UN Command & Korea

Why in news?

The United Nations Command found that North and South Korea were both guilty of violating armistice agreements.

What is the story behind?

- This allegation followed a recent incident involving gunfire along the Demilitarised Zone between the two countries.
- The latest shootings incident at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) occurred on May 3, 2020.
- A multinational special investigations team conducted the investigations into the latest shootings.
- The investigations team concluded that this shooting was in violation of the armistice agreement that brought a halt to the Korean War in 1953.

What is the UN Command?

- The UN Command, led by the United States, established in 1950.
- It oversees affairs pertaining to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).
- One of its roles is to ensure the terms of the armistice agreement, 1953, are being agreed upon by both North Korea and South Korea.

What is the Korean Armistice Agreement?

- The 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement, was a ceasefire though there was no official declaration of the end of the war.
- The conflict has continued, without fighting between the parties.
- The events surrounding the Korean War and the ceasefire cannot fully be explained without a deep dive into the region’s history and politics and the Second World War.
- Many do not realise that South Korea, under President Syngman Rhee, did not sign the armistice.
- In the absence of an official peace treaty, the two officially remain at war.
- However, in December 1991, North and South Korea signed a pact.
- In this pact, they agreed to refrain from aggressions, in a step that would lead to better relations and a potential resolution of the situation.
- Since the armistice was enforced, there have been several violations of it

from both North and South Korea, leading to persistent tensions.
- However, despite this, there have also been a softening of relations, particularly between the present leaders of North and South Korea.

What was this latest shooting about?

- According to reports, there were no casualties as a result of the shooting.
- According to the South Korean announcement, North Korean soldiers opened fire at a South Korean guard post at the DMZ on May 3, 2020.
- Therefore, the two countries had been involved in a gunfire exchange.
- South Korea said it had retaliated by firing 10 shots as a warning towards North Korean posts at the border.
- According to the announcement, South Korea had warned North Korea through broadcast messages that the firings were a violation of the 2018 inter-Korean military agreement.
- Inter-Korean military agreement, 2018 had come about following a meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.
- This agreement's Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, said there would be reduced military tensions between the two countries.

How have the two countries responded?

- Following the shooting, South Korea had stated that it was trying to investigate the shooting.
- It also said messages had been sent to North Korea to find out more about the causes, but they had not received any responses.
- North Korea did not separately address the issue.
- The shootings from North Korea did not appear to be intentional.
- Prior to this, shootings occurred across the DMZ in December 2017 when a North Korean soldier defected to the other side.
- In November 2017, another North Korean soldier defected only to be shot at, who required medical supervision following his defection to South Korea.

What did UN Command find in investigations?

- A statement released by the UN Command stated that North Korea had been invited to share information regarding this incident.
- the investigation team didn't get any formal response from North Korea.
- The investigation said North Korea had violated the armistice of 1953 by firing four rounds, as had South Korea by firing five rounds in return.
- The report said investigations had been unable to determine whether the shootings that originated from North Korea had been intentional.

- Incidents such as these that involve shootings and other similar disturbances, violate the terms of the armistice agreement.

What was South Korea's statement?

- Following the release of the report of the UN Command, South Korea released a statement implying that it did not agree with the statement.
- It also said that the UN Command ended the investigations without fully looking into North Korea's role in the shootings.
- South Korea also defended its stance of returning fire, saying it had been operating according to protocol.

Source: The Indian Express

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