Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Hindustan Times interview with Punjab DGP: Misleading framing, heroin figure contradicted

A Hindustan Times interview with Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav presents anti-drug and anti-gang enforcement alongside pro-Khalistan activity as a single security picture. The Lab assesses the item as Misleading, with three claims unsupported, including a heroin seizure figure roughly ten times higher than Punjab Police's own published update.

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NARRATIVES
Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism · Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism

OUR ASSESSMENT

The Hindustan Times interview with Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav presents the state's anti-drug and anti-gang operations as evidence of effective policing while placing pro-Khalistan militancy within a broader security narrative involving terrorism, Pakistan-backed narcotics trafficking and overseas criminal networks.

The central framing concern emerges from the interview's treatment of these issues as interconnected security threats. The reporter asks whether pro-Khalistan elements are collaborating with gangsters based abroad to destabilize Punjab. In response, the DGP discusses operations against pro-Khalistan terrorists and overseas gangsters but does not identify a specific joint operation or provide evidence establishing the collaboration suggested in the question. The exchange therefore reinforces an association between Khalistan-related activity and transnational criminality without independently substantiating its broader implications.

This distinction matters because political advocacy for Khalistan, participation in separatist movements, involvement in violent militancy and participation in organized crime are separate categories requiring separate evidence. The existence of armed groups or criminal networks does not establish that individuals expressing support for Khalistan are involved in terrorism or narcotics trafficking. Presenting these subjects within a continuous security narrative risks encouraging readers to interpret political identity or affiliation as an indicator of criminality.

The interview also relies heavily on enforcement statistics to establish the credibility of Punjab Police's security operations. However, the reported seizure of 44,424 kg of heroin since March 2025 conflicts with a Punjab Police update published on November 1, 2026, which recorded 4,464 kg over the same campaign period. The substantial discrepancy requires clarification. Similarly, reported reductions in gang-related murders and shootings require comparable reporting periods before they can establish the scale of improvement claimed.

The interview's reference to Operation Hard Ball provides a documented basis for discussing transnational organized crime. The July 2026 U.S. Department of Justice announcement identified several India-based criminal organizations implicated in serious offences, including targeted killings, extortion and narcotics trafficking. It also alleged that one criminal enterprise collaborated with corrupt law-enforcement personnel in India. These findings demonstrate the complexity of transnational criminal activity but do not independently substantiate a general connection between Sikh political advocacy and organized crime.

The principal information-integrity concern is therefore the movement from documented drug enforcement and specific criminal investigations toward a broader security framing of pro-Khalistan activity. The interview does not explicitly characterize all Sikh political advocacy as terrorism, and its principal statements are attributable to an identified official. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of these subjects can reinforce an association between Sikh separatist politics, narcotics trafficking and threats to public security without providing sufficient evidence for that generalization.

THE CLAIM

Interview | Have made dent on drugs & gangs, challenges remain, says Punjab DGP

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On 2 November 2026 (updated on 3 November, India time), Hindustan Times published an interview titled "Interview | Have made dent on drugs & gangs, challenges remain, says Punjab DGP". Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav discussed the state's response to drug trafficking, organized crime, militant networks and allegations of deteriorating law and order. The interview highlighted a reported 90% conviction rate under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, Punjab's contribution to India's heroin seizures, and reductions in gang-related murders and shootings. These figures were presented as evidence that policing outcomes contradicted opposition criticism of the state's security situation.

The interview subsequently connected organized crime with questions about pro-Khalistan militancy. The reporter asked whether pro-Khalistan elements were attempting to destabilize Punjab with the assistance of gangsters operating abroad. Yadav responded by discussing efforts to dismantle militant networks and extradite wanted individuals, referring to pro-Khalistan "terrorists" and overseas gangsters within the same enforcement framework.

The DGP also credited the FBI-led Operation Hard Ball with helping reduce organized crime in Punjab. However, the interview did not examine the full implications of the operation's July 2026 indictments, including allegations that members of India-based criminal organizations had collaborated with corrupt Indian police personnel in extortion schemes and the fabrication of criminal accusations.

The Lab's assessment

The Lab assesses the article as Misleading, with a severity rating of 2. The principal concern is the manner in which documented narcotics enforcement, organized crime investigations and allegations of pro-Khalistan militancy are presented within a continuous security narrative. Although the interview includes identifiable sources and verifiable law-enforcement developments, several claims are insufficiently contextualized, while important findings concerning criminal activity and alleged corruption within Indian policing institutions receive limited examination.

Criminalization through association

The most significant framing issue arises from the reporter's question suggesting that pro-Khalistan elements are collaborating with overseas gangsters to destabilize Punjab. The question introduces this relationship as an apparent security concern without identifying a specific investigation, criminal proceeding or documented instance of collaboration. Yadav's response refers to efforts against pro-Khalistan terrorists and gangsters operating abroad but does not establish the broader relationship implied by the question.

