



## 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>

