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1. What is Boeing's India Engineering and Technology Center, which PM Modi will inaugurate in Bengaluru?

Why in news?

What is Boeing's India Engineering and Technology Center, which PM Modi will inaugurate in Bengaluru?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate aircraft manufacturing giant Boeing's largest investment facility outside the USA in Bengaluru. The Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center (BIETC), built with an investment of Rs 1,600 crore, will have a 43-acre campus.

What is BIETC?

BIETC is Boeing's new campus in India. The facility will look to develop next-generation products and services for the global aerospace and defence industry. The Prime Minister will also launch the Boeing Sukanya Program, which aims to support the entry of more women from across India into the aviation sector.

What does the programme aim to achieve?

The program will provide opportunities for girls and women to learn critical skills in STEM fields and train for jobs in the aviation sector. For young girls, the program will create STEM Labs at 150 planned locations to help spark an interest in STEM careers. The program will also provide scholarships to women training to be pilots.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Indian Express

2. China's population fell for the second year in a row in 2023. But why?

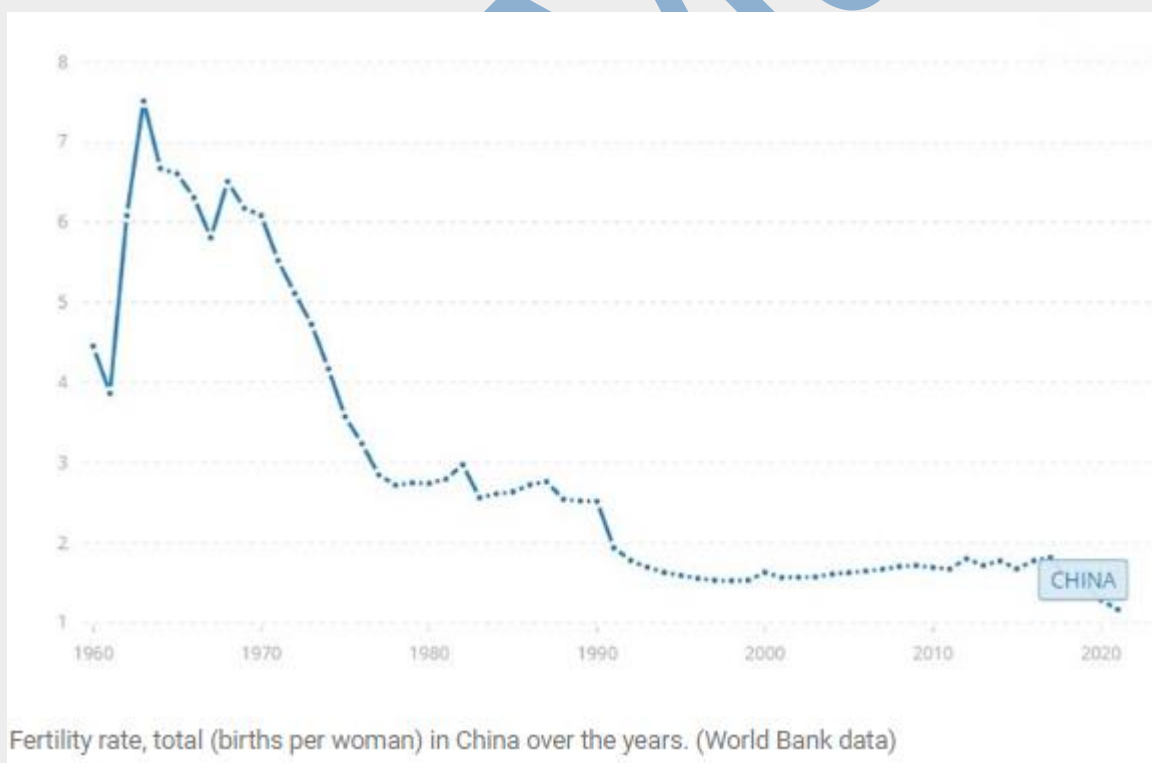
Why in news?

The year 2023 saw 11.1 million deaths and 9 million births in China, marking the second year in which the country's total population has reduced. In the same year, India overtook China as the most populous country in the world.

In numbers released recently, the Chinese government said that the total population stood at 1.4 billion.

Recent Trend

The fall is part of recent population trends. Since 2016, the Total Fertility Rate or TFR (the number of children a woman, on average, is expected to bear in her lifetime) has been falling in China. Another important concept here is that of replacement rate. It is the number of children a woman is to have, to replace the present generation in the future. A couple having two children would mean maintaining the same level of population in the future as well. China's TFR, according to its 2020 Census, was 1.3 births per woman — marginally up from the 1.2 in the 2010 and 2000 censuses, but way below the replacement rate of 2.1.



Is the One-child policy to be blamed for China's falling population?

