

CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE FORUM ON NOVEMBER 20-21

# First after Op Sindoor: India invites Pak to SCO meeting in Delhi

If Pak minister travels to India, will be first since Bilawal in 2023

**Shubhajit Roy**

*New Delhi, October 27*

INDIA HAS invited Pakistan's National Heritage and Culture Minister Aurangzeb Khan Khichi for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)'s Civilisational Dialogue Forum in New Delhi on November 20-21, sources told *The Indian Express* Tuesday.

This is the first such invitation by India to a senior min-



## Why the invitation

Bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, frozen for a decade over Islamabad's state policy of terror, were downgraded further in 2019 when the two countries recalled their envoys. The two countries run into each other in multilateral fora like the SCO. As host of an SCO event, Delhi is obligated to extend an invitation to Islamabad. Pakistan is due to host the SCO summit next year.

ister of Pakistan ever since the military hostilities between the two countries in the wake of Operation Sindoor in May 2025 following the Pahalgam terror attack.

The last time India hosted a senior minister of Pakistan was in May 2023 when Bilawal Bhutto, who was then the Foreign Minister of his country, travelled to Goa for a meeting of the SCO Foreign Ministers.

The invitation to Pakistan's minister is part of Delhi's obligation to invite representatives from all SCO member countries since it had proposed to host the SCO civilisational dialogue forum. Pakistan is scheduled to host the summit of SCO leaders

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# India invites Pak to SCO meeting in Delhi

next year.

For Delhi, the diplomatic task is cut out. While it has kept bilateral ties frozen for a decade now after the Pathankot and Uri attacks in 2016, it has to engage with Pakistan at the multi-lateral level.

The civilisational dialogue, expected to be held in one of Delhi's iconic monuments in November, was first proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the SCO Council of Heads of State summit in Tianjin in September 2025. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh formally announced that India would host the event while addressing the 25th SCO Council

of Heads of Government meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on October 20, 2026.

The key goals are to strengthen people-to-people ties and cultural engagement across Eurasian member states, and showcase the shared heritage, art, literature and traditions of ancient civilisations.

The engagement between India and Pakistan under the rubric of SCO began last month when a senior Indian official visited Islamabad and flagged the issues of "connectivity, regional connectivity, transit and trade".

Alok Dimri, India's national coordinator for the grouping,

told Pakistan's public broadcaster PTV that the SCO had come to the neighbourhood after traversing East Asia and Central Asia – the last two summits took place in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Tianjin (China).

A senior official with the rank of Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Dimri led the Indian delegation at the SCO national coordinators' meeting in Islamabad. Recalling that Prime Minister Modi had proposed a civilisational dialogue among SCO member countries, he said it had been decided that it will be held in New Delhi on November 20.

"This is a journey where Eurasian and Asian landmass member states have come together on the SCO platform," he had said. The SCO member states include Russia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus and China.

The Indian delegation's presence at a SCO meeting in Pakistan was the first in almost two years. In October 2024, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar went to Islamabad for the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting. During that visit, Jaishankar had met senior Pakistani leaders under the SCO format.

# Arunachal Minister holds talks with 'dam-affected' people amid concerns over Siang project

**Press Trust of India**

ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Minister Ojing Tasing on Tuesday held discussions with a delegation of the East Siang Downstream Dam Affected People's Forum (ESDDAPF) on the concerns surrounding the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP).

The forum was led by its president Oni Tamuk and general secretary Jobomchang Mengu, and represents communities spanning 72 villages that could be affected by the project.

In a post on X, Mr. Tasing, the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister, said the interaction provided a platform to discuss the project and its pre-feasibility report (PFR), address apprehensions and clarify misconceptions about its potential implications for downstream com-



A drone view showing Adi community settlements believed to be at risk of submersion if the proposed 11,500-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Dam project is completed in Siang district. REUTERS

munities in East Siang district. Emphasising the need to balance national priorities with local interests, Mr. Tasing, who represents the Pangin Assembly constituency in Siang district, said a project of such significance must advance with the trust and confidence of the people.

The proposed project is a hydropower and water-storage initiative, with a planned capacity of around 11,200 MW. The project is

being examined for its potential to strengthen India's energy and water security, and facilitate flood moderation. Its strategic significance has also been linked to concerns over possible upstream interventions in the Brahmaputra basin.

