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Transforming Indian Healthcare - Achievements and Milestones (2014-2025)

Context:

- Over the past 11 years (2014-2025), **India's healthcare system has witnessed substantial transformation** driven by robust policy interventions, political commitment, increased funding, and technology-driven solutions.
- These efforts aim to build an affordable, accessible, equitable, and quality healthcare system, aligning with **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-3)** and national objectives under **Ayushman Bharat and National Health Mission (NHM)**.

Healthcare in 2014 - Challenges and Gaps:

- **Infrastructure deficiencies:** Shortage of primary health centres (PHCs), community health centres (CHCs), and diagnostic facilities.
- **Human resource crisis:** Inadequate number of doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals.
- **Service quality:** Limited access, uneven service delivery, and low affordability.
- **High out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE):** Major barrier to universal health access.

Vision Shift - From Illness to Wellness:

- **Proactive well-being approach:** Emphasis on preventive and promotive care, rather than curative alone.
- **Policy backbone:** National Health Mission (**NHM**) as a cornerstone of systemic reform.

Key Pillars of Transformation:

- **Strengthening primary healthcare:**
 - **Ayushman arogya mandirs:**
 - Over 1.77 lakh centres established to deliver comprehensive primary care.
 - Services include maternal-child health, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) screening, and mental health support.
 - **Telemedicine services:**
 - **eSanjeevani:** Enabled remote consultations.
 - **Tele-MANAS:** Specialized mental health support.

- **Maternal and child health improvements:**
 - **Maternal mortality rate (MMR):** According to the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, India's MMR **declined by 86%**, which is almost double the global average decline.
 - **Infant mortality rate (IMR):** India's IMR reduced by 73%, compared to a global decline of 58%.
- **Tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs):**
 - **Mass screening at Arogya Mandirs:** For example, 28 crore screened for hypertension, 27 crore for diabetes, and 27 crore for oral cancer.
 - **Focus on cancer screening:** Breast, cervical, and oral cancer screening prioritized.
- **Universal immunisation and public health milestones:**
 - **Mission Indradhanush:** 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women were vaccinated.
 - **U-WIN portal:** Digitized vaccination with 42.75 crore doses administered till May 2025.
 - **Eliminated diseases:** Polio (2014), Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus (2015), Trachoma (2024).
 - **Malaria:** Over 80% reduction in cases and deaths (2015–2023).
 - **Kala Azar:** Elimination target achieved in 2023.
 - **Tuberculosis:** 17.7% reduction in incidence and 21% decline in mortality. "Missing" TB cases dropped from 15 lakh (2015) to 1.2 lakh (2024).

Healthcare Financing and Affordability:

- **Government health expenditure:** Government health expenditure as a share of GDP has increased from 1.13% to 1.84% (2014–2022).
- **Reduction in OOPE:** Declined from 62.6% to 39.4% (2014–2022).
- **Free Drugs and Diagnostics Initiative:** Available in 36 States/UTs; Tele-radiology in 12 States/UTs.
- **PM National Dialysis Programme:** Benefited over 28 lakh kidney patients; saved ₹8,725 crore in OOPE.
- **Emergency Healthcare Access:** National Ambulance Services (NAS) and Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) reaching remote populations.

Infrastructure Expansion and Human Resource Development:

- **PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM):** Launched in **2021**, PM-ABHIM aims to build long-term health infrastructure.
 - **Achievements under PM-ABHIM:** 18,802 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, 602 Critical Care Hospital Blocks, 730 District Integrated Public Health Labs.
- **Human resource strengthening:** 5.23 lakh health workers were added, including 1.18 lakh Community Health Officers (CHOs). CHOs act as a bridge between community health workers and doctors.

Conclusion - Towards Universal Healthcare:

- India's healthcare journey from 2014 to 2025 represents a **paradigm shift** from illness to wellness, backed by innovative policies, digital tools, and fiscal support.
- The current foundation offers strong momentum toward achieving **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Transforming Indian Healthcare - Achievements and Milestones

(2014-2025) FAQs

Q1. Examine the role of the National Health Mission (NHM) in transforming India's primary healthcare landscape over the past decade.

Ans. The NHM has significantly strengthened India's primary healthcare through initiatives like Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, reduction in maternal and infant mortality, and improved accessibility to diagnostics and medicines.

Q2. Discuss how digital platforms have contributed to democratizing access to healthcare services in India.

Ans. Digital platforms like eSanjeevani, U-WIN, and Tele-MANAS have enabled remote consultations, digitized immunization records, and enhanced mental health outreach, thereby bridging urban-rural healthcare divides.

Q3. Analyse the impact of preventive healthcare strategies on India's disease burden, especially regarding non-communicable diseases.

Ans. Preventive healthcare strategies, including mass screenings for hypertension, diabetes, and cancers at primary health centres, have led to early detection and reduced disease burden from lifestyle-related ailments.

Q4. Evaluate the outcomes of public health financing reforms in reducing Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in India.

Ans. Increased public health spending and schemes like Free Drugs and Diagnostics Services and PM Dialysis Programme have reduced OOPE from 62.6% to 39.4%, enhancing affordability and financial protection.

Q5. Discuss in the recent government initiatives towards transforming India's public healthcare.

Ans. India's approach has evolved toward holistic wellness through preventive care, digital health systems, disease elimination efforts, and infrastructure expansion under PM-ABHIM, marking a shift from curative to proactive healthcare.

Source: IE

The New Battle Challenge of China-Pakistan Collusion

Context

- **Operation Sindoor (May 7-10)** has brought to the fore a troubling evolution in regional geopolitics, one marked by unprecedented battlefield collusion between **China and Pakistan**.
- Confirmed publicly by the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, **Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh**, the conflict has underscored the transformation of the **China-Pakistan strategic nexus from traditional partnership to real-time operational cooperation**.

