



Naval exercise

Indian and Philippine navy personnel aboard an Indian Navy ship during the ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise 2026 under the theme 'Anchored in Trust, United at Sea', in Philippines on Saturday. PTI

'PAKISTAN'S PLAN TO ACQUIRE 5TH-GEN FIGHTER JETS CAUSE FOR WORRY'

Air Force needs to induct 36-40 aircraft annually, says Air Chief

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, October 3

THE INDIAN Air Force (IAF) needs to induct 36 to 40 aircraft annually to prevent its depleting fighter squadrons from falling below 30 and move towards the sanctioned strength of 42, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal A P Singh said on Saturday.

He also highlighted the ongoing efforts of the IAF to develop a robust beyond-visual-range (BVR) combat capability through the planned induction of the indigenous ASTRA and its variants of BVR air-to-air missiles, along with additional batches of foreign missiles offering longer ranges.

The IAF Chief made the remarks while addressing the media ahead of the 94th Air Force Day, which will be observed on October 8.

Responding to a question about the IAF's fighter squadron strength, Air Chief Marshal Singh said the force could begin inducting 30 to 35 fighter jets annually "if things go as planned".

Referring to HAL's target of delivering up to 24 LCA Mk1A

aircraft to the IAF annually, he said even if HAL produces 20 aircraft a year and the Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) contract is finalised by the end of this year, the total annual induction would add up to approximately 32 aircraft.

The MRFA programme, under which the IAF would receive 12 aircraft annually, involves the proposed acquisition of 114 Rafale jets.

He said if the proposed contract to acquire 12 additional Su-30 aircraft is included, with six jets delivered each year, the annual induction could rise to between 30 and 35-40 aircraft, provided all the plans move forward as expected. "So, we are hoping that these things will happen and that we will be able to achieve the pace of growth we have set," he said.

The IAF Chief said it is prudent to have a mix of three to four types of fighter jets in the force's inventory, so that they can perform different roles effectively. He said in the near future, the IAF will have a healthy mix of LCA Tejas Mk 1A, LCA Mk 2, the French Rafales and the indigenous fifth-



Air Chief Marshal A P Singh

generation fighter jet — Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Talking about reports of Pakistan moving to acquire China's fifth-generation J-35 stealth fighter jet, Air Chief Marshal Singh said it is a cause for worry. "Is it a no-go situation? I wouldn't agree with that. We possess the necessary capabilities... it is not just about a single platform, but about how it is integrated into the entire system."

"Pakistan has possessed other platforms in the past, yet they haven't been able to achieve anything significant with them during Operation Sindoor. Similarly, if we effec-

tively integrate the platforms we are purchasing and inducting, we should be able to counter this threat — at least for the time being."

He also said there is a need to push the AMCA programme and take alternative decisions in case there is a delay in that. He also clarified that Russia has offered the Su-57, but no decision has been taken yet, even as he emphasised the need to consider the need for a fifth-generation aircraft "if our adversaries are getting a fifth-generation aircraft".

Responding to a question from *The Indian Express* on how the IAF is working towards augmenting its BVR capability, the Air Chief said three variants — Astra and its Mk2 and Mk3 variants — are currently under production or in stages of research.

The Astra BVRAAM is already in production, while the Mk2 variant is midway through its R&D and the Mk3 is in the initial stages of R&D, progressing through research and development.

He said the IAF is also making efforts to procure additional batches of missiles with

longer ranges from foreign sources. India has been reportedly looking at procuring Russian R-37M ultra-long-range air-to-air missiles and additional batches of French Meteor Missiles.

Augmenting the BVR capability of the IAF has been in focus since Operation Sindoor. ACM Singh said the Astra, its variants and the additional foreign missiles will fulfil the immediate requirements of the IAF, adding that the development of the Astra Mk2 and Mk3 variants is progressing in the right direction, particularly in terms of ranges.

The first in the family, ASTRA Mk 1, has a range of 80 to 110 km. A more advanced version of the ASTRA Mk 1 — the ASTRA Mk 2 — has an enhanced range of 200 km.

