Sikh Disinformation Lab

MISLEADING

NationPress report of an ISI “2027 election plot” rests on unnamed officials, not verifiable evidence

A 7 October 2026 NationPress article asserts that Pakistan's ISI has activated a coordinated multi-state campaign to destabilise the 2027 assembly elections, using "pro-Khalistan violence" in Punjab as a diversion for drugs and arms smuggling. The Lab assesses the report as disinformation — misleading in framing and unsupported in its central claims.

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9 October 2026

SOURCE POSTED
8 October 2026

NARRATIVES
Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism · Linking Sikhs to Gangs, Drugs and Organized Crime · Portraying Advocacy for Khalistan as Terrorism

OUR ASSESSMENT

The report does not provide publicly checkable evidence establishing that these separate activities form a single ISI-directed operation timed to the 2027 Punjab election, or that pro-Khalistan grenade attacks and vandalism are deliberately being used as diversions for narcotics and arms trafficking. The strategic conclusion is attributed principally to unnamed intelligence officials. The article additionally conflates violent attacks with political vandalism and inaccurately states that all seven listed states are scheduled to vote between February and March 2027. Indian authorities have charged Shahzad Bhatti and other Pakistan-based actors in serious grenade and terror-network cases, and individual BKI/Khalistan-linked violent incidents have also been documented. However, those cases do not by themselves establish NationPress's larger claim that the ISI has organized a coordinated 2027 election destabilisation campaign in which “pro-Khalistan violence” and vandalism are deliberately used to distract security agencies while narcotics and weapons are smuggled into Punjab. The report supplies no publicly verifiable operational evidence connecting those separate categories of activity into one chain; the conclusion rests primarily on unnamed intelligence officials. The framing also collapses materially different conduct — grenade attacks, narcotics trafficking, arms smuggling and political vandalism — into a common “Khalistan angle.”

THE CLAIM

ISI plots multi-state disruption ahead of 2027 assembly polls: Intel agencies

THE ANALYSIS

What was published

On 8 October 2026, the Indian outlet NationPress published a report headlined "ISI plots multi-state disruption ahead of 2027 assembly polls: Intel agencies."

The article asserts that Indian intelligence agencies have identified a single, ISI-directed operation spanning several states terror activity in Uttar Pradesh, narcotics and grenades in Punjab, and unrest in Manipur and they are timed to the 2027 assembly elections. On Punjab, the report states: "In Punjab, the strategy involves flooding the state with arms and drugs while using pro-Khalistan violence to distract security forces."

The Lab's verdict is that the report is disinformation, misleading in framing, with a severity rating of 4 out of 5. It falls within the Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism narrative.

What the review found

The core problem is evidentiary. The report does not provide publicly checkable evidence establishing that these separate activities form a single ISI-directed operation timed to the 2027 Punjab election, or that pro-Khalistan grenade attacks and vandalism are deliberately being used as diversions for narcotics and arms trafficking. The strategic conclusion is attributed principally to unnamed intelligence officials.

The article also contains a verifiable error: it inaccurately states that all seven listed states are scheduled to vote between February and March 2027.

The Lab notes what is not in dispute. Indian authorities have charged Shahzad Bhatti and other Pakistan-based actors in serious grenade and terror-network cases, and individual BKI-and Khalistan-linked violent incidents have been documented. Those cases do not, by themselves, establish NationPress's larger claim of an organised 2027 election destabilisation campaign in which violence and vandalism are deliberately deployed to occupy police while narcotics and weapons cross the border.

The claims, assessed

1. That the ISI has launched a coordinated 2027 election destabilisation campaign across Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur — unsupported. This is the article's overarching premise. The evidence offered for the specific 2027 election strategy consists principally of unnamed Intelligence Bureau and intelligence officials.

