

# Kailash Manasarovar Yatra giving a new impetus to ties, says Chinese envoy

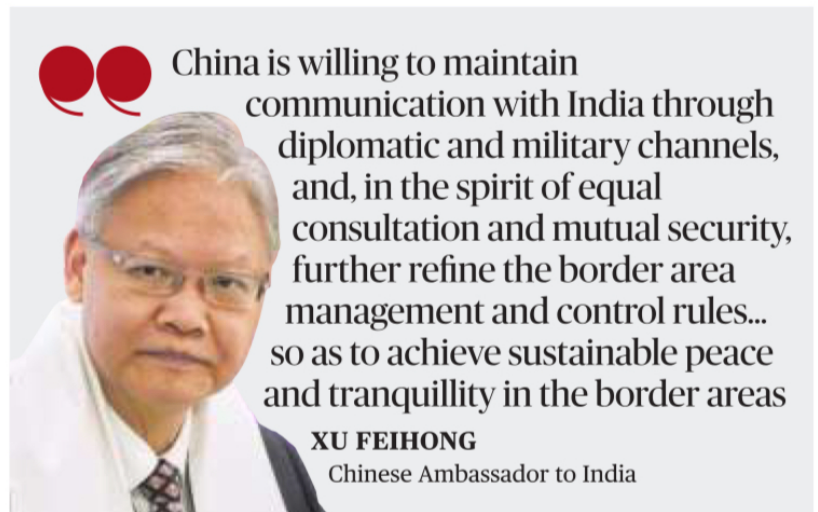
**Suhasini Haidar**

NEW DELHI

China is prepared to discuss “refining border management and control rules” to resolve issues around its disputed boundary with India after the four-year military stand-off ended at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong said on Sunday.

He expressed optimism that the revival of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra would “inject impetus” to ties and that direct flights would be launched soon.

Rejecting criticism of China’s support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, Mr. Xu said that bilateral ties were not targeted at a third country. He warned that comments by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and other Indian officials supporting



the Dalai Lama’s statement on his successor could cause friction within India-China bilateral ties.

In written responses to questions posed by *The Hindu*, the Mr. Xu pointed to a flurry of high-level visits from India to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings over the past month as proof of improving ties. They include visits by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Se-

curity Adviser Ajit Doval, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Mr. Xu noted the possibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelling to China for the SCO Summit on August 31 and September 1, which would be his first visit since the Galwan clashes.

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# Kailash Yatra gives new impetus to ties: envoy

“In the next stage, China is willing to maintain communication with India through diplomatic and military channels, and in the spirit of equal consultation and mutual and equal security, further refine the border area management and control rules and strengthen confidence-building measures, so as to achieve sustainable peace and tranquillity in the border areas,” Mr. Xu said.

“Resuming the pilgrimage for Indian pilgrims to the sacred mountain and lake in [Tibet] is an important initiative taken by China to improve relations between the two countries,” the Chinese Ambassador said.

“Currently, the government departments of both China and India, as well as major airlines, have done a lot of work for the resumption of direct flights. We hope that direct flights between the two countries will be launched as soon as possible,” he added.

## + **‘No third party targeted’**

While the Defence Minister had visited Beijing and held bilateral talks, India had said that the SCO Defence Ministers meeting failed to find consensus as one country – referring to Pakistan – had held up the language on terrorism in a proposed joint statement. The Chinese Ambassador did not respond to a specific query about why the SCO had not included India’s concerns over the Pahalgam terror attack and cross-border terrorism in the joint statement last month, pointing instead to an SCO “code of conduct” that members could express their positions but “should avoid bringing bilateral conflicts” to discussions, in a reference to India-Pakistan tensions.

Asked about the statement of India’s Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh, about China’s support to Pakistan during the four-day Operation Sindoor in May, Mr. Xu said that China-Pakistan ties did not “target any third party”. In his comments, Lieutenant-General Singh had suggested that China had “used the neighbour [Pakistan] to cause pain” to India, in the manner of a “borrowed knife”.



“Defence and security cooperation is part of the normal cooperation between China and Pakistan,” Mr. Xu added, indicating that Mr. Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had already discussed the issue.