This distinction is important. Political advocacy for Khalistan, participation in separatist movements, involvement in violent militancy and membership in organized criminal networks are separate categories that require distinct evidence. Criminal proceedings against particular individuals do not establish that people supporting Khalistan as a political objective are involved in terrorism, drug trafficking or organized crime.

The interview does not explicitly equate all Sikh political advocacy with terrorism. Nevertheless, placing Khalistan-related activity alongside narcotics trafficking, militant networks, foreign-based gangsters and threats to Punjab's stability can reinforce a broader association between Sikh separatist activism, politics and criminality. The concern is the insufficient distinction between established criminal conduct and political activity.

Operation Hard Ball: the evidence missing from the security narrative

A particularly important omission concerns the treatment of Operation Hard Ball. The DGP credits the FBI-led operation with contributing to improvements in Punjab's organized-crime situation. However, the July 7, 2026, U.S. Department of Justice announcement presents a more complex picture of the relationship between criminal networks and Indian law-enforcement institutions.

The opposition alleges that gangsters are operating with impunity in Punjab and extortion-related shootings are rising.

The data tells a different story. Organised crime-related murders fell from 43 in 2025 to 24, a 44% decline. Firing incidents dropped from 207 to 128 over the same period. The anti-gangster campaign launched on January 20 marked a turning point. We witnessed a gang war last year, but the situation has since improved. Operation Hard Ball by the FBI has also played a major role. In Punjab even a small fight becomes a firing incident. Punjab has the third-highest number of licensed firearms in the country after Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. So if two parties fight in Madhya Pradesh, they fight with sharp-edged weapons. When they fight in Punjab, they use firearms. On social media presence, such incidents also become big news.

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Hardly a day goes by without Punjab Police busting a terror module and recovering weapons. Are pro-Khalistan elements making desperate attempts to destabilise the state with the help of gangsters hiding abroad?

The frequency of these recoveries reflects our determination to dismantle such modules. Whether dealing with pro-Khalistan terrorists or gangsters operating from abroad, we are making every effort to bring them back to India to face justice. Our newly established Overseas Fugitive Tracking and Extradition Cell is doing outstanding work, and we have already successfully extradited multiple wanted individuals.

Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav credits Operation Hard Ball with helping curb organized crime while discussing pro-Khalistan militancy and overseas gangsters as security threats. However, the July 2026 U.S. Department of Justice indictments also implicated Indian law-enforcement personnel in alleged criminal collaboration. Prosecutors specifically accused members of the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria syndicate of working with corrupt Indian police officials to facilitate extortion and fabricate criminal cases. This significant dimension of Operation Hard Ball is absent from the DGP's response, which emphasizes enforcement successes without addressing allegations of criminal infiltration within India's own policing institutions. — Source: Hindustan Times interview, November 3, 2026

The operation resulted in charges against members of three India-based transnational criminal organizations, including the Bishnoi and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria enterprises. The indictments allege involvement in targeted killings, narcotics trafficking, extortion and other serious offences across several countries. Crucially, federal prosecutors also alleged that the Bhagwanpuria criminal organization had corrupted law-enforcement officers

in India and worked with corrupt government officials to facilitate extortion. According to the Justice Department, members of the organization provided false criminal allegations to Indian police, resulting in baseless proceedings and extortion attempts against perceived rivals.

The indictment includes a specific April 2026 allegation in which a Bhagwanpuria associate reportedly supplied a victim's identity to a corrupt police officer in Punjab, leading to allegedly fabricated murder accusations against members of the victim's family and subsequent extortion. These remain allegations subject to judicial determination, but they are directly relevant to any discussion of the operation's implications for Punjab's security environment.

The interview does separately raise internal police collusion, and Yadav acknowledges the dismissal of more than 32 police personnel facing serious drug-related allegations. However, this response is not connected to the findings of Operation Hard Ball, despite the DGP's explicit reference to that investigation as an enforcement success.

This creates an important gap in the account. Operation Hard Ball documented allegations not only of criminal networks operating across international borders but also of corrupt Indian officials facilitating criminal activity. Presenting the operation primarily as evidence of effective policing, without examining these specific allegations, provides an incomplete picture of the institutional vulnerabilities identified by U.S. investigators.

The distinction is particularly relevant because criminal networks cannot be understood solely through the political identities or alleged affiliations of those targeted by law enforcement. The U.S. indictments also raise questions about how criminal organizations allegedly exploited Indian law-enforcement structures, including through the misuse of criminal proceedings.

Statistical accuracy and selective presentation

The interview's enforcement statistics raise a separate factual concern. Yadav is reported as stating that Punjab Police recovered 44,424 kg of heroin under the Yudh Nashian Virudh campaign beginning in March 2025. However, a Punjab Police update issued on November 1, 2026, reported 4,464 kg of heroin seized during the campaign's first 20 months. The published interview figure is therefore approximately ten times the amount reported in the contemporaneous police update.