2. That Punjab is being deliberately flooded with drugs and weapons ahead of the election — unsupported. Cross-border narcotics and weapons smuggling into Punjab is real and extensively documented, and that is not the disputed point. The article makes a narrower and more specific assertion: that ISI-backed networks have been ordered to dump as much ammunition and narcotics as possible into Punjab ahead of the elections. That specific instruction is not evidenced.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

01 Pakistan's ISI has launched a coordinated destabilisation campaign targeting Uttar Pradesh , Punjab , and Manipur ahead of 2027 assembly elections , intelligence agencies warn.

02 Seven states — UP, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Goa — are set to vote between February and March 2027 .

03 ISI operative Shahzad Bhatti reportedly recruited Indian youth pan-India for terror surveillance, narcotics smuggling, and currency counterfeiting.

04 In Punjab , the strategy involves flooding the state with arms and drugs while using pro- Khalistan violence to distract security forces.

05 In Manipur , ISI-backed proxies in Bangladesh and India are allegedly working to reignite the 2023 -scale ethnic violence and spread unrest across the Northeast .

06 Security agencies have prepared vulnerability assessments; central and state forces are on heightened alert.

NationPress's headline, synopsis and key takeaways present an alleged 2027 ISI destabilisation plan as a coordinated operation linking arms and narcotics trafficking in Punjab with “pro-Khalistan violence.” The report relies primarily on unnamed intelligence officials and does not provide publicly verifiable evidence establishing that the cited grenade attacks, vandalism and smuggling activity form a single election-timed operation or that Khalistan-related incidents are being used deliberately to divert security agencies — Source: NationPress / underlying IANS report

3. That "pro-Khalistan violence" is being used to distract police from narcotics and arms smuggling — unsupported. This is the central concern for the Lab. The report states that sporadic grenade attacks and vandalism attributed to pro-Khalistan operatives serve two purposes: promoting the Khalistan movement, and keeping security agencies occupied so drugs and arms can move undetected. That construction chains Khalistan to the ISI, to grenade attacks, to drugs, to arms, to election destabilisation — a recognised narrative pattern, and one the article does not substantiate with publicly verifiable operational evidence.

4. That vandalism and grenade attacks are part of the same security operation — misleading. This is a misleading generalization. Political graffiti or vandalism and grenade attacks are not analytically interchangeable. The Lab

has previously reviewed recent cases in which pro-Khalistan graffiti occurred and individuals publicly claimed responsibility. That does not by itself transform graffiti into a component of a terror or narcotics operation.

5. That the strategy follows the ISI's "Punjab playbook" from the 1980s and 1990s — false. This framing demeans the essence of the Sikh freedom struggle and trivializes Sikh militancy and Sikh political issues by recasting them as an external intelligence template.

Why the framing matters

The report's method is to collapse materially different conduct — grenade attacks, narcotics trafficking, arms smuggling and political vandalism — into a common "Khalistan angle." Documented criminal cases are used as scaffolding for a far broader strategic conclusion that rests on unnamed sources. Readers encountering the piece should distinguish between the individual prosecutions, which exist, and the coordinated election-plot narrative built on top of them, which the article does not evidence.

CLAIMS ASSESSED

01	ISI has launched a coordinated 2027 election destabilisation campaign across Punjab, UP and Manipur	UNSUPPORTED
02	Punjab is being deliberately flooded with drugs and weapons ahead of the election	UNSUPPORTED
03	“Pro-Khalistan violence” is being used to distract police from narcotics and arms smuggling	UNSUPPORTED
04	Vandalism and grenade attacks are part of the same security operation	MISLEADING
05	The strategy follows the ISI's “Punjab playbook” from the 1980s and 1990s	FALSE

SOURCES

01 https://www.nationpress.com/national/isis-2027-assembly-election-plot-up-terror-punjab-drugs-and-manipur-unrest

02 The Lab's analyst review of the above item (verdict: Disinformation / Misleading; severity 4; the Claiming Pakistan Controls Sikh Political Activism narrative)

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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