While side-stepping another question about whether China’s trilaterals with other countries in South Asia – including a recent China-Bangladesh-Pakistan initiative on trade, and a China-Pakistan-Afghanistan initiative on infrastructure – were a way of “cutting India out” of the SAARC region, Mr. Xu said that India was welcome to join any of the initiatives, and hoped that China and India could create other trilateral partnerships with countries in the region. He claimed that in the past 12 years since the launch of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which India has refused to join, trade between China and South Asian countries “doubled from less than \$100 billion to about \$200 billion”.

### **Dalai Lama succession**

He said the issue of the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation was an “internal matter” for China, and warned that statements from India would be seen as “interference”. During the celebrations for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in Dharamshala earlier this month, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama had announced that his successor would be chosen by his office, not by China or any other authority, a statement that was supported by Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju. Subsequently, the Ministry of External Affairs had said that the Indian government had “no position” and makes “no statement” on the issue.

“We have noted the MEA of India’s response to media queries regarding the statement by the 14th Dalai Lama. However, it cannot be denied that some officials of India openly expressed their welcome and support for the statement by the 14th Dalai Lama, and attended his 90th birthday celebration,” Mr. Xu said. “Such words and deeds are, in essence, promoting interfering in China’s internal affairs using [Tibet]-related issues, contrary to Indian government’s public stance,” he added.

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# Open to debate on Operation Sindoor in Parliament: govt.

Opposition insists on response from PM on Operation Sindoor and its after-effects during the Monsoon Session; Minister says any debate on the subject should be held within laid-down rules

**Sobhana K. Nair**

NEW DELHI

**T**he Centre is open to discussing all issues of national importance, including Operation Sindoor, in Parliament, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Sunday.

The government said this at an all-party meeting held ahead of the Monsoon Session beginning on Monday. At the same time, it cautioned the Opposition that any debate on the subject had to be held within the laid-down rules and procedures.

Opposition parties, meanwhile, insisted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi speak on Operation Sindoor and U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated claims that he had brokered peace between India



**Setting the stage:** Union Ministers J.P. Nadda and Kiren Rijiju with Congress leader Jairam Ramesh and others after the all-party meeting on Sunday ahead of the Monsoon Session. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

and Pakistan. They demanded a discussion on the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

"We are very open to a discussion on important issues like Operation Sindoor. These are issues of

great national importance. The government is not shying away and will never shy away, but is open to discussions within rules, conventions," Mr. Rijiju told presspersons after the all-party meeting.

The Minister empha-

sised that "*niyam* (rules)" and "*parampara* (conventions)" are important for the government.

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**V-P CALLS FOR BONHOMIE**

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# Over 58% Dalit voters in Bihar think unemployment is biggest poll issue: survey

**Abhinay Lakshman**

NEW DELHI

More than 27.4% Dalit voters in Bihar have “no trust” in the Election Commission (EC), a new survey released ahead of the Assembly election in the State has found. It also shows that over 58% Scheduled Caste (SC) voters in the State thought that unemployment was the biggest issue in the upcoming polls.

The survey was conducted and released by the National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Associations (NACDAOR), a conglomerate of hundreds of associations across the nation. It covered a total of 18,581 SC voters from across the State and was conducted between June 10 and July 4, Ashok Bharti, Chairman of NACDAOR, told *The Hindu*.

He added that since the Election Commission start-

**More than 27.4% Dalit voters in Bihar have ‘no trust’ in the Election Commission, the survey also found**

ed its special intensive revision of the rolls as the survey was under way, one question was put on the survey mid-way, for which only around 8,500 responses could be gathered.

## **Fear of losing vote**

To the question “Do you fear losing your vote in the new voter list?”, over 71% of the respondents said “yes” and 23.4% said “no” with a little over 5% not expressing an opinion. On the question of whether they trusted the EC to be impartial, over 27% said “no”, about 51% said “yes”, and 21% said they did not know.

The survey asked a total of 11 questions.

It found that while over 47.5% of the respondents said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was their favourite leader at the national level, 40.3% said Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and about 12% said other politicians.

It further said that to the question “who do they credit for the caste census?”, 33.15% respondents said Narendra Modi, 30.81% Rahul Gandhi, 27.57% Bihar Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav, and about 8% other politicians.

Further, the survey showed that about 48% said the work of the Nitish Kumar-led government was “bad”, while about 45% said it was good.