Earlier this year, the DRDO had conducted a flight test of its Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology for the ASTRA Mk 3, which could have a range of over 350 km.

He also said that while the IAF is growing the number of drones and loitering munitions, there is no need for a separate drone force.

Fighter jet deal likely by end of fiscal year: IAF chief

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

India expects to finalise the much-awaited Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) deal by the end of the current financial year, provided the ongoing process progresses as planned, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh said on Saturday.

The proposed acquisition of 114 fighter aircraft is at the price negotiation stage, with discussions also under way on other critical aspects of the programme.

In February, the government cleared the long-pending proposal to procure 114 Rafale fighter jets from France through a government-to-government framework.

Speaking at a press conference ahead of Air Force Day on October 8, Mr. Singh said the IAF could also look at acquiring another fighter platform if the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme encounters delays. "Russia has offered us Su-57 jets, but no decision has been made on it," he said.

BID TO ADDRESS CONCERNS ON OVERREACH BY TAX AUTHORITIES

Arrest powers under GST regime likely to be removed

GST Council to discuss issue on Oct 7, Govt may bring amendment in Winter Session

Aanchal Magazine
New Delhi, October 3

MORE THAN nine years after its rollout in July 2017, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime is set to see a major overhaul — removal of arrest powers.

In a bid to boost investor sentiment and allay concerns about overreach by tax authorities, the upcoming GST Council meeting, on October 7, will take up the proposal to decriminalise offences under the indirect tax regime, two persons

aware of the development told *The Indian Express*.

The Centre and the states are learnt to have held several meetings over the last eight-nine months, including involvement at the top levels of the Union government, to reach a broad consensus on removal of the arrest provisions under GST, which were being seen as a major impediment

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EXPLAINED

Throwback to VAT

If the power to arrest is removed, the GST regime, in a way, will be similar to the Value Added Tax regime that existed before the rollout of the indirect tax regime in July 2017 and did not have any provisions for arrest.

Arrest powers under GST likely to be removed

for traders and businesses. The move is viewed as urgent as several arrests of high-ranking functionaries were made in recent times under the GST provisions that were termed by industry leaders as an overreach.

For intentional frauds and deceit under GST, the authorities will proceed with prosecution and arrests will be through the country's criminal code, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, a source said.

"The consultations had been going on since the last eight-nine months. The feedback from businesses about the arrests has been taken into account to move ahead with this discussion. The GST Council will take up the matter and the final decision will be taken after that, following which there will be legislative changes to allow removal of arrest provisions under GST laws," said a source.

After the rollout of GST in July 2017, authorities have grappled with multiple instances of frauds, involving broadly similar modus operandi. Typically, such cases involve fake identities or mule accounts to undertake fraudulent GST transactions in a bid to avail input tax credit, or fake bills without actual supply of goods. Many suppliers also undervalue their final goods and show purchase of raw materials at lower rates. Or, they supply taxable goods and services without due payment of GST to the central and state governments.

In 72,393 cases of GST offences from 2021-22 to 2024-25, 887 arrests were made by central GST formations. The arrests by state authorities will be in addition to this number.

Under the Central GST Act, non-compliance can result in penalty under Section 122, in-

• GST evasion including input tax credit frauds

Period	Cases	Detection (In Rs crore)	Recovery (In Rs crore)	Arrests
2021-22	12,574	73,238	25,157	342
2022-23	15,562	1,31,613	33,226	190
2023-24	20,582	2,30,332	31,758	223
2024-25 (up to Dec 24)	23,675	1,88,415	20,128	132
Total	72,393	6,23,598	1,10,269	887

*FRAUD DETECTED BY CENTRAL GST FORMATIONS *EVASION FIGURES INCLUDE FIGURES OF ITC FRAUD CASES; SOURCE: LOK SABHA

terest under Section 50, and recovery of tax. However, violations involving deliberate intent to evade tax attract arrest and prosecution under the criminal provisions of the CGST Act.

