Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

Lokmat Times report ties Sikh gurdwara restorations to ISI recruitment without evidence

An IANS report republished by Lokmat Times asserts that Pakistan's restoration of historic gurdwaras may serve Inter-Services Intelligence efforts to recruit Sikh visitors and revive Khalistan sentiment. Sikh Disinformation Lab assesses the report as Misleading, resting on anonymous allegations and association rather than demonstrated connections.

PUBLISHED
17 November 2026

SOURCE POSTED
13 November 2026

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

OUR ASSESSMENT

What was published

On 13 November 2026, Lokmat Times published an IANS report titled "Pakistan's Sikh Outreach Raises Concerns Amidst Punjab Election Buzz."

The article portrays Pakistan's restoration and reopening of historic Sikh gurdwaras as a possible strategy by its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to influence Sikh communities and revive support for Khalistan ahead of Punjab's 2027 Assembly elections.

Citing unnamed Indian intelligence officials, the report links the reopening of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib in Lahore and the planned expansion of Gurdwara Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das Ji to alleged intelligence recruitment. It also invokes Pakistan's treatment of religious minorities, claims declining support for Khalistan and connects religious outreach with allegations of arms and narcotics smuggling.

The Lab's assessment

Verdict: Misleading and unsupported framing.

The central concern is how the article transforms Sikh religious heritage and access to historic gurdwaras into a narrative of foreign intelligence manipulation without presenting evidence connecting these specific religious initiatives to ISI operations.

The reopening of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi and plans to expand Gurdwara Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das Ji are documented developments. Both concern historically significant Sikh religious sites, and the restoration initiatives have been publicly discussed by Pakistani authorities and Sikh representatives. However, the article presents these developments primarily through the suspicion that increased Sikh pilgrimage could facilitate intelligence recruitment and the revival of Khalistan-related activity.

This framing treats Sikh religious participation as a potential security threat. Rather than examining the significance of restoring access to gurdwaras closed since Partition, the report suggests that Sikh visitors could become instruments of a foreign intelligence agency. The central allegation relies on unnamed intelligence officials without identifying specific recruitment operations, individuals, communications or documentary evidence connecting the restoration projects to the ISI.

The article further claims that support for Khalistan has been declining and that Pakistan is consequently shifting from violent methods to religious outreach. No survey, participation data or identifiable intelligence assessment is provided to substantiate this claimed decline or demonstrate that Sikh religious engagement is part of such a strategic transition.

Another significant concern is the use of Pakistan's Sikh population figures. The report contrasts an estimated 20 lakh Sikhs before Partition with the 15,998 recorded in Pakistan's 2023 census, presenting the difference as evidence of continuing persecution. This comparison omits the mass displacement of Sikh populations during the 1947 Partition. Although religious minorities in Pakistan face documented discrimination and violence, the demographic change cannot be attributed to contemporary persecution without accounting for Partition and subsequent migration.

The report also introduces allegations of drone-based arms and narcotics smuggling immediately after discussing Sikh pilgrimage and Khalistan. Cross-border smuggling is a documented security concern, but the article provides

no evidence linking the particular gurdwara restoration projects, Sikh pilgrims or religious organizations to those activities.

The cumulative effect is to connect Sikh religious access, Khalistan advocacy, Pakistani intelligence operations and organized criminal activity through repeated association rather than demonstrated relationships.

Context

For Sikhs, historic gurdwaras in Pakistan are not simply instruments of bilateral diplomacy. They are places of religious, cultural and historical importance, many of which became inaccessible following Partition. Their restoration and reopening carry significance for Sikh communities across national borders.

The article's framing shifts attention from this religious and historical context toward the possibility that Sikh engagement with these sites serves a hostile intelligence agenda.

Its reliance on anonymous security allegations, unsupported claims about political sentiment and the juxtaposition of religious pilgrimage with weapons smuggling creates an impression of organized foreign control without establishing the connections necessary to support that conclusion.

The central information-integrity concern is the securitization of Sikh religious heritage: legitimate religious access and restoration activities are portrayed as possible instruments of foreign intelligence recruitment, while Sikh political expression is associated with violence and outside manipulation without sufficient supporting evidence.