Mr. Bharti told *The Hindu*, “A lot of people do surveys of Scheduled Castes, but hardly do many of them actually speak to us on the ground. This survey is of Dalits, by Dalits.”

# As Nitish faces heat over spate of killings, data shows crime in state among highest

From 2015-24, crime in Bihar rose by 80%; India's avg went up by 24%

ANJISHNU DAS

NEW DELHI, JULY 20

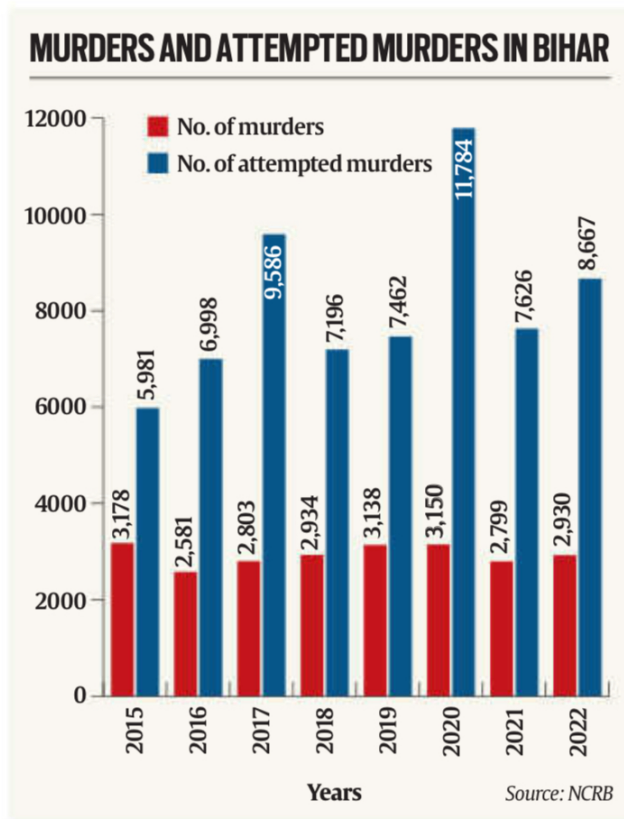
AS ASSEMBLY elections approach, a spate of murders – the latest on Thursday, when five gunmen killed a notorious criminal inside a hospital in Patna – has sparked a political row over law and order in Bihar.

Targeting CM Nitish Kumar, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said that Bihar has descended into “chaos” under the leadership of an “unconscious CM”. Even LJP (RV’s) Chirag Paswan, who is part of the NDA, has said the recent murders “demonstrate the complete collapse of law and order in Bihar”.

While Nitish is credited for reversing the “jungle raj” over the last decade under him, data from NCRB and Bihar Police’s state-level figures accessed by *The Indian Express* shows that crime is rising.

The rise in overall number of crimes in Bihar has been 80.2% from 2015 to 2024, as per State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB) data. From 2015-22, according to the latest available national-level data, India saw an increase in overall crimes of 23.7%.

The number of crimes in Bihar has risen every year since 2015 – barring 2016, 2020 (during pan-



demic), and 2024. The highest year-on-year rise of 24.4% was in 2017. In 2022, there were 3.5 lakh crimes in Bihar, up 23.3% from the previous year. Crime fell at the national level by 4.5% in 2022 and 7.7% in 2021. The latest SCRB data shows the number of crimes rose in 2023 to 3.54 lakh, before falling marginally to 3.52 lakh in 2024. As of June 2025, Bihar has seen 1.91 lakh crimes, more than half what was recorded in 2024.

Since 2015, Bihar has been among the 10 worst states in terms of overall cases of crimes. Adjusted for population, though,

Bihar’s rate of crimes per lakh people has been significantly below the national average.

In 2022, Bihar saw the seventh highest number of crimes at a rate of 277 cases per lakh population. However, India recorded an overall crime rate of 422 cases per lakh population. After 2015, Delhi reported the highest crime rate for 5 years, while Kerala ranked the worst for 3 years. This, however, is also a factor of registration of cases, which could be higher in Delhi and Kerala due to the economic and educational status.

Though Bihar’s overall crime

rate did not exceed the national average in any year since 2015, the NCRB data shows that Bihar’s law and order issues stem from a consistently higher-than-national-average incidence of violent crime.

