

## 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 **38<sup>th</sup> 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 overlying 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.



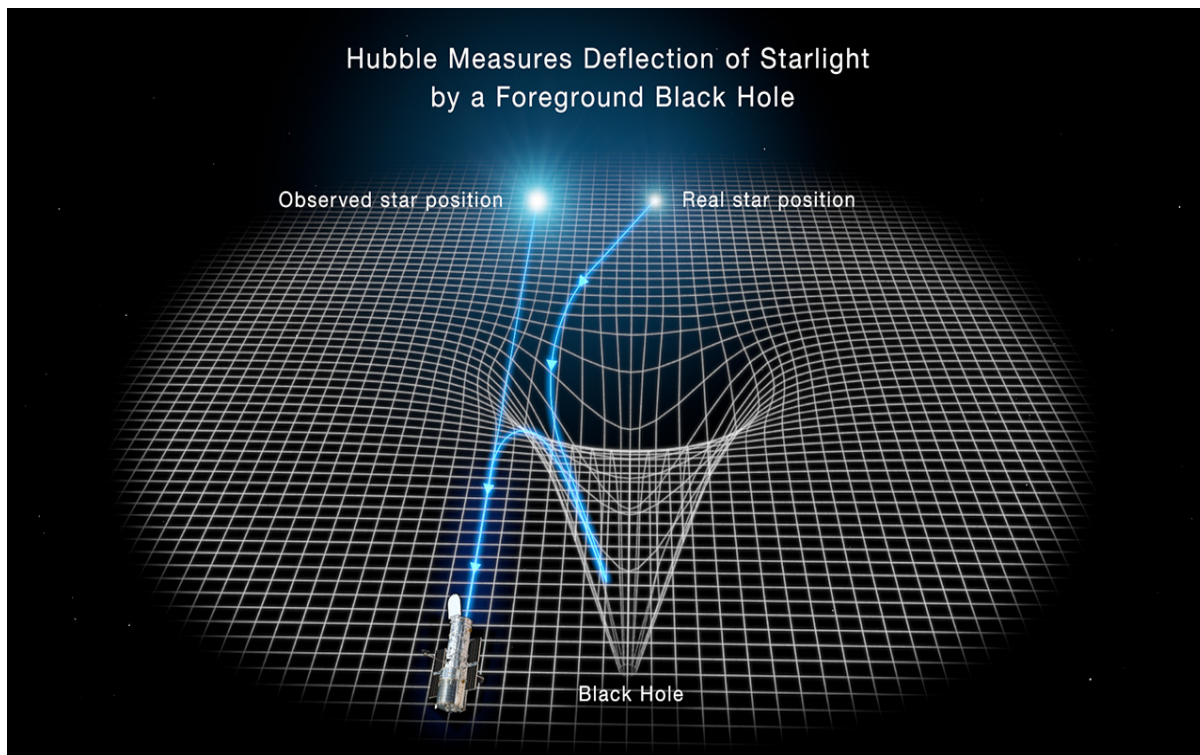
## References

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.

### Easing health costs

The government has announced policy changes in import duties to ease the healthcare costs of rare diseases. A lowdown:

- Full exemption from basic customs duty on imported drugs and special medical foods for personal use in treating rare diseases
- Certificate from health authorities required for individuals to get the exemption
- Previously, drugs/medicines attracted customs duty of 10%, with some lifesaving drugs having concessional rates
- Pembrolizumab, used in cancer treatment, also fully exempted from basic customs duty

Annual treatment costs for rare diseases can range from ₹10 lakh to over ₹1 crore per year

- **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](#)