The project, however, has generated concerns over its potential social and environmental consequences, including the implications for downstream communities.

# Over 99 lakh names deleted from voter list in Karnataka

**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

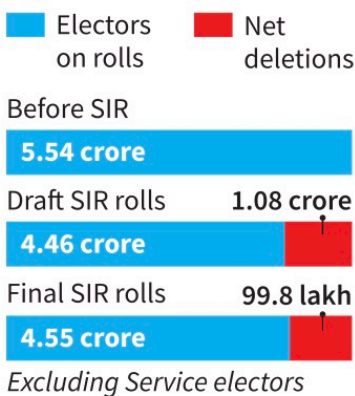
A whopping 99.32 lakh names have been struck off from the electoral rolls in Karnataka following the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise. The number of voters in the final list published on Tuesday came down from 5,54,32,314 before the exercise began, to 4,55,00,011, including 44,322 Service electors.

The constituency-wise electoral rolls can be accessed on the website of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

At the draft stage, the electorate had shrunk to 4.46 crore, with nearly 1.08 crore names deleted. The final roll has seen a net addition of 8.19 lakh names compared with the draft roll.

## Sharp drop

The electorate shrunk by 18% even after a net addition of 8.2 lakh voters during SIR claims and objections phase



However, the net additions have barely offset the deletions, knocking off nearly a crore from the pre-SIR electorate.

The net addition figures does not indicate how many people who were wrongly excluded have managed to get back on the

rolls. Nor does the figure provide a separate break-up of first-time voters added during the SIR, making it difficult to ascertain how many of those deleted have been reinstated. Those who applied for inclusion through Form 6 within the claims and objections period will have their names included in the final roll if their applications are accepted. Those who applied after the deadline will be included in supplementary lists, which will be published every quarter after the SIR.

Karnataka CEO V. Anbu Kumar said that the population-to-electors ratio should ideally be between 60 and 70, and that of the State stood at 66.11.

**CONTINUED ON**

**» PAGE 10**

Jaishankar to travel to U.S. for three-day G20 meeting

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

A week after United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit to India, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will travel to the U.S. city of Atlanta to attend the meeting of G20 Foreign Ministers hosted by Mr. Rubio. The three-day visit from October 29 to 31 will include meetings with his counterparts from other G20 countries amidst a series of global developments and the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has not announced the visit thus far, but diplomatic sources confirmed that his engagements will include the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu.

The Quad Ministers earlier met in Delhi in May this year but could not schedule a summit of the leaders in India, whose turn it has been to host the summit since 2024. Instead, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S. President Donald Trump, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will hold a Quad leaders' meeting in Manila.

# Science successful only when society benefits from it: Modi

PM stresses on importance of taking science from laboratory to land; he says India is no longer playing catch up and emerged as leader in scientific, technological developments in 21st century

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

**P**rim Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said science succeeds only when it travels from the laboratory to the land and improves people's lives.

Addressing the Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC), he said it must not become "merely a forum for discussion" but should deliver measurable outcomes.

Mr. Modi said India's science and technology story has long been one of catching up with other countries, but in the 21st century the country has emerged as a leader in scientific and technological developments. He said, "The discovery of zero showed that India has a culture of discovery. Chandrayaan's landing near the lunar south pole, Mangalyaan's success on the first attempt, and the vaccines developed during the COVID-19 pandemic are examples of this."

The audience at the conclave comprised three Nobel Laureates, top technocrats of India's scientific establishment, startup founders and scientists



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave 2026 in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

from both India and abroad.

## Focus on research

Mr. Modi said a country's technological capabilities depend on its research. He said efforts to "speed up" the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) work are underway. Referring to research funding, he cited a commitment of ₹1 lakh crore, including ₹12,000 crore for taking research from the laboratory to the market, with private investors partnering equally. He also referred to new commitments of ₹24,000 crore.

The number of patents filed in India had risen from about 50,000 to 1.5

lakh, Mr. Modi said, describing this as evidence of a strengthening culture of innovation rather than merely an increase in number.

## Science in the age of AI

On artificial intelligence (AI), he posed what he called an "important question" about how to exercise scientific judgement in the age of AI.

"Science works by questioning paradigms and looking at problems with fresh eyes," he said. "AI can perform routine tasks quickly and raise productivity, but should not limit scientists' thinking or independent thought, and its answers must meet the ac-

curacy standards of scientists."