- Now it is **imperative to explore the scope, nature, and consequences of this collaboration, analysing its implications for India's military posture**, diplomatic strategy, and long-term security environment.

The Nature of China-Pakistan Collusion

• A Strategic Shift: From Tacit Support to Tactical Partnership

- Historically, **China's role in India-Pakistan military conflicts**, in 1965, 1971, and 1999, remained limited to diplomatic backing and symbolic gestures in support of Pakistan.
- However, Operation Sindoor revealed a **more active and layered involvement**.
- Rather than merely supporting Pakistan in principle, China provided **tangible operational support**, leveraging its **defence-industrial base, real-time ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) capabilities**, and **tactical interoperability**.
- This marks a major departure from earlier strategies and represents a sophisticated form of **grey-zone warfare**, enabling Pakistan without triggering direct confrontation with India.
- China's **diplomatic posture**, especially after the April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack, was openly aligned with Pakistan.

• Digital and Informational Collusion: Crafting the Narrative

- Chinese state media and affiliated digital influencers **amplified Pakistani propaganda**, including **exaggerated claims of Indian military losses**.
- **Social media operations** were synchronized with Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) **psychological warfare**, seeking to shape global perceptions and frame India's military actions as disproportionate responses.
- The goal was clear: to **delegitimise India's punitive actions**, obscure the terrorist origins of the conflict, and portray India as the aggressor.

Strategic and Operational Implications for India

• Deterrence Dynamic and New Strategic Normal

- The **deterrence dynamic** between India and its adversaries has shifted.
- China's ability to support Pakistan **without overt military involvement** complicates India's strategic calculus.
- It allows Beijing to test India's red lines while maintaining **deniability and avoiding direct confrontation**.
- India is now operating in a **new strategic normal**, one in which **conventional retaliation** against Pakistan is feasible even under the shadow of nuclear deterrence.
- But just as India finds this new latitude, Pakistan and China are forging their **own normal of joint battlefield operations**.

• Boost to China's Arms Industry and Two Live Borders for India

- Pakistan's post-conflict announcements, such as the acquisition of China's **J-35 stealth fighters, KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft**, and **HQ-19 missile defence systems**, cement this trajectory.

- The **real-time combat deployment of Chinese platforms** effectively served as a **live-fire demonstration** for China's arms industry.
- It validated Chinese systems in a real battlefield against western-origin platforms and has given Beijing added leverage in **global arms markets**, while incentivising future use of **grey-zone tactics**.
- India now faces the reality of **two live borders**. Despite partial disengagement in Eastern Ladakh, Chinese forces remain deployed in strength.
- Simultaneously, the **2021 ceasefire** along the Line of Control has broken down, requiring **simultaneous deployment** of troops, ISR capabilities, and logistical assets on both the western and northern fronts.

Strategic Recommendations and Way Forward

- **Recalibrate Diplomacy with China:** Strategic collusion with Pakistan must carry costs for Beijing. Just as India has ruled out terror and talks with Pakistan, **China's military enabling of Pakistan must impact bilateral engagements**.
- **Expand Conventional Capabilities**
 - India's defence spending, which declined from **17.1% to 13%** of central government expenditure over a decade, must be **urgently reviewed**.
 - Investments must be directed toward **ISR systems, drones, cyber operations**, and **network-centric warfare**
- **Avoid Predictability in Military Response**
 - India must **diversify its punitive options**, avoiding formulaic kinetic retaliation.
 - Levers such as **economic sanctions, covert operations**, and **treaty-based tools** (like reconsidering the **Indus Waters Treaty**) should be explored without public signalling.
- **Institutional and Strategic Integration:** The blurring of threat domains necessitates **inter-agency coordination, military modernization**, and **doctrinal shifts**. Operation Sindoor should be studied not just tactically but as a model for future warfare.

Conclusion

- The events of Operation Sindoor and the attendant China-Pakistan collusion mark a **strategic inflection point** for India.
- No longer can collusion be viewed as a hypothetical worst-case scenario; it is now a **lived reality**.
- As India faces this increasingly **complex and contested battlespace**, it must respond with a blend of **hard power, diplomatic clarity**, and **strategic imagination**.
- The **choices made now will determine whether India can preserve strategic stability in the region** or remain reactive to the initiatives of a deeply integrated adversarial axis.

The New Battle Challenge of China-Pakistan Collusion FAQs

Q1. What was Operation Sindoor?

Ans. Operation Sindoor was a four-day military confrontation between India and Pakistan that took place from May

7 to May 10, 2025, involving targeted strikes and escalated hostilities.

Q2. How did China support Pakistan during Operation Sindoor?

Ans. China supported Pakistan by providing advanced military hardware, real-time intelligence and surveillance through ISR systems, satellite navigation support, and battlefield advisory inputs without directly engaging in the conflict.

Q3. What term describes the evolving China-Pakistan strategy against India?

Ans. The evolving strategy has been described as a one-front reinforced war, where China and Pakistan coordinate military efforts on a single front without China's direct involvement in combat.

Q4. What major concern did Chinese media highlight during the conflict?

Ans. Chinese media repeatedly emphasized concerns about the potential for nuclear escalation and called for international diplomatic intervention to prevent the situation from worsening.

Q5. What key change does India need to make in response?

Ans. India needs to reassess its strategic and military posture, including increasing defence spending, modernizing conventional capabilities, and developing flexible response strategies to address the growing threat from a collusive China-Pakistan axis.

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