Section 69 of the CGST Act provides for the power to arrest after approval by the Commissioner. Sub-section (1) provides that where the Commissioner has "reasons to believe" that a person has committed any offence related to fake invoices, fraudulent availing of input tax credit, he may, by order, authorise any officer of central tax to arrest such person. The "reasons to believe" have to be backed by credible material and evidence, and mere suspicion is not sufficient, with all the reasons required to be recorded in writing.

According to sources, after the GST Council discusses the issue at its upcoming 57th meeting slated on Wednesday, the Centre is expected to bring in an amendment in the Winter Session of Parliament to enable the removal of arrest powers.

Industry experts said arrests had become a harassment tool, especially in the services sector, including banking and insurance, and would often be deployed as a bargaining tool for

businesses to pay penalty in order to avoid prolonged legal battles. An official said the removal of arrest powers would be a taxpayer-friendly measure and remove any perceptions of fear and harassment.

The concern about arrest powers under GST laws is not new. It was flagged by several states in the early meetings of the GST Council, even before the 2017 rollout of the indirect tax regime.

In the fifth GST Council meeting held in December 2016, the Maharashtra Additional Chief Secretary had observed that the power of arrest and confiscation was not in tune with the concept of ease of doing business, according to the minutes of the meeting. A minister from West Bengal had said that under VAT law, there was no power of arrest and that First Information Report (FIR) could be lodged only with the police, and it may not be prudent to give such powers to the tax authority.

The Commissioner, GST Council, had said that under GST, the provision of arrest was highly restricted and the power could be exercised only where combined evasion of duty was Rs 2 crore or more and where offence was very severe -- where supplies were made

without any invoice; invoice was made without any supply; tax collected but not paid to the government; tax collected in contravention of provisions of the GST Act but not paid to the government; and taking input tax credit without receiving goods and services.

An official document from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) stated that in the administration of taxation, the provisions for arrests are created to tackle the situations created by some unscrupulous tax evaders.

"To some, these may appear very harsh, but these are necessary for efficient tax administration and also act as a deterrent and instill a sense of discipline. The provisions for arrests under GST law have sufficient inbuilt safeguards to ensure that these are used only under authorisation from the Commissioner. Besides this, the GST law also stipulates that arrests can be made only in those cases where the person is involved in offences specified for the purposes of arrest and the tax amount involved in such offence is more than the specified limit," it said.

The government has been moving towards decriminalisation of offences on the direct tax side as well. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had, in September, removed arrest and detention provisions from the tax recovery rules with retrospective effect from April 1, 2026, barring tax officials from undertaking arrest in case of tax default. In a notification dated September 17, the CBDT had brought in Income-Tax (Fourth Amendment) Rules, 2026, which also removes "arrest and detention" from the tax recovery rules in case of death of the defaulter.

Protests persist as Rahul calls for joint 'resistance'

Around 150 detained in Delhi as political leaders, activists, youth groups continue protests seeking removal of CEC Kumar; Kharge demands dissolution of Lok Sabha, Assemblies over 'illegal' polls

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

As Opposition leaders, civil society activists, and youth organisations on Saturday continued their protests seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and suspension of the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, launched the 'Satyagraha' digital platform to map resistance movements across the country.

In a video posted on his social media handle, Mr. Gandhi said truth was being suppressed and that, as the Leader of the Opposition, it was his responsibility to help resist this.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Police on Saturday detained around 150 protesters, including All India



Supreme Court advocates Prashant Bhushan and Kapil Sibal, activist Yogendra Yadav, and AISA leader Neha Bora take part in the protest near Jantar Mantar on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Students' Association (AISA) leader Neha Bora, activists Yogendra Yadav and Anjali Bharadwaj, and Supreme Court advocate Prashant Bhushan, as they marched towards Jantar Mantar to demand the removal of the CEC.

Independent Rajya Sabha member and senior Su-

preme Court advocate Kapil Sibal also joined the march but was not detained.