Referring to the birth anniversary of nuclear scientist Homi J. Bhabha on October 30, Mr. Modi said a developed India will need large quantities of nuclear energy. He noted that the 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) has reached first criticality, strengthening the country's long-term energy position.

He also pointed to Indian space start-ups, a rocket made in India that placed a satellite in orbit on its first attempt, and the country's satellite docking capability. Indian-made AI chips are reaching other countries, an AI model has been built domestically, and work is underway on battery technology based on Indian raw materials, he said. The needs of sectors ranging from nuclear energy to space to AI and semiconductors differ, he said, but India's emerging technologies are rising together.

Describing India as a young country with vision and imagination, Mr. Modi said it needs a generation capable of leading in technology. He summed up the guiding principle as: "We will do it."

SC Collegium recommends 4 judges as HC Chief Justices

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended four judges for appointment as Chief Justices of the High Courts of Gujarat, Delhi, Telangana and Uttarakhand.

Justice Manash Ranjan Pathak, who is currently serving as a judge in the Gujarat High Court, has been recommended for appointment as its Chief Justice in a Supreme Court Collegium resolution of October 26.

Justice Pathak's parent High Court is Gauhati.

Justice P. Sam Koshy, whose parent High Court is Chhattisgarh and is currently serving on the Bench of the Telangana High Court, has been proposed for the Delhi High Court Chief Justiceship.

Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty of Calcutta High Court and Sudhir Singh of Patna High Courts have been recommended for appointments as Chief Justices of Telangana and Uttarakhand High Courts, respectively.

The Supreme Court Collegium has approved the proposal for appointment of Ajay Sharma, Judicial Member, CESTAT, Mumbai, and advocate Vaibhav Anant Sugdare as judges of the Bombay High Court.

# SRMIST V-C flags need for more skilled workers, calls for sustained collaboration

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

India will require about three lakh semiconductor professionals by 2030, with a greater pool of skilled workers needed in fabrication, packaging, testing and semiconductor equipment in addition to chip design, C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice-Chancellor of SRM Institute of Science and Technology, said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Semiconductor Summit 2026, organised by SRM Institute of Science and Technology in association with *The Hindu*, he said India had an opportunity to expand its semiconductor capabilities but needed to address gaps in manufacturing, talent and the conversion of research into commercial products.

“The world will need about one million semiconductor professionals by 2030. India already gives about one in five of the world’s chip designers,” he said, adding that the country’s requirements would extend beyond design to fabrication, packaging, testing and equipment.

He said India’s semiconductor market was already worth more than \$50 billion, while most of the chips it used were imported. “Factories alone will not close that gap. We need ideas, we need designs, and we need people,” he said.

Mr. Muthamizhchelvan said universities needed to



C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice-Chancellor of SRM Institute of Science and Technology, at the summit on Tuesday. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

change how they evaluated research and focus on outcomes such as patents, prototypes and products with commercial potential rather than academic publications alone.

“We have been judging our research and development in terms of the publications that are coming out from the research. And we used to forget that. We called this fund and forget,” he said.

## **SRM’s research**

He said SRM was aligning its research with national missions, including those covering artificial intelligence, semiconductors and quantum technologies. The university was encouraging students to work on problems identified by industry and offering academic credits for solutions developed through such projects.

Semiconductor development required expertise across multiple disciplines, including physics, chemistry, materials science, chemical engineering, mechanical de-

sign and computing, rather than electronics alone, he said.

He cited two projects involving SRM students and semiconductor companies as examples of efforts to bring university research closer to industrial applications.

He also said India needed to build its own technological capabilities rather than remain primarily a consumer of imported products. “The real chip is the human mind. So if our mind is tuned towards making chips, then obviously things will become easier,” he said.

The V-C invited companies to work with SRM on technical problems, establish joint laboratories, co-guide doctoral and postgraduate research, file patents together and take products to market. “Bring us your hardest problem. We’ll be happy to work on those problems,” he said.

He said the semiconductor ecosystem would require sustained collaboration rather than isolated investments or initiatives.

# India's next investment cycle will shape its carbon future

**T**he United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) recent warning that the world could cross the 1.5°C warming threshold within the next few years is likely to renew calls for faster decarbonisation. India, too, will face this pressure, but its choices are still open. Much of the housing, industrial infrastructure, power networks and urban development needed for its next phase of growth is yet to be built.

