



NIA's Combat Against the Terror-Gangster Nexus

For Prelims: [National Investigation Agency](#), [Organized crime](#), [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#), [2008 Mumbai attacks](#), [Administrative Reforms Commission](#)

For Mains: Organised Crime and Terrorism, Terror-Gangster Nexus, Money Laundering, Arms smuggling.

Source: IE

Why in News?

The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** recently convened its inaugural meeting with police officials from Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi to tackle the growing concern of the **terror-gangster nexus**.

- This meeting comes in the wake of increasing reports of **organized crime linked to terror groups**, particularly those with [Pro-Khalistan Elements \(PKEs\)](#) and connections to Pakistan.

What are the Highlights of the NIA Meeting on the Terror-Gangster Nexus?

- **Mapping of Extortion Calls:** The meeting focused on mapping extortion calls made by gangsters, especially those linked to terror syndicates, PKEs, and **Pakistan-based networks**.
- **Cybercrime and Drug Smuggling:** The use of cyberspace by gangsters to evade arrest and their involvement in [drug smuggling](#) were key topics of discussion.
- **Central-State Coordination:** The meeting emphasised the need for collaborative action plans and the implementation of **uniform standard operating procedures (SOPs)** to strengthen centre-state coordination in combating organised crime and terrorism.
- **Strategic Significance:** The meeting aligns with the directive from Union Home Minister to establish a **model anti-terrorism structure under the NIA's purview**, aiming for a more unified approach to tackling the terror-gangster nexus.

What is the Terror-Gangster Nexus?

- **About:** The Terror-Gangster Nexus refers to the **collaboration between organised crime groups (gangsters) and terrorist organisations**.
 - This alliance often involves sharing resources, networks, and operational tactics to further their respective goals.
 - Terrorism and organised crime share a **symbiotic relationship**, where the **operations of one often benefit the other**.
 - These nexuses often have international dimensions, with connections to foreign countries that support or harbour terrorist activities.
 - Gangsters often provide financial support and logistical assistance to terrorist groups. This can include [money laundering](#), drug trafficking, and [arms smuggling](#).
 - Terrorist **organisations may recruit members from criminal gangs**, leveraging their existing skills in violence and evasion of law enforcement.
- **Key Conflict Zones of Gangster-Terrorism Nexus in India:**

- **Jammu and Kashmir (J&K):** Pakistan-based groups like [Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\)](#), [Jaish-e-Mohammad \(JeM\)](#), and others operate in J&K, often funded through Hawala, money laundering, and **drug money**.
 - The **kidnapping of Rubiya Sayeed in 1989** and the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight in 1999 highlight the use of criminal activities to further terrorist agendas.
- **Northeastern States:** Persistent insurgencies with groups like the [United Liberation Front of Assam \(ULFA\)](#) and [Naga insurgents](#). Poor governance allows criminal-terrorist collaboration.
 - Collaboration with **criminal groups in Myanmar and Bangladesh** exacerbates the problem, leading to a well-established crime-terror nexus in this region.
- **Western India (Maharashtra and Gujarat):** The infamous '**D-Company**,' led by **Dawood Ibrahim**, illustrates the overlap between organised crime and terrorism, particularly in the **1993 Mumbai bombings and the 2008 Mumbai attacks**.
 - Groups like the **Indian Mujahideen (IM)** and **Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI)** have been involved in criminal activities to fund their operations.
- **Naxalites/Maoists (The 'Red Corridor'):** The [Naxalite movement](#), which spans across several states in central and eastern India, has also **exhibited a strong nexus with organised crime**.
 - The Maoist groups **engage in extortion, illegal arms** trade, and running parallel governments in the areas under their control.
 - Their operations are **funded by criminal activities**, which in turn fuel their insurgency against the Indian state.
- **Punjab:** Punjab's history of terrorism, particularly during the **Khalistan movement**, was heavily financed by drug trafficking and smuggling operations. The **terror-drug nexus in the state continues to be a concern**.
- **Haryana and Delhi:** These regions have witnessed a **rise in gangster-related activities**, with connections to terror groups becoming increasingly evident.
 - The use of cyberspace by these **entities to coordinate and carry out operations has been a growing concern**.

What are the Key Facts About the National Investigation Agency?