Take murder, for instance. While overall murder cases fell from 3,178 in 2015 to 2,930 in 2022, Bihar ranked second-highest for number of murders each year since 2015, behind only the much more populous UP. The number of attempted murders has risen in Bihar from 5,981 in 2015 to 8,667 in 2022, second-highest after UP again.

According to latest SCRB data accessed by *The Indian Express*, Bihar recorded 1,379 murders till June 2025, compared to 2,786 in all of 2024 and 2,863 in 2023.

Adjusted for population, in 2022 for example, Bihar recorded 2.3 murders and 6.9 attempted murders per lakh population, exceeding national average of 2.1 and 4.1, respectively. Over the past decade, while Bihar’s murder rate peaked at 3.1 in 2015, the rate of attempted murders was highest in 2017 at 9.1.

Owing to its large population, Bihar’s rates of murder and attempted murder make it a middle-of-the-pack state – it ranked among top 10 states for murder only in 2017 and 12th highest murder rate in 2022. However, the state has been in top 5 for rate of attempted murders every year from 2015-22. In 2017, Bihar saw second-highest rate of attempted murders. Property dispute as a motive for murder in Bihar was the most cited reason in all but one year from 2015-22; 1,016 murders linked to property disputes reported in 2018, the highest in this period.



# Prime Minister to visit U.K., Maldives this week

Modi is expected to unveil India-U.K. trade pact that was announced in May; he has been invited to Maldives for Independence Day celebrations; maritime security talks on the cards with Muizzu

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

**P**riime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a two-nation visit to the United Kingdom and the Maldives from July 23 to 26, the External Affairs Ministry announced on Sunday.

During the visit to the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister is expected to unveil the bilateral trade agreement that was announced by both sides on May 6.

“During the visit, Prime Minister Modi will hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister [Keir] Starmer on the entire gamut of India-U.K. bilateral relations. They will also exchange views on issues of regional and global importance,” the Ministry said in a statement. The visit will also include a meeting with King Charles III.

Mr. Modi had announced the trade deal on May 6, describing it as



**On agenda:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his U.K. counterpart, Keir Starmer, at the G20 Summit last year. PTI

“ambitious and mutually beneficial”. The announcement followed a telephone conversation with Mr. Starmer.

Negotiations for the agreement, which began in 2022, witnessed several delays due to changes in government in the U.K. The British government

has described the agreement as “the biggest and most economically significant bilateral trade deal”.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had visited the U.K. in June to lay the groundwork for the unveiling of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The visit will include a

review of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) between the two countries, “with a specific focus on trade and economy, technology and innovation, defence and security, climate, health, education and people-to-people ties,” the External Affairs Ministry said.

## Guest of Honour

Following the U.K. leg of the tour, Mr. Modi will travel to the Maldives on July 25 at the invitation of President Mohamed Muizzu. He will be the Guest of Honour at the 60th Independence Day celebrations of the Maldives on July 26.

“The two leaders will also take stock of the progress in the implementation of the India-Maldives Joint Vision for a ‘Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership,’ adopted during the State Visit of the President of Maldives to India in October 2024,” the Ministry said.

## Nepal Ministry says PM Oli will visit India in September

**Press Trust of India**  
KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli will pay an official visit to India towards mid-September, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

“Preparations for the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister are under way. However, the date and the detailed schedules of the visit are yet to be finalised,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lok Bahadur Chhetri said.

However, sources at the Prime Minister's Office said that Mr. Oli will embark on his official visit to the southern neighbour on September 16. The visit will be short this time, probably for two days, the sources added.

Mr. Oli, the chairperson of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), had assumed the office of Prime Minister for the fourth time last July.

He had chosen to visit China for his maiden foreign visit, breaking the tradition of visiting India as the first destination after



K.P. Sharma Oli

assuming the post of Prime Minister. Mr. Oli visited China in December last year at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang and met President Xi Jinping.

## ‘Soured ties’

Amid speculation by some sections of local media that he didn't receive any invitation from India for an official visit, indicating that his relations with New Delhi had soured, Mr. Oli on Thursday said he will be visiting India and that ground work is under way on both sides for the trip.

He, however, did not specify any timeframe for the visit.