NITI Aayog estimates that 86% of the building stock that India will have in 2070 is yet to be built. Total floor space will more than double, from about 18 billion square metres in 2020 to 42 billion by 2070. India's crude-steel capacity, at about 200 million tonnes in 2024-25, is targeted to reach 300 million tonnes by 2030-31. Cement output is projected to rise from about 427 million tonnes in 2024 to 660 million tonnes by 2030.

## The advantage of choice

The usual reading of these numbers is that India's infrastructure deficit makes decarbonisation harder. Demand for steel, cement and electricity will continue to rise even as India tries to reduce emissions. True, but only partly. The other side of the development deficit is that much of India's future capital stock remains a choice rather than an inheritance. Its future emissions will depend on what it chooses to build now and the technologies and standards that are embedded in that investment.

Mature economies face the opposite problem. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that around 80% of the building stock that advanced economies will use in 2050 already exists. In the European Union, 85% of buildings predate 2000, around three-quarters perform poorly in terms of energy efficiency, and only about 1% are renovated each year. India has legacy problems too, but has more room to avoid creating them. It can build in efficiency from the outset and reduce the risks of stranded assets, premature retirements, or expensive retrofits



**Amarendu Nandy**

An Associate Professor in the economics and public policy area at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ranchi, Jharkhand



**Aayush Anand**

A GARP Certified Sustainability and Climate Risk Professional and works with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)

Its future emissions will depend on what it chooses to build now and the technologies and standards incorporated into those investments

later. In buildings, India need not wait for technology to catch up. The know-how is there, and so is the regulatory framework. The gap is in implementation.

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)'s State Energy Efficiency Index reports that the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2017 has been notified by 27 States, but legally incorporated in only 21. BEE has since issued the Energy Conservation and Sustainable Building Code (ECSBC) 2024 for commercial and office buildings and the Eco-Niwas Samhita (ENS) 2024 for residential buildings. States should embed these standards in building permits, occupancy certificates, and grid connections, where non-compliance can carry a cost.

## The issue in the power sector

Power presents a different problem. India has added renewable generation quickly, but the network to move it has not kept pace. The IEA estimates that transmission bottlenecks have held back around 60 GW of renewable capacity. The Ministry of Power's plan envisages roughly 590 GW of generation additions between 2023 and 2032. So, an unresolved transmission gap will become more serious as generation expands. As transport, cooling and parts of industry electrify, the gains from cleaner generation will depend on whether that power can be reliably moved to where it is needed. Transmission and storage, therefore, must be planned alongside, and in some cases ahead of, new generation and demand.

In steel and cement, the low-carbon transition is harder. The Ministry of Steel acknowledges that hydrogen-based green steel is not yet viable in India, while NITI Aayog places large-scale carbon capture in cement further down the transition path. Mandating technologies could raise costs and, worse, lock firms into processes that later prove uneconomic.

Public procurement could be a better instrument. The Union and State governments,

Indian Railways, the National Highways Authority of India, and other public agencies buy large quantities of steel and cement and can help create an early market for lower-emission materials.

India already has a green-steel taxonomy, and the Ministry of Steel has proposed aggregated procurement through competitive bidding. Tenders could set emissions-intensity thresholds without prescribing the production route. Competitive bidding would then reveal the green premium while rewarding producers who find the most efficient ways to meet the thresholds. As the premium narrows with economies of scale and technological advances, the thresholds could be tightened. They could also be aligned with the emissions-intensity targets under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), ensuring consistent policy signals.

## Costs and risks

Finance can also skew these choices. The IEA estimates that India's cost of capital for grid-scale renewables is about 80% higher than in advanced economies. Since clean infrastructure is front-loaded in cost, that gap can make an otherwise viable project uneconomic. Targeted instruments such as payment-security mechanisms, partial credit guarantees, or concessional debt can ease financing or off-taker risk. But where the technology is still unproven, cheaper public finance will simply shift more risk onto the public balance sheet.

India cannot avoid the investment required to build the economy it still needs. What matters is what kind of capital the investment leaves behind. Where technology is mature, there is little reason to build inefficiency into assets that will last for decades. Where it is still evolving, preserving flexibility has value. Getting those choices right now can spare the country costlier corrections later.

