and how to recognize and avoid these traps. For instance, Mr. Viswanathan, a retired government employee, was on the brink of transferring his money to cybercriminals due to a digital arrest when he recalled one such campaign he had attended and immediately reported the scam to the nearest police station.³⁹

When the police began investigating these cases, they discovered that the scam operates across several countries, including Hong Kong, Cambodia, and China. Thanks to

³⁸ Cyber Helpline 1930 Foils Digital Arrest Scam, Saves ₹1.29 Crore For 73-Year-Old Doctor In Mumbai, The Free Press Journal, June 6, 2025, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/cyber-helpline-1930-foils-digital-arrest-scam-saves-129-crore-for-73-year-old-doctor-in-mumbai>.

³⁹ Srinivas, Vadrevu. "Andhra Pradesh: 76-Year-Old Escapes Cyber Criminals' Tentacles, Saves Rs 1.20 Crore." Deccan Chronicle, February 8 2025, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/southern-states/andhra-pradesh/andhra-pradesh-76-years-old-escapes-cyber-criminals-tentacles-saves-rs-120-crore-1860049>.

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international cooperation, some scammers based abroad have been identified and brought to justice.⁴⁰ Indian cyber police recently busted a big gang operating out of Thailand.⁴¹

As technology grows and cybercrimes increase, the government has taken further steps to protect citizens, the government in 2018 approved the idea of ‘I4C’ known as the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre, which is an initiative by the Ministry of Home Affairs, I4C has managed to perform a lot of overhauling functions in the cybercrime sector of India, with it working for the betterment of Internet and protection of people from cybercrimes, I4C recently was responsible for blocking close to 83,668 WhatsApp accounts and 3,962 Skype IDs used for the scam of digital arrest.⁴²

In these scams, criminals often pretend to be CBI officers. To fight back, the real CBI launched "Operation Chakra V" and has arrested several key individuals behind these scams nationwide. These measures demonstrate that both the government and the police are doing their best to protect people from digital arrest and other online scams.⁴³

In summary, India's whole-of-government approach, which combines technological intervention, international collaboration, robust law enforcement, and extensive citizen education, demonstrates a comprehensive commitment to countering the sophisticated threat of digital arrest scams and safeguarding the interests and dignity of all its citizens.

The fight against this scam is not a fight in persona, but in rem. There is a need for everyone to stay informed, share knowledge with their families and communities, and support victims without judgment.

⁴⁰ "Digital arrest scam: Delhi cyber police arrest three after retired officer cheated of Rs 48.5 lakh." The Tribune, April 19, 2025, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/delhi/digital-arrest-scam-delhi-cyber-police-arrest-3-after-retired-officer-cheated-of-rs-48-5-lakh/>.

⁴¹ NDTV. "In Madhya Pradesh, Cops' Big 'Digital Arrest' Bust Is a Thailand-Based Gang." NDTV, June 24 2025, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/digital-arrest-madhya-pradesh-woman-cheated-of-rs-14-lakh-thailand-cambodia-based-cyberfraud-gang-8750301>.

⁴² "More Than 83,668 WhatsApp Accounts Used for Digital Arrest Blocked: Home Ministry." Telangana Today, March 25 2025, <https://telanganatoday.com/more-than-83668-whatsapp-accounts-used-for-digital-arrest-blocked-home-ministry>.

⁴³ Ranjan, Mukesh. "CBI Raids 12 Locations, Arrests Four Kingpins in Digital Arrest Case; Victim Extorted 42 Times Over Three Months." The New Indian Express, April 15 2025, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Apr/15/cbi-raids-12-locations-arrests-four-kingpins-in-digital-arrest-case-victim-extorted-42-times-over-three-months>.

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