In his post on X announcing the 'Satyagraha' initiative, Mr. Gandhi said people across the country were fighting for their rights and were "too often fighting alone".

He listed Gen Z, students, farmers, Adivasis, Dalits, and women among those involved in different struggles. "'Satyagraha' is an initiative to bring these voices together on one map," he said, urging people fighting what they considered injustice to register their movements on the platform.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh linked the launch of the 'Satyagraha' platform to the protests against Mr. Kumar.

Referring to the police action during Friday's demonstrations, he said the "Home Minister's police" had displayed "barbarity" against people peacefully protesting on the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi.

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RELATED REPORTS ON

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3 FIRs filed over protest on SIR row; hundreds detained on Day 2

No individual or organisation named in FIRs, say police; protest outside Parliament Street police station after woman journalist alleges sexual harassment by male police officer; Rahul Gandhi condemns incident, questions Amit Shah

**Shrimansi Kaushik
Ashna Butani**
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Saturday registered three FIRs in connection with Friday's protest near Jantar Mantar demanding the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Political leaders, civil society activists and student and youth organisations continued their agitation on Saturday as the protest entered its second day, with hundreds of people being detained again.

According to the police, two FIRs were registered at the Parliament Street police station and one at Connaught Place police station under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhi-



Protesters clashing with police personnel during demonstrations against CEC Gyanesh Kumar; a protester being detained near Jantar Mantar on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA/ANI

ta, including disobedience and obstructing a public servant. The police said no individual or organisation had been named in the FIRs.

On Saturday, hundreds of protesters marched towards Jantar Mantar amid heavy police deployment and barricades on roads leading to the protest site.

Traffic diversions were in place on Jantar Mantar Road and Raisina Road. The call for Saturday's protest was given by All India Students' Association (AISA) president Neha Bora.

The march began near Patel Chowk metro station and saw participation from multiple Left student or-



ganisations and Rajya Sabha member Kapil Sibal, among others.

"Women protesters, journalists, and lawyers were manhandled by male police personnel," AISA said in a statement.

Journalist 'harassed'

Meanwhile, a group of independent journalists sat

on a protest outside the Parliament Street police station later in the day after a woman journalist alleged that she was sexually harassed by a male police officer while reporting on the protest. She also alleged that the police refused to register her complaint.

Delhi Police did not respond to the allegations.

Condemning the incident, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi wrote on X: "A female journalist has accused a police officer of misconduct at Jantar Mantar. For hours, hundreds of journalists have been sitting there with just one demand: that an FIR be registered. Isn't that the police's basic duty?... Delhi Police comes under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Amit Shah ji, where are you? You have to answer for this."

India, Pak. summon diplomats over two men killed by BSF

Suhasini Haidar

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

India and Pakistan summoned each other's diplomats and traded charges on Saturday over the killing of two Pakistani men whom the Border Security Force said had attempted to infiltrate through the International Border along Punjab's Tarn Taran district.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) summoned the Indian Charge d'Affaires (CdA) in Islamabad on Saturday to protest the killings of men they said were "unarmed civilians". Late in the evening, India also summoned the Pakistan Charge d'Affaires to reject the Pakistani statement and protested "the continued facilitation of illegal cross-border infiltration from Pakistan".

After completing the post-mortem procedures, a senior BSF official told *The Hindu* that they handed over the bodies to Pakistani Rangers on Saturday.

Officials did not confirm whether any weapons had been found on the men, who had been accused of trying to infiltrate through the border fencing on Friday morning.

While the BSF said that they had shot at the men, including one who ran away, when they attempted to cross over at the International Border along Tarn Taran district, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry accused the Indian security forces of using "unprovoked lethal force against unarmed civilians".

"Such use of force was wholly unjustified and grossly disproportionate, resulting in the tragic loss of two precious lives. Pakistan categorically rejects any attempt to mischaracterise the deceased as 'infiltrators'," the Pakistan MoFA said in a statement.