THE CLAIM

Pakistan's Sikh Outreach Raises Concerns Amidst Punjab Election Buzz

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On 13 November 2026, Lokmat Times published an IANS report headlined "Pakistan's Sikh Outreach Raises Concerns Amidst Punjab Election Buzz."

The report presents Pakistan's restoration and reopening of historic Sikh gurdwaras as a possible strategy by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to influence Sikh communities and revive support for Khalistan ahead of Punjab's 2027 Assembly elections.

Citing unnamed Indian intelligence officials, it links the reopening of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib in Lahore and the planned expansion of Gurdwara Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das Ji to alleged intelligence recruitment. It also invokes Pakistan's treatment of religious minorities, asserts a decline in support for Khalistan, and places religious outreach alongside allegations of arms and narcotics smuggling.

The Lab's assessment

The Lab assesses the report as Misleading.

The reopening of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi and plans to expand Gurdwara Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das Ji are documented developments. Both concern historically significant Sikh religious sites, and the restoration initiatives have been publicly discussed by Pakistani authorities and Sikh representatives.

The difficulty lies in the framing. The report presents these developments primarily through the suspicion that increased Sikh pilgrimage could facilitate intelligence recruitment and the revival of Khalistan-related activity. Rather than examining the significance of restoring access to gurdwaras closed since Partition, it suggests that Sikh visitors could become instruments of a foreign intelligence agency.

The claims

That the ISI is using gurdwara restoration to recruit Sikh visitors: Unsupported. The allegation rests on unnamed intelligence officials, with no independently presented evidence linking these projects to recruitment.

That the ISI intends to revive Khalistan sentiment through Sikh pilgrims: Unsupported. No identified recruitment network, operational records or individual cases are supplied.

That support for Khalistan is declining among Sikhs worldwide: Unsupported. No comparative research or identifiable data establishing this trend are presented. The report uses the claimed decline to argue that Pakistan is shifting from violent methods to religious outreach, without survey or participation data to substantiate it.

That Pakistan's Sikh population declined from approximately 20 lakh in 1947 to 15,998: Misleading. The 2023 census count is documented, but the comparison omits the mass displacement of Sikh populations during the 1947 Partition. Religious minorities in Pakistan face documented discrimination and violence; the demographic change nonetheless cannot be attributed to contemporary persecution without accounting for Partition and subsequent migration.

That the ISI has shifted from promoting violence to using religious outreach: Unsupported. This is a strategic inference with no underlying intelligence assessment or evidence of the claimed change disclosed.

The report also introduces allegations of drone-based arms and narcotics smuggling immediately after discussing Sikh pilgrimage and Khalistan. Cross-border smuggling is a documented security concern, but no evidence is provided linking the particular gurdwara restoration projects, Sikh pilgrims or religious organizations to those activities.

The cumulative effect is to connect Sikh religious access, Khalistan advocacy, Pakistani intelligence operations and organized criminal activity through repeated association rather than demonstrated relationships.

Context

For Sikhs, historic gurdwaras in Pakistan are not simply instruments of bilateral diplomacy. They are places of religious, cultural and historical importance, many of which became inaccessible following Partition. Their restoration and reopening carry significance for Sikh communities across national borders.

The report's framing shifts attention from that religious and historical context toward the possibility that Sikh engagement with these sites serves a hostile intelligence agenda. Its reliance on anonymous security allegations, unsupported claims about political sentiment and the juxtaposition of religious pilgrimage with

weapons smuggling creates an impression of organized foreign control without establishing the connections necessary to support that conclusion.

The central information-integrity concern is the securitization of Sikh religious heritage: legitimate religious access and restoration activities are portrayed as possible instruments of foreign intelligence recruitment, while Sikh political expression is associated with violence and outside manipulation without sufficient supporting evidence.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	The ISI is using gurdwara restoration to recruit Sikh visitors.	UNSUPPORTED
02	The ISI intends to revive Khalistan sentiment through Sikh pilgrims.	UNSUPPORTED
03	Support for Khalistan is declining among Sikhs worldwide.	UNSUPPORTED
04	Pakistan's Sikh population declined from approximately 20 lakh in 1947 to 15,998.	MISLEADING
05	The ISI has shifted from promoting violence to using religious outreach.	UNSUPPORTED

SOURCES

01 https://www.lokmattimes.com/international/pakistans-sikh-outreach-raises-concerns-amidst-punjab-election-buzz-a001-w02-1/

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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