# Exit polls predict drubbing for Japan PM in Upper House

Agence France-Presse

TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's coalition lost its Upper House majority in elections on Sunday, local media projected, in a debacle that could end his short premiership.

Mr. Ishiba's governing coalition was already humiliatingly forced into a minority government after Lower House elections in October, shortly after he became Prime Minister and called the snap vote.

Mr. Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its partner Komeito won around 41 of the 125 Upper House seats contested on Sunday, short of the 50 needed to retain a majority, Nippon TV and TBS projected. National broadcaster NHK projected that



Shigeru Ishiba

the LDP could win anything between 27 and 41 seats and Komeito between five and 12, making retaining a majority "difficult".

The right-wing populist party Sanseito was meanwhile projected to have made strong gains, winning between 10 and 22 seats, adding to the two it already holds in the 248-seat chamber.

# Putin meets adviser to Iran's Khamenei for nuclear talks

Agence France-Presse

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a surprise meeting with Ali Larijani, top adviser to Iran's supreme leader on nuclear issues, to discuss Tehran's nuclear programme in the Kremlin on Sunday.

Moscow has a cordial relationship with Iran's clerical leadership and provides crucial backing for Tehran but did not swing forcefully behind its partner even after the U.S. joined Israel's massive bombing campaign on Iran in June.

Mr. Larijani "conveyed assessments of the escalating situation in the Middle East [West Asia] and around the Iranian nuclear programme", Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

**Britain, France, Germany to hold new discussions with Iran on its nuclear programme**

said. Mr. Putin had expressed Russia's "well-known positions on how to stabilise the situation in the region and on the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear programme", he added.

Separately, a German diplomatic source said on Sunday that Britain, France and Germany are planning to hold talks with Iran on its nuclear programme in the coming days. Iran's Tasnim news agency also reported that Tehran had agreed to hold talks with the three European countries.



# ‘Russia is open to peace with Ukraine but achieving goals remains priority’

**Associated Press**

MOSCOW

Russia is open to peace with Ukraine but achieving its goals remains a priority, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Sunday, days after U.S. President Donald Trump gave Moscow a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face tougher sanctions.

Mr. Peskov and other Russian officials have repeatedly rejected accusations from Kyiv and its Western partners of stalling peace talks.

“President (Vladimir) Putin has repeatedly spo-



**Consecutive attacks:** A rescuer walks at the site of a Russian drone strike in Dnipro in Ukraine earlier last week. REUTERS

ken of his desire to bring the Ukrainian settlement to a peaceful conclusion as soon as possible. This is a long process, it requires ef-

fort, and it is not easy,” Mr. Peskov told state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin. “The main thing for us is to achieve our goals. Our

goals are clear,” he added.

The Kremlin has insisted that any peace deal should see Ukraine withdraw from the four regions that Russia illegally annexed in September 2022, but never fully captured.

It also wants Ukraine to renounce its bid to join NATO and accept strict limits on its armed forces – demands Kyiv and its Western allies have rejected.

## Latest gains

Meanwhile, Russian forces have taken control of the village of Bila Hora in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region.

# Iran could hold nuclear talks with European powers next week: Report

**REUTERS**

DUBAI, JULY 20

IRAN, BRITAIN, France and Germany could hold talks next week on Tehran's nuclear programme, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on Sunday, following warnings by the three European countries that failure to resume negotiations would lead to international sanctions being reimposed on Iran.

"The principle of talks has been agreed upon, but consultations are continuing on the time and place of the talks. The country in which the talks could be held next week has not been finalised," Tasnim reported, quoting a source informed on the matter.

The report on possible talks comes a few days after the foreign ministers of the so-called E3 nations, as well as the European Union's foreign policy chief, held their first call with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi since Israel and the US attacked Iranian nuclear facilities a month ago.