AS DOHA STEPS UP DARK TRANSITS THROUGH HORMUZ

# LNG imports from Qatar rise to eight-month high in Oct

Sukalp Sharma  
New Delhi, October 27

QATAR BECAME the second largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India in October, a comeback the Gulf nation scripted by aggressively using tactics like switching off the LNG tankers' transponders, or "going dark", to avoid detection and capitalising on windows of opportunity based on maritime security assessments in the Strait of Hormuz.

Doha's increased risk tolerance follows similar tactics being used by the UAE for a few months now to ship its LNG through the fraught waters of the strait. Additionally, industry sources indicated that ship-to-ship (STS) transfers are also being used by Qatar to move LNG beyond the strait.

Qatar was only second to the US in terms of LNG supplies to India in the October 1-25 period, when overall import volumes grew sequentially as well as on a year-on-year basis. The gulf nation has traditionally been India's top source of LNG, but the disruption in vessel movements through the Strait of Hormuz led to a crash in supply volumes starting March.

India got 0.44 million tonnes of Qatari LNG till October 25, up nearly 370% from volumes imported in all of September, according to provisional data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

In March-September, LNG imports from Qatar averaged just 0.07 million tonnes, just a fraction of the 2025 monthly average of 0.95 million tonnes.

STS transfers have already emerged as a key ploy for Gulf

## • India's LNG imports from Qatar in 2026

| Month                 | Volumes (million tonnes) | Share in India's LNG imports |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| January               | 1.05                     | 40.9%                        |
| February              | 0.74                     | 39%                          |
| March                 | 0.06                     | 3.6%                         |
| April                 | 0                        | 0%                           |
| May                   | 0                        | 0%                           |
| June                  | 0.13                     | 5.3%                         |
| July                  | 0.09                     | 4%                           |
| August                | 0.09                     | 3.4%                         |
| September             | 0.09                     | 4.2%                         |
| October (till Oct 25) | 0.44                     | 17.6%                        |

SOURCE: KPLER

producers to move oil out of the Persian Gulf. Unlike regular operations, in which crude is loaded onto tankers that sail directly to the destination port, STS transfers involve a shuttle tanker that carries the oil for some distance, after which the cargo is transferred to another tanker.

In STS operations in the Strait of Hormuz, the supplier usually takes on the responsibility — and the risk — of sending the oil through the strait, after which a tanker waiting in safer waters takes the oil to its destination. STS is not that common in LNG flows as the process is a lot more complex than transferring crude from one tanker to another. Super-chilled gas requires cryogenic hoses to be transferred, and requires much more careful handling. However, in the absence of any alternative route to evacuate export volumes, Qatar is evidently resorting to STS transfers ahead of the northern hemisphere winter, when demand jumps globally. "Qatari LNG deliveries

to India are at their highest monthly level since the conflict began...For India, a sustained recovery in Qatari supply could ease the pressure to source replacement cargoes from other suppliers, particularly as underlying import requirements remain firm despite elevated prices," said Sonal Ranjan, LNG and natural gas analyst at Kpler.

Robust LNG demand in India has led to Indian importers competing hard to pick up cargoes from the spot market at super-normal prices, even as some of the other major Asian LNG buyers have curtailed imports.

The West Asia crisis has pushed India to secure cargoes from non-hormuz dependent supply sources, as New Delhi has been prioritising supplies over price considerations.

The US was the top LNG supplier to India in the October 1-25 period, reclaiming the pole position after losing it to Oman in September. **FULL REPORT ON**  
[WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

# Record turnout as Israelis vote in polls centred around Netanyahu

Nearly 67% of voters had cast ballots by 6 p.m. local time; Opinion polls show long-serving leader Netanyahu running neck and neck with rival Gadi Eisenkot, a former military chief; Netanyahu worries over high voting among Israel's Arab minority

**Agence France-Presse**  
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, fighting for his political life, scrambled to bring out his base on Tuesday as Israelis voted in record numbers in the country's first election since the October 7, 2023 attack.

After casting his vote in Jerusalem, Mr. Netanyahu expressed worry over high voting among Israel's Arab minority and warned of attempts to "steal the election".