- **About:** To combat the multifaceted threats of terrorism **involving inter-State and international linkages**, the Indian government established the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** in 2008.
 - It was established in response to the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Formed under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.
 - It was initiated based on recommendations from various experts and committees, including the [Administrative Reforms Commission](#).
- **Organisational Structure:** **Union Ministry of Home Affairs** (Parent Ministry), **New Delhi** (Headquarters).
- **Investigation Process:** State governments can refer cases to the NIA through the Central Government (Union Home Ministry). The NIA can also **take up cases suo motu or if directed by the Central Government**.
 - The NIA can investigate scheduled offenses committed outside India if they fall under its jurisdiction.
- **Mandate and Jurisdiction:** Investigates and prosecutes offences affecting national security, sovereignty, and international relations.
 - **Jurisdiction:** Operates across states **without needing special permission**; can also investigate crimes committed **outside India under the NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019**.
 - **Scheduled Offences:** The NIA investigates various offenses under laws such as the [Explosive Substances Act 1908](#), [Atomic Energy Act 1962](#), [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act 1967](#), [Anti-hijacking Act 2016](#) and others.
 - In September 2020, the **NIA's mandate was expanded to include offenses under the [Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act](#)** if connected to terrorism.
- **Special Courts:** Trials are conducted in special courts **designated by the Central Government, chosen in consultation** with the Chief Justice of the High Court of the respective State.

- **Operation Related to Terror-Gangster Nexus:** [Operation Dhvast](#).

What are the Challenges in Combating the Terror-Gangster Nexus?

- **Legislation:** Despite the [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita \(BNS\), 2023](#) introducing provisions for organised crime, challenges persist in integrating this framework with existing state laws like the [Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act \(MCOCA\), 1999](#) particularly given the **inter-State and international nature of such offences**.
- **Complex Networks:** Both terrorist and gangster organisations operate through intricate and decentralised networks, making it difficult for law enforcement to track and dismantle them.
- **Resource Sharing:** These groups often share resources such as weapons, funds, and safe houses, which enhances their operational capabilities and resilience.
- **Legal and Jurisdictional Issues:** Different countries have **varying laws and levels of enforcement, creating gaps** that these groups exploit. International cooperation is often hindered by legal and bureaucratic hurdles.
 - Ensuring the safety of witnesses who provide critical information can be challenging.
- **Technological Advancements:** The use of advanced technology for **communication, encryption, and cybercrime** makes it harder for authorities to intercept and monitor their activities.
- **Corruption and Infiltration:** Corruption within law enforcement and government agencies can impede efforts to combat these networks. Additionally, these groups may **infiltrate state institutions to gain protection and insider information**.
- **Local Support and Influence:** These groups often have **strong local support (like sleeper cells) and influence, which can provide them with protection** and resources, complicating efforts to root them out.

Way Forward

- **Legislative Reforms:** Enhance the implementation of **BNS, 2023** to uniformly address organised crime across India.
 - This law should define **criminal gangs, and their members, and set stringent provisions** for dealing with them, including bail provisions and stricter investigation timelines.
 - Strengthen laws and regulations to **combat terrorist financing**, including measures to target **virtual currencies and crowdfunding platforms (dark net)** used by extremist groups.
 - Implement **comprehensive rehabilitation programs for criminals to reintegrate them into society** and reduce repeat offenses.
- **Network Mapping:** Develop a comprehensive database of all known Terror-Gangster Nexus, their second-line commanders, and their network of operatives. Continuous and detailed interrogation, combined with raids, should be used to dismantle these networks.
 - Invest in advanced **digital forensics and block chain capabilities** to track and disrupt the online activities of these groups, including their use of social media and encrypted communication channels.
- **Joint Operations:** Conduct joint operations with foreign law enforcement agencies like [INTERPOL](#), to dismantle transnational networks and bring perpetrators to justice.
 - Conduct more frequent and sophisticated **undercover operations to infiltrate terrorist and criminal networks**, gathering valuable intelligence and disrupting their activities.
- Form small, independent, **self-contained Special Task Forces (STFs)** with the **mandate to dismantle organised gangs**. These units should have the authority to **conduct raids, seizures, and interrogations without bureaucratic hindrance**, and be equipped with the necessary logistics and equipment.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the terror-gangster nexus in India, its impact on national security, and the challenges it poses to law enforcement. What strategies can effectively dismantle these networks?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. Analyse the complexity and intensity of terrorism, its causes, linkages and obnoxious nexus. Also suggest measures required to be taken to eradicate the menace of terrorism. **(2021)**

Q. India's proximity to the two of the world's biggest illicit opium-growing states has enhanced her internal security concerns. Explain the linkages between drug trafficking and other illicit activities such as gunrunning, money laundering and human trafficking. What counter-measures should be taken to prevent the same? **(2018)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/nia-s-combat-against-the-terror-gangster-nexus>