The three European countries, along with China and Russia, are the remaining parties to a 2015 nuclear deal reached with Iran - from which the US withdrew in 2018 - that lifted sanctions on Iran in return for restrictions on its nuclear programme. The E3 have said they would restore U.N. sanctions on Tehran via the so-called "snapback mechanism" by the end of August if nuclear talks that were ongoing between Iran and the US before the Israel-Iran air

## IRAN: REPLACED AIR DEFENCES DAMAGED IN WAR WITH ISRAEL

*Dubai:* Iran has replaced air defences damaged during last month's conflict with Israel, Iran's Defah Press news agency reported on Sunday quoting Mahmoud Mousavi, the regular army's deputy for operations. During the conflict in June, Israel's air force dominated Iran's airspace and dealt a heavy blow to its air defences while Iranian military launched successive barrages of missiles and drones on Israeli territory. **REUTERS**

war do not resume or fail to produce concrete results.

"If EU/E3 want to have a role, they should act responsibly, and put aside the worn-out policies of threat and pressure, including the 'snap-back' for which they lack absolutely moral and legal ground," Araqchi said earlier this week.

The snapback mechanism can be used to restore U.N. sanctions before the U.N. Security Council resolution enshrining the deal expires on October 18.

Prior to the Israel-Iran war, Iran and the US held five rounds of nuclear talks mediated by Oman but faced major stumbling blocks such as uranium enrichment in Iran, which Western powers want to bring down to zero to minimise any risk of weaponisation.



# Annual share of abstentions in India's votes at the United Nations reaches an all-time high

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

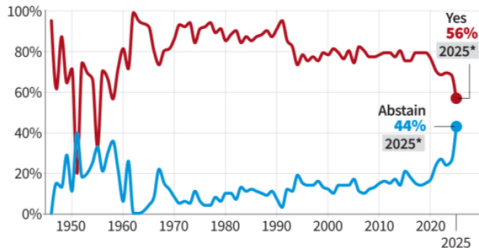
An increasingly polarised world has led to India altering its voting strategy at the United Nations in such a way that the proportion of abstentions every year has increased, while the 'yes' votes have reduced, an analysis has found. According to former diplomats, this rise in the share of abstentions could in fact help India establish its own position on various issues.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of more than 5,500 different resolutions in the UN that India voted on between 1946 and June 2025 shows that the annual percentage of 'yes' votes by India has fallen to 56%, the lowest since 1955. On the other hand, the annual percentage of abstentions has increased to 44%, the highest share in India's history at the UN.

The data show that this change in voting patterns

## UN voting pattern shifts

India's annual share of 'yes' votes on United Nations resolutions dropped to 56% in 2025\* — the lowest since 1955 — while abstentions rose sharply to 44%, marking a new high for the same period



\*Data up to June 2025  
Source: United Nations

Note: No voting took place on General Assembly resolutions in 1964

began around 2019.

India's voting pattern remained volatile until the late 1960s, with the percentage of annual 'yes' votes swinging between 20% and 100% during this period. The percentage of abstentions also fluctuated between 0% and 40%.

The subsequent 25 years — between around 1970 and 1994 — saw the magnitude of this volatility

decrease substantially. The percentage of annual 'yes' votes during this period ranged between a low of 74% and a high of 96%. Annual abstentions ranged between 8% and 19%.

Between the mid-1990s and 2019, India's voting patterns in the UN became even more stable, with the share of 'yes' votes ranging between 75% and 83%. The share of abstentions

ranged between 10% and 17%.

According to former representatives to the UN, the increase in abstentions is simultaneously a reflection of an increasingly polarised world, as well as a reflection of the fact that UN resolutions have become much more complicated.

### 'A useful tool'

"This may best be looked at through a much wider lens than merely an India-centric one to better understand the pattern," T.S. Tirumurti, former Permanent Representative of India to the UN, explained. "It is probably a reflection of greater polarisation between major powers in the UN. This has resulted in a lesser incentive to make compromises by either side to strive hard for a consensus resolution, which was the case a decade or so earlier."

In such a context, Mr. Ti-

rumurti said abstentions also provide emerging and middle powers like India the opportunity to express themselves more freely, rather than merely going along with the consensus or voting against it.

Voting for or against a resolution has also become more fraught now because they have become very complicated, according to Syed Akbaruddin, former Permanent Representative of India in the UN. "Previously, resolutions used to be clear and focussed on one topic," he explained. "What happens now is that contested resolutions are becoming like Christmas trees, where several different aspects and provisions are hung on the same resolution. So, there are situations where we might agree with most of the provisions of a resolution but not with some. In such situations, we cannot vote 'yes' or 'no', and so abstention is a useful tool."