Similarly, the DGP cites a reduction in organized crime-related murders from 43 in 2025 to 24 in 2026, alongside a decrease in firing incidents from 207 to 128. The interview does not clearly establish that these figures cover equivalent reporting periods. Comparing a completed calendar year with an incomplete year can create a misleading impression of improvement unless the observation periods are aligned.

These discrepancies matter because the interview uses official statistics to establish institutional credibility before moving into broader claims about militant networks, organized crime and security threats. Where numerical assertions are inaccurate or incompletely contextualized, readers have less basis for evaluating the wider conclusions being presented.

Broader information-integrity implications

The article illustrates how documented enforcement activity can provide credibility to broader security narratives that are not supported to the same evidentiary standard. Verified criminal investigations, official police statistics and allegations of pro-Khalistan militancy are presented together, potentially encouraging readers to treat them as components of a single interconnected threat.

The DGP's comments are attributable to a named senior official, and the interview includes questions about police corruption, rehabilitation and other institutional challenges. These features distinguish it from anonymous or fabricated reporting. However, transparent attribution does not eliminate the need to scrutinize unsupported

associations, incomplete contextual information or discrepancies in reported evidence.
The Lab's concern is therefore is that the article places pro-Khalistan activity within a broad framework of terrorism and organized crime without sufficiently establishing the relationships implied, while giving limited attention to specific allegations of criminal collaboration involving Indian police personnel documented in the same international operation cited as an enforcement success.

The article's misleading effect lies in this imbalance: it foregrounds the alleged security threat associated with pro-Khalistan elements while leaving the role of corrupt Indian law-enforcement personnel in transnational criminal activity comparatively underexamined. This selective framing risks reinforcing associations between Sikh political activity and criminality without providing readers with the complete evidentiary context necessary to assess those claims.
The claims

Claim 1: Pro-Khalistan militants are working with overseas gangsters to destabilize Punjab. Verdict: Unsupported. The characterization is raised in the reporter's question. In response, the DGP discusses operations against pro-Khalistan terrorists and against overseas gangsters, but does not identify a specific joint operation or provide evidence establishing the collaboration the question suggests. The exchange reinforces an association between Khalistan-related activity and transnational criminality without independently substantiating it.

Claim 2: Pakistan intelligence recruits youth to conduct attacks. Verdict: Unsupported. The DGP describes operations and incentives, but the interview contains no independently checkable case documentation supporting the assertion.

Claim 3: Punjab seized 44,424 kg of heroin since March 2025. Verdict: Unsupported. The figure reported in the interview conflicts with a Punjab Police update published on 1 November 2026, which recorded 4,464 kg over the same campaign period. The discrepancy is substantial and requires clarification. On related numbers, the reported reductions in gang-related murders and shootings require comparable reporting periods before they can establish the scale of improvement claimed.

Context

The interview's reference to Operation Hard Ball rests on a documented basis. The July 2026 United States Department of Justice announcement identified several India-based criminal organizations implicated in serious offences, including targeted killings, extortion and narcotics trafficking. It also alleged that one criminal enterprise collaborated with corrupt law-enforcement personnel in India.

Those findings illustrate the complexity of transnational criminal activity. They do not independently substantiate a general connection between Sikh political advocacy and organized crime.

Enforcement statistics carry weight in public debate precisely because readers treat them as verifiable. Where a headline seizure figure departs by an order of magnitude from the police service's own published update, the figure cannot be relied upon as reported, and the credibility it is meant to lend to the wider security account does not follow.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	Pro-Khalistan militants are working with overseas gangsters to destabilize Punjab	UNSUPPORTED
02	Pakistan intelligence recruits youth to conduct attacks	UNSUPPORTED
03	Punjab seized 44,424 kg of heroin since March 2025	UNSUPPORTED

SOURCES

01 https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/interview-have-made-dent-on-drugs-gangs-challenges-remain-says-punjab-

02 Punjab Police campaign update published 1 November 2026 (heroin seizure total: 4,464 kg)

03 U.S. Department of Justice announcement, Operation Hard Ball, July 2026

Sikh Disinformation Lab

About Sikh Disinformation Lab

Sikh Disinformation Lab is an independent, evidence-based programme founded and hosted by the World Sikh Organization of Canada. It monitors, analyses and publicly documents disinformation affecting Sikhs.

The Lab examines claims against evidence, publishes assessments with that evidence attached, and tracks coordinated campaigns over time. Every published assessment names what was claimed, where it appeared, what the review found, and what that assessment rests on. Where an item makes several distinct claims, each is assessed separately.

Assessments are made against the methodology framework in force at the time of publication. That framework is public, versioned, and reviewed at each phase gate; a material change produces a new version rather than a silent edit. The full method is published at sikhdisinfolab.ca/method.

Corrections are dated entries, never silent edits. Where a published assessment is found to be wrong or incomplete, the correction is recorded against it and listed at sikhdisinfolab.ca/corrections. If you believe something published here is inaccurate, write to the programme and it will be reviewed.

Assessments are the responsibility of Sikh Disinformation Lab.

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