Introduced in 1980, the One-child policy restricted couples to have only one child, or face harsh penalties. The Communist Party of China, the most powerful entity in the country and one that has been in power since 1949, did so in a bid to accelerate economic growth.

So what other factors are responsible?

In 2016, the One-child policy officially ended and couples were allowed to have up to two children. This was increased to three children in 2021. However, this has not helped achieve the goals of population growth.

As is the case with its two neighbours, China's demographic trends have in part to do with an increasingly educated population. Women's education and employment allow them the agency to make choices about their reproductive health. High pressures of modern society, with increasing competition for jobs, is also a factor.

People are marrying later and sometimes choosing not to have children. Even those who do often have only one child because of the high cost of educating children in cities in a highly competitive academic environment.

How could a falling population impact China?

The working-age population between 15 to 59 years, which is seen as being productive in an economy, has now fallen to 61% of the total population. The proportion of those aged 60 and older has increased. Life expectancy has also increased for both men and women over time as a result of advanced healthcare systems.

In the short run, the trend will result in the need for greater investments in elderly care, including palliative care, and hiring more medical professionals and nursing staff. In the longer run, it could lead to greater pressure on the young population to support the 'dependants' (those under the age of 15 and over the age of 59). It also comes at a time when China's overall economic growth is lower than expected and yet to go back to the highs it reached in the 2000s.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Indian Express

3. Iran, Pakistan, and the Baloch militancy

Why in news?

The relationship between Iran and Pakistan has taken serious hits over the last two days. Recently, Iranian missiles and drones struck two alleged bases of the Jaish al-Adl, an anti-Iran Baloch militant group, in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Pakistan reacted strongly to the "blatant breach" of its sovereignty, recalled its envoy to Tehran, said the Iranian ambassador (who is now in Iran) "may not return", and then carried out its own cross-border missile strikes on alleged terrorist sanctuaries in Iran. Iran has summoned a senior Pakistani diplomat in response. Both countries have claimed civilian casualties in attacks by the other side.

Relationship before 1979

Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, both countries were firmly allied to the United States and had, in 1955, joined the Baghdad Pact, later known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a military alliance modelled on NATO.

Iran provided material and weapons support to Pakistan during its 1965 and 1971 wars against India. After the liberation of Bangladesh, the Shah of Iran famously said that he would not tolerate "further disintegration" of Pakistan.

Relationship after Iran revolution

When Ayatollah Khomeini's ultra-conservative Shiite regime took power in Iran, Sunni-majority Pakistan was undergoing its own Islamisation under military dictator Gen Zia-ul-Haq — and the two countries found themselves at opposite ends of the sectarian divide.

Geopolitically too, differences began to emerge.

First, as Iran went from being an ally to a sworn enemy of the United States almost overnight, the Americans embraced Pakistan closer. Since 1979, the US has been a major reason for the Iranian distrust of Pakistan, which increased after 9/11 as Islamabad extended unqualified support to the US "War on Terror".

Also, Pakistan and Iran ended up on opposite sides in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Iran backed the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, a Pakistani creation.

Common Baloch 'problem'

The 909-km Iran-Pakistan border, known as the Goldsmith Line, stretches from a tripoint with Afghanistan to the northern Arabian Sea. Roughly 9 million ethnic Baloch live on either side of the line, in the Pakistani province of Balochistan, and the Iranian

province of Sistan and Baluchestan. Another 500,000 live in the neighbouring areas of Afghanistan in the north.

The Baloch share cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious links that transcend modern borders. They also nurse deeply rooted grievances against both the Pakistani and Iranian states.



In Pakistan, the Baloch are an ethnic minority physically and politically distant from the Punjabi-dominated regime; in Iran, in addition to being an ethnic minority, the majority-Sunni Baloch are also a religious minority who have been persecuted by the state.

The Baloch homeland is rich in natural resources but impoverished. In Iran, 80% of the Baloch population lives under the poverty line. In Pakistan, massive investments in projects such as China's Belt and Road initiative have not improved their lives.

Baloch nationalism traces its roots to the early decades of the 20th century, when new international borders came to be drawn in the region. Their marginalisation in both

countries in subsequent years fuelled several separatist movements for a "Greater Balochistan" nation state.

The insurgents travel back and forth across the porous border after attacking military, and sometimes, civilian targets. Iran's strikes were in response to terrorist actions by the Sunni Islamist Jaish al-Adl that operates in Iran; the Pakistani response targeted the Baloch Liberation Army and the Baloch Liberation Front, separate groups that have been active in Pakistan.

Notably, the Baloch insurgents in Iran are often organised on Sunni religious lines, whereas the ones in Pakistan are more secular ethno-nationalist organisations. Iran and Pakistan have earlier cooperated to combat the Baloch insurgency. At the same time, the insurgency has been a source of tension, with the two countries accusing each other of harbouring and supporting terrorists.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Indian Express & The Hindu