However, the Ministry of External Affairs said that the incident highlighted "a clear pattern of repeated cross-border movement by armed narcotics syndicates operating from Pakistan"

Cases will be completed in 3 years under new criminal laws, says Home Minister

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, that criminal cases in the country will be completed within three years, even if they go all the way to the Supreme Court, once the new criminal laws are fully implemented.

Mr. Shah, who is also the Minister for Cooperation, was speaking at a cattle rears' conference, 'Gaupalak Sammelan'. Along with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, he also inaugurated a State-level exhibition on the new criminal codes at Bhopal's BHEL Dussehra ground.

"Our justice system was once known for its '*tareekh pe tareekh* (date after date)' taunts. Once the laws are fully implemented in one to one-and-a-half years, whatever FIR you file, the culprit will be punished within three years, up to the Supreme Court," he said, adding that the old codes were made by the British to protect their rule.

'Modern provisions'

"Now, the new laws have been made to protect the honour, property and bo-



Madhya Pradesh meet: Amit Shah, along with Mohan Yadav attend the 'Gopalak Sammelan' in Bhopal on Saturday. PTI

dy of the Indian public. Their *mool mantra* (fundamental principle) is justice. After their full implementation, our criminal justice system will become the most modern in the world. We have integrated various modern scientific technologies in it, like digital evidence, e-summons, online hearings, video conferencing and various provisions related to FSL (forensic science laboratories)," the Union Minister said.

"There are provisions for women's safety, [finding] missing children and protection from terrorism and lynching in them," Mr. Shah added.

The three new criminal codes – Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) – came into force in the

country on July 1, 2024. They replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860; the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973; and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; respectively.

Mr. Shah virtually laid the foundation for a ₹255-crore milk processing plant, with the capacity to process three lakh litres per day, in Ujjain. He also inaugurated a milk processing plant and a research laboratory in Bhopal and a mini dairy plant in Shivpuri.

He said that the infrastructure will help increase income for cattle rearers.

Mr. Shah said that India is the largest milk producer in the world and that the per capita milk availability in the country has increased from 307 grams per day in 2013-14 to 485 grams per day now.

UAE says flydubai co-pilot attacked pilot with axe in 'terrorist attack'

The suspect was identified as Hammam al-Hammami, an Omani national, say sources; Oman reportedly barred the co-pilot from flying over extremist views and moved him to an administrative role at Oman Air before he was later hired by flydubai

Reuters

DUBAI/TEL AVIV

The co-pilot of flydubai flight FZ 1073, which was bound for Israel, attempted to carry out a "terrorist attack" with an axe during the flight, the United Arab Emirates prosecutor general said on Saturday.

The co-pilot was identified as Hammam al-Hammami, an Omani national, a source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. UAE authorities did not immediately respond to a request for confirmation of his identity.

Separately, a regional official said the co-pilot had been barred from flying by



Dubai Crown Prince Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum visiting Captain Smit Machchhar in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. ANI

Oman over concerns that he had adopted extremist views. The official said he was moved to an administrative job at Oman Air. The co-pilot was later hired by flydubai. It wasn't im-

mediately clear to what extent the co-pilot was vetted. The Gulf diplomat said he had undergone standard security checks before being hired.

Disaster was averted on

Wednesday after passengers and crew subdued the co-pilot, who had attacked the captain in what Israeli officials said was an apparent attempt to crash the plane carrying more than 170 passengers and crew.

While Emirati authorities and the airline have not publicly identified the co-pilot, Israeli officials have previously said he is an Omani national. Oman has not commented on the incident.

"Investigations into the incident involving flydubai flight FZ 1073 found that the co-pilot had attempted to carry out a terrorist attack," Prosecutor General Hamad Saif Al Shamsi said in a statement carried by

the UAE's state news agency.

The co-pilot attacked the pilot inside the cockpit with a crash axe and attempted to take control of the aircraft, the prosecutor general said.

A crash axe is typically kept in the cockpit for use during emergencies such as crashes.