Nationwide turnout as of 6:00 p.m. was 66.7%, the highest at that point in the day since such statistics were first recorded in 1973,



**At the crossroads:** A Likud party poster with Benjamin Netanyahu and a Hebrew slogan 'Right or Palestine', in Beni Brak, Israel. AP

the Central Elections Committee said.

The vote comes as Israel looks increasingly isolated on the world stage, driven by the war in Iran and the devastating military campaign in Gaza, and vio-

lence in the occupied West Bank.

## Tight contest

The last opinion polls showed Mr. Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister, running

neck and neck with his main rival Gadi Eisenkot, a former military chief.

Mr. Eisenkot's Yashar party on Tuesday warned that Mr. Netanyahu was "laying the groundwork to challenge election results".

Speaking at a polling station, Mr. Eisenkot called on Israelis to ignore distractions and vote to replace "the worst government since the state was established".

Some 7.3 million people are eligible to vote, with tens of thousands of Israelis estimated to have flown in from abroad for the election.

Mr. Netanyahu has pointed to Arab-Israeli parties throughout the elec-

tion to stoke fears of a Palestinian state. "We cannot leave this battle here in the hands of the left and the Arab parties that want to bring an end to the Jewish state," Mr. Netanyahu said, urging Israelis to vote for his right-wing Likud party.

United Arab List head Mansour Abbas, who could emerge as a kingmaker in a close election, accused Mr. Netanyahu of "lying and inciting" to mobilise his voters.

Polling will close at 10 p.m. Final results could take days to trickle in and it is highly unlikely that any single party will get the 61 seats needed for a majority in the 120-member Parliament.

# Two charged for assisting Iran over U.K. airbase plot

**Sriram Lakshman**

LONDON

Two British nationals have been charged under the United Kingdom's National Security Act in connection with an incident last month at Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford, a military airbase used by the United States.

Nouman Essghir, 24, and Mohmed Ahmad Abdulkarim, 24, from London, were charged and scheduled to appear in court this week.

Mr. Abdulkarim was arrested for allegedly assisting a foreign intelligence service.

The country was believed to be Iran, according to Laurence Taylor, the Head of the U.K.'s National Counterterrorism Policing unit.



**Launch pad:** A U.S. B-1 bomber on the tarmac at the RAF Fairford base. Washington had used the facility to launch strikes on Iran. AFP

Tehran has denied involvement with the incident.

Five men were arrested as they approached the airbase in three vans on September 27. This resulted in the evacuation of residents in the airbase area in Gloucestershire.

The suspects were subsequently released on police

bail, which led to criticism from U.S. President Donald Trump.

An Iranian-British dual national was later arrested and released on police bail in early October.

Following the incident, Washington had removed its 12 B-1 bombers, used in its strikes on Iran, from the airbase.

# Burnham reignites Britain's divisive Brexit debate with his push for closer EU ties

Jill Lawless

London, October 27

FOR A decade, British governments have observed a cardinal rule: Don't mention Brexit. In particular, don't suggest that voters' 2016 decision to leave the European Union should be reversed.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who marked his 100th day in office on Tuesday, has broken that code of silence and reignited a debate that bitterly divided the country. He says Brexit has been a failure and the U.K. should seek a much closer relationship with the EU, with options up to and including rejoining the 27-nation bloc.

"I am positive about closer ties with Europe and I'm not hiding that," Burnham told the Sunday Times. "I think it will add to British GDP. I think it will give us stronger control of migration. I want to make those arguments."

In recent interviews, Burnham has said the country should have an "evidence-based debate" about the consequences of Brexit. He gave the example of immigration. Supporters of Brexit argued that it would give the country control over its borders by ending the right of EU citizens to live and work in the U.K., and of British nationals to settle across the bloc.



British PM Andy Burnham

While Britain now sets its own immigration policy, Burnham said leaving the bloc had made it harder to control unauthorized migration because Britain has lost access to EU databases and agreements.

"The truth of the matter is we've lost immigration control in the way that we once had," Burnham told broadcaster ITV on Monday.

Most economists agree that Brexit has hurt the British economy, but few politicians have wanted to reopen the painful debate.

The decision of British voters, by 52% to 48%, to leave the bloc after four decades of membership was followed by years of U.K.-EU wrangling over divorce terms. Britain finally left the EU in 2020 with a bare-bones trade deal that erected new barriers to doing business with the bloc of 450 million people on the U.K.'s doorstep.