Prelim Bits 31-03-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Korean War

In its G20 year, India has declared it will represent the voice of the "Global South" for peace and recalled its diplomatic intervention in Korean War 7 decades ago.

- On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea.
- The peninsula had been divided at the end of World War II along the ***38th Parallel***, with Soviet and US forces occupying the North and South respectively.
- In 1948, after the two Koreas declared themselves separate countries, and held their own elections, the occupying forces departed.
- However, neither the North nor the South accepted the other and to this day, both claim the entire Korean peninsula and the islands on either side.
- **India's Role -** India is counted among the countries that contributed to bringing the war to a close, though its efforts were only partially successful.
- New Delhi also discharged an important role in the months after the truce, as chair of a committee to repatriate prisoners of war.
- India's 1952 proposals for the exchange of prisoners enabled the July 1953 armistice agreement.

References

1. IE - Recalling India's diplomatic role in the Korean War

Assamese gamosa

The 'hybrid' gamosa was used to felicitate guests in a function sparked protests across Assam.

- The Assamese gamosa and Bengali gamchha were cut in half and sewn together triggered rows in Assam claiming that a symbol of Assamese identity had been insulted.
- The '*gamosa or gamocha'* is a handwoven rectangular cotton piece of cloth with red borders and different designs and motifs.
- It is traditionally offered to elders and guests as a mark of respect and honour by Assamese people.
- It is an integral part of all socio-religious ceremonies in the state and is considered as an Assamese identity and pride.
- A 'gamosa' literally means a towel and is commonly used in Assamese households for day-to-day affairs.
- For specific purposes, it is also made of expensive materials like traditional Assamese *'Pat' silk* and in different colours as well.
- Gamosa is also known as phulam gamosa; a 'gamosa' meant for exchange during 'Bihu'

festival is known as ***'Bihuwan'***.
- Gamosa, a unique scarf found only in Assam, also received Geographic Indication (GI) tag.

References

1. IE - How a 'hybrid' gamosa sparked protests across Assam
2. Sentinel Assam - Assamese Gamocha gets GI Tag

Upward Lightning

Brazilian researchers recently succeeded in taking pictures of upward lightning with high-speed video cameras at very high resolution.

- Upward lightning is a phenomenon whereby a self-initiated lightning streak develops from a tall object that travels upward toward an overlaying electrified storm cloud.
- The event is long known also called as upward flashes.
- Upward discharges are usually branched upward.
- They almost always occur from towers, tall buildings, or mountain tops.
- **Process -** This process is triggered by the development of the stepped leader.

  *Essentially, a **stepped leader** is a channel of negative charge that travels downward in a zigzag pattern from a cloud, nearly invisible to the human eye.*

- This stepped leader travels to the ground in a millisecond, leading to an intensification of the positive charge on the ground.
- The positive upward discharge of electricity from lightning conductor rod travels to connect with the negative discharge from lightning in the clouds.
- When contact is eventually made, the lightning channel is complete and charges can flow rapidly from the cloud toward the ground.

References

1. IE - When lightning travels from ground to sky
2. Weather - Upward Lightning Caught On Camera Near Memphis

Gravitational Lensing

Astronomers have discovered one of the biggest black holes ever found due to Gravitational lensing.

- The ultra-massive black hole discovered is over 30 billion times the mass of our Sun.
- **Gravitational lensing** is the phenomenon where a foreground object (a galaxy or a black hole) bends the light from a more distant object behind it.
- It warps the space around the massive foreground object, distorting the image of a

background object into rings, arcs or multiple points of light.
- The foreground object acts as a gravitational lens and the distant object in the background is magnified.
- Gravitational lenses help reveal dark matter in galaxies.
- Einstein ring is an example of gravitational lensing.

References

1. IE - Black hole discovered due to its light-bending gravity
2. EarthSky - What is gravitational lensing?

Drugs, Medicines or Food for Special Medical Purposes

The Union Government has given full exemption from basic customs duty on all medicines imported for treatment of all Rare Diseases.

- **Earlier -** Drugs/medicines attract basic customs duty of 10%, while some categories of lifesaving drugs/vaccines attract a concessional rate of 5% or nil.

- **Now -** A general exemption notification by CBIC substituted 'Drugs, Medicines or Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) instead of 'drugs or medicines'.
- Thereby, a full exemption from basic customs duty on all drugs and Food for Special Medical Purposes imported for personal use for treatment of all Rare Diseases is given.
- It covers all the rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021.
- This also fully exempted Pembrolizumab (Keytruda) used in treatment of various cancers from basic customs duty.
- The individual importer has to produce a certificate from Central or State Director Health Services to avail this exemption.

References

1. PIB - Customs duty full exemption for rare disease imported drugs
2. The Hindu - Drugs for rare diseases get customs duty relief
3. IE - Imported medicines for rare diseases exempted from basic customs duty

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