The investigation into flight FZ 1073, including the suspect's motives, is ongoing, and the findings will be released once the "necessary procedures" have been completed, the prosecutor general said. The UAE is leading the investigation. The airline is owned by Dubai's government.

DISCUSSION TO BLEND IMPORTED COAL WITH DOMESTIC SUPPLIES GOING ON

Coal stocks down 66%, raising concerns ahead of next summer

Pratyush Deep

New Delhi, October 3

REBUILDING COAL inventories ahead of next summer was the “main concern”, officials said amid a “neck-to-neck situation” as stocks at domestic coal-based power plants plunged 66% — from around 54.9 million tonnes at the beginning of April to 18.6 million tonnes by the end of September.

With rainfall in parts of northern and eastern India, there has already been some moderation in electricity demand and officials maintained they expect the demand to further ease as the summer heat recedes and the country moves into the post-summer demand pattern.

This will ease some pressure on coal-based power plants and allow them to rebuild inventory by March, officials told *The Indian Express*.

“The concern is not for this year but for next year. This year things will be neck-to-neck as there is a lot of pressure on thermal power plants in the absence of hydro-power due to rainfall deficit. The main concern is rebuilding the stock by March be-

fore the onset of next summer” a senior official involved in power system operations told *The Indian Express*.

The depletion of coal inventories at domestic coal-based power plants this year is the highest in the past three years.

Fuel stocks at domestic coal-based power plants have declined by around 66% this year, compared with a decline of around 23% during the same period last year, when stocks fell from 55.2 million tonnes at the beginning of April to 42.6 million tonnes by the end of September. The same was 31.8% in 2024 and 36.8% in 2023 for the same period.

Push for increasing stock

Officials expect the situation to improve with better availability of railway rakes for transporting coal to power plants, along with an increase in coal production. Coal India Limited, the country's largest coal miner that accounts for about 83% of the coal supplied to the power sector in India, also reported a 9.18% increase in coal production during September compared to the same month last year.

• COAL INVENTORY



YEAR	BEGINNING OF APR	END OF SEPT
2026	54.9	18.6
2025	55.2	42.6
2024	47.8	32.6
2023	34.5	21.8

FIGURES IN MILLION TONNES
SOURCE: NATIONAL POWER PORTAL

“Supplies to the power sector also registered strong growth of 10.63%, during the month rising to 48.90 million tonnes (MT) from 44.20 MT in previous fiscal,” the state owned miner informed exchanges on Thursday.

Coal supplies to thermal power plants depend heavily on logistics, particularly the availability of railway rakes, as a large share of India's operational coal-based generation capacity is located away from the coal mines.

“October and November are typically crucial for rebuilding stocks as demand usually moderate during this period. While there has been some heating demand during the peak winter, usually this is the

period when coal stock rises,” another senior official told *The Indian Express*.

Blending of imported coal under discussion

This year, higher-than-projected demand has already raised concerns over power availability, with the government moving to take additional measures to maximise generation from available capacity. Among these measures, the power ministry has directed around 112 captive coal-based power plants to operate at maximum capacity from October 1 to December 31.

Apart from this, there has also been discussion on direc-

ting thermal power plants to blend imported coal with domestic supplies, officials aware of the matter told *The Indian Express*. However, no final decision has been taken on the issue so far. While the government has issued advisories on blending imported coal with domestic supplies from time to time in the past, such advisories have not been issued beyond October 15, 2024.

At the same time, there is a push to add more battery energy storage systems (BESS) over the next six months, particularly at the inter-state transmission system (ISTS) level.

The move is aimed at addressing the growing gap between the availability of solar power during the day and the higher demand for electricity after sunset, when generation from solar projects falls sharply.

One of the senior officials quoted above said at least five to six major renewable energy companies are planning to add around 10 gigawatts of battery energy storage capacity by March. Queries sent to the Ministry of Power did not elicit any response till the time of filing this report.

• THE GOVERNMENT, SEEKING TO DIRECT HOW PEOPLE USE THE TECHNOLOGY, HAS RESPONDED BY IMPOSING NEW REGULATIONS AND JUDICIAL GUIDELINES ON ITS USE — AND MISUSE

China wants its citizens to embrace AI, but fears they depend on it too much

Yan Zhuang
October 3

AS CHINA'S government pushes its citizens to embrace artificial intelligence, it is confronting a problem partly of its own making: overreliance on the technology.

State media reports have featured stories that serve as cautionary tales: a farmer who lost 25 acres of seedlings after asking an AI for advice, children who have become so attached to chatbots that they want their parents to speak like them and AI-generated micro dramas with characters that look like carbon copies of one another.

These cases and others have

raised concerns in China that as it rushes to catch up with the United States in AI, it is running into adverse side effects created by the new technology, which is accused of undermining human relationships and depriving people of their better judgment.

The government, seeking to direct how people use technology, has responded by imposing regulations and judicial guidelines on its use — and misuse.

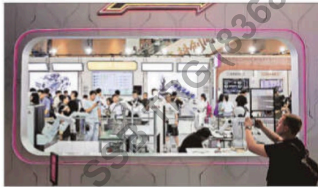
The response reflects how the ruling Communist Party is trying to balance its ambitions to promote the widespread use of AI with a desire to avoid anything that might undermine social order, say analysts.

The party is “recognizing

that the more they develop the technology, the more there's going to be social challenges that they have to deal with,” said Scott Singer, a fellow and co-director of the China AI Initiative at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “Where the party is sensitive is any area where they feel like the technology is getting better in a way that fundamentally could disrupt social stability.”

Singer said the party is particularly sensitive to disruptions caused not only to human relationships but also the job market as AI threatens to replace workers.

Concerns about overuse are shared among China's citizens,



People at World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai. FILE

who say they see the spread of the technology as inevitable even as they question its benefits and tire of its ubiquity.

Xie Tong, a graphic designer in Beijing, uses AI in her own work at a consulting agency and can no longer imagine her life

without it. But she despairs at encountering AI all around her — in the subway ads that she sees on her commute and in the work of contractors at her job who obviously relied on AI.

“It's like a marriage where you curse your partner but you can't leave them,” she said.

For a time, China's AI push created a boom in virtual companion apps, including ones offering romantic partners, personal tutors and AI avatars of family members.

In a country already struggling with a shrinking population and a historically low birthrate, the proliferation has led to concerns from Beijing about AI replacing human rela-

tionships. State media quoted experts saying people could soon find it hard to navigate real interactions. Reports cited a 2025 survey by the China Youth and Children Research Center of more than 8,500 minors that showed more than 20 percent “only wanted to chat with AI and did not want to talk with real people.”

That mirrored the concerns of some parents like Vivian Lyu, a stay-at-home mother in Hangzhou who two years ago introduced her 5-year-old daughter, Polly, to Doubao, an AI assistant created by ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok.

Soon, the child was chatting with the A.I. and a personalized

companion on the app nearly every day. At first, Ms. Lyu thought the AI was good at keeping Polly entertained when the mother had to take care of household tasks. “When you feel like you don't have a choice, you use Doubao,” she said.

In July, the government imposed limits on A.I. companions that require platforms to step in if users exhibited unhealthy dependencies. Under the new rules, platforms must intervene if users show signs of self-harm.

The rules also banned virtual relationships between chatbots and minors, which forced ByteDance to shut down the feature on Doubao that allowed users to create companions.

NYT

REGIONAL, EUROPEAN NATIONS PROVIDING DEFENSIVE MILITARY AID, SAY OFFICIALS

Saudi plans assault to break Houthi blockade in Red Sea

Operation to be led by Yemeni forces supported by Saudi air strikes: Officials

Reuters

Riyadh, October 3

SAUDI ARABIA is planning an offensive against Iran-backed Houthi militants in Yemen, with options being considered including a coastal push to secure the Red Sea route or an assault on multiple fronts, regional and Western officials told *Reuters*.

The operation, expected to be launched in the coming weeks, will be led by Yemeni forces on the ground, which are overseen by Riyadh, and supported by Saudi air strikes, according to six people with knowledge of the preparations.

While US is already providing intelligence to support Riyadh's operations in Yemen, and some regional and European nations are providing mainly defensive military aid to the kingdom, the Saudi allies aren't expected to play a direct role in combat operations, said people who requested anonymity to discuss security matters.



Black smoke rise from an oil facility in Riyadh on Saturday. AP

ity to discuss security matters.

A key objective of the planned Saudi offensive, which hasn't been previously reported, is aimed at reversing the rapid gains made by the Houthis last month when they advanced down the coast and seized control of the Bab el-Mandeb strait, according to the people with knowledge of the plans who include Gulf and Yemeni officials and Western diplomats.

The Saudis are considering two possible options for the assault, the Gulf and Yemeni officials said: Either a narrowly focused attack on the area around Bab el-Mandeb or a broader offensive that also includes other

synchronized attacks on multiple fronts around Yemen, in the governorates of Al-Bayda, Marib, Taiz and Al-Jawf.

Spokespeople for the Saudi and Yemeni governments, the Houthi group and the US military didn't immediately respond to requests for comment about the Saudi plans. The six people with knowledge of preparations couldn't give a precise timing for the launch of the offensive, with their estimates ranging from within a week to until after US midterm elections in November.

Michael Ratney, a former US envoy to Saudi Arabia, said he expected an offensive to be narrowly focused and certainly

Fire, smoke seen near Aramco oil facility in Riyadh

Riyadh: A large plume of smoke and fire was seen rising in the vicinity of an Aramco facility in Riyadh on Saturday, a witness told *Reuters*.

There was no confirmation from Saudi authorities about the fire. Aramco did not respond to a request for comment. The fire comes amid escalating hostilities between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis, who have stepped up attacks on Saudi cities and energy infrastructure. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's fire. **REUTERS**

more modest in scope than the Saudi-led operation in 2015 that sought to rout militants.

"As much they want to vanquish Houthis, they also need to get back to status quo before Houthis controlled territory along Babel-Mandeb," he added. "Ideally, it would be a limited operation to retake areas and go back to normal maritime traffic."

Thousands protest across Spain over housing crisis as relief measures rejected

Reuters

MADRID

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Madrid and other Spanish cities on Saturday as they stepped up demands for action to tackle a mounting housing crisis after government measures were struck down by the Opposition.

Some demonstrators waved posters calling for a general strike after the measures drawn up to address mass anger over the eviction of an 87-year-old woman in Madrid, and oth-



Protesters demonstrate demanding action to stop evictions and alleviate the housing crisis, in Madrid, Spain, on Saturday. REUTERS

er housing issues, were rejected in Parliament.

"It's a shame," said Nando de Angulo, 26, who joined Saturday's protest

in Madrid. "It only proves that it is us the people who have to adapt to the political parties, and not the politicians to what the people

want, and this can't go on like that."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez might call a snap election for November after the legislation failed to pass, Spanish media reported on Friday, and would be watching the strength of Saturday's protests before making a decision.

About 70,000 protesters took part in Saturday's demonstration in Madrid, the Spanish government said. Protests planned in some other cities were called off because of heavy rain.

North Korea says test of strategic missile included use of AI

Agence France-Presse

SEOUL

North Korea said it tested an intermediate-range strategic missile on Saturday that involved the use of AI, hours after Seoul said Pyongyang had launched a ballistic missile.

The launch took place days after Seoul's military demanded an apology from Pyongyang for a blast that wounded three South Korean soldiers in the Demilitarised Zone that it blamed on the North.

Early Saturday, "our military detected a ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea toward the East Sea," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

Hours later, Kim Yo-jong, the sister of Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong-un, said the missile fired in the morning was an "intermediate-range strategic missile capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude".