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Federal States

The term '*federal*' has its origin in the Latin '*foederis*' meaning league. In a federal state, the government authority is '*layered*' at different levels. Its implication is one of alliance, contract and coexistence of the state's internal diverse regions and peoples. Under the federal system, the rights and responsibilities of local governments are protected by constitution. Here the central authority cannot simply assume the functions of local governments temporarily to relinquish them when the demands have been met. The individual regions of the state possess a certain degree of autonomy which is protected, and there is a constant watch against over-centralisation. This is what permits diverse peoples and even cultures to join a single state. Their first allegiance may be to their own region, but their ultimate loyalty is towards the state.

A federal government has a written constitution that cannot be unilaterally altered. There is division of power between the central government and the component states/provinces. The federal government is generally formed in the countries where the people belong to different racial, ethnic, cultural groups; speak different languages; follow different religions; and have different customs and traditions.

In a federal set-up, local governments derive their authority from the regional governments, which themselves possess constitutionally guaranteed autonomy in specified matters of importance. Thus, the regional or state governments do not depend on the discretion of the centre.

A federation differs from a unitary government in the sense that in the unitary polity '*states*', if any, exist at the mercy of the central government. As opposed to this, in a federation each level of government is, in theory, autonomous within its allocated sphere of competence, and is free from any non-agreed intervention from the other, except in emergency, if the constitution so provides. Thus, what distinguishes federalism from a unitary government is *guaranteed constitutional autonomy*, not the formal division of powers.

Federalism is, thus, essentially a compromise between centripetal and centrifugal forces that are operative at the same time. A federal system of government is one in which there is a division of powers between one general and several regional authorities, each of which, in its own sphere, is coordinate with the others, and each of which acts directly on the people through its own administrative agencies (Birch, 1955).

India is the largest democracy in the world. It has adopted the democratic form of government for its administration. Its political structure is federal in concept but unitary in functioning.

Indian Federalism

India, a Union of States, is a *Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic* with a *parliamentary system* of government. The republic is governed in terms of the Constitution, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949 and came into force on January 26, 1950.

The Constitution which envisages parliamentary form of government is federal in structure with unitary features. The President of India is the constitutional head of executive of the Union. Article 74(1) of the Constitution provides that there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister as head to aid and advise the President who shall in exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice. The real executive power, thus, vests in Council of Ministers with

The Commission submitted its report on September 30, 1955, recommending reorganisation of India into 16 States and 3 Territories. The Government of India examined the report in detail and proposed the reorganisation of India into 15 States and 7 Territories. Finally, the Parliament passed the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 reorganising India into 14 States and 6 Union Territories from November 1, 1956.

As a result of reorganisation, a very large area and population was brought under a similar administrative pattern. All the states, covering 98 per cent of area and population of India, now had a similar legislative, executive and judicial structure as chief components of the Republic. Only a small portion as the Union Territories was left under the Central guidance. The anomaly of the institution of *Rajpramukh* was removed, ending the last hereditary and feudal association with the administration as head of the state. The territorial contiguity was another major achievement. Various blocks of territories, existing as enclaves and exclaves, even after the integration of states were merged with the contiguous units; excepting the one anomaly in respect of Himachal Pradesh which was still left in two major blocks. Most of the reorganised states were larger in area and population than before. Madras and Bihar lost some areas, while Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir underwent no change. Certain former states like Hyderabad, Coorg, Bhopal, Saurashtra, Kachchh, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Ajmer, Mewar, and PEPSU lost their identities as such. There were little boundary changes, old boundaries of different levels had been maintained. The number of states, as reorganised, was less than recommended by the Commission or proposed by the government.

Post-Reorganisation Changes

The reorganisation of states could not satisfy all opinions. It did not mark the end of the process. On linguistic, ethnic, or cultural grounds, pressing demands have been made for readjustment of politico-territorial units. In the years that followed, the territorial changes have been more towards division and fragmentation. Consequently, there was an increase in the number of units and also certain variations in the administrative set-up.

Although language was made an open issue in the reorganisation, it is evident that 'communalism' played a vital role in the partitioning of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat (May 1, 1960), and Punjab (November 1, 1966) into Punjab and Haryana. The Sikhs felt themselves to be a different community from the Hindus in the Punjab and so did the Marathas from Gujaratis in Bombay (Mumbai). Communalism, thus, in the pre-independent India was responsible for the partition of the subcontinent and in the post-Independence India was responsible for creating further territorial divisions (Rai, Satya, 1965, and Singh, G.S. 1966). The States Reorganisation Commission had recommended one greater Punjab comprising the then East Punjab and Himachal Pradesh including PEPSU and Bilaspur. Various forces have succeeded in getting this region divided into four units as at present: the states of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

The other region of large territorial changes lies in the North-East. The internal administration of this area was organised and based on traditional tribal ways of life and social customs. Nagaland (December 1, 1963), and Meghalaya (April 2, 1970) were carved out from Assam, while Manipur (1971), Tripura (1971), Mizoram (December 8, 1986), and Arunachal Pradesh (December 8, 1986) were upgraded from the status of union territories to the status of full-fledged states. In fact, the

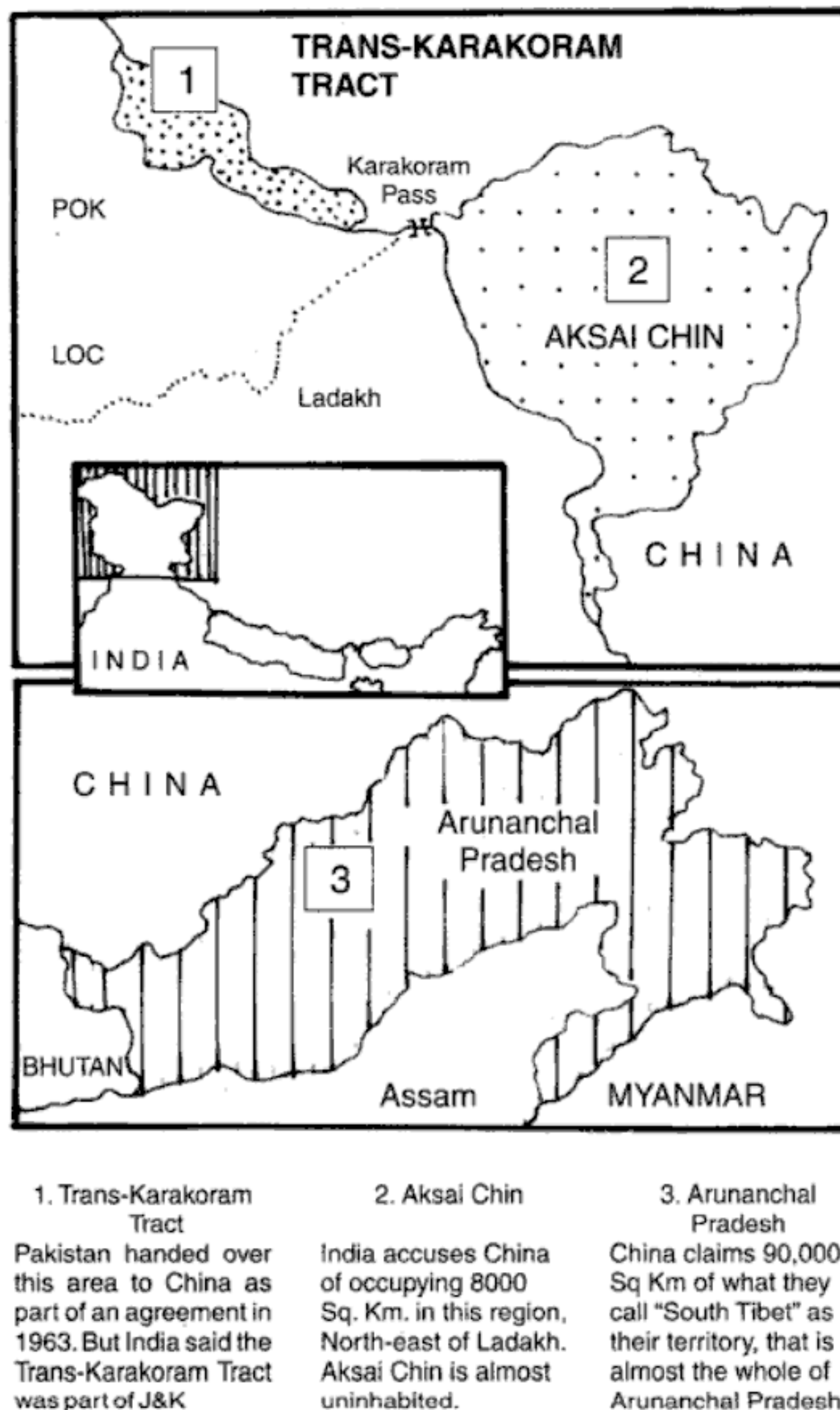


Fig. 16.1 Three Unresolved Territorial Disputes between India and China

In 1954, India gave up its extra-territorial rights on Tibet, exercised by the British Raj on the basis of the Anglo-Tibetan Trade Agreement of July 1914. India formally recognised the Chinese Sovereignty over Tibet and, as a consequence, for the first time in several centuries Tibet came under the direct control of a strong military power with an active and aggressive policy. The geo-strategic value of the entire Himalayan front was drastically changed. The buffer zone of Tibet disappeared and sharp boundary between India and China was established.

between British India and Nepal was decided, is given in the resolution of June 1882. The resolution directed that 'except where natural obstacle intervenes the line from pillar to pillar may be regarded as straight.' The present Indo-Nepal boundary is peaceful and there is no boundary dispute between the two countries.

India–Bhutan Boundary

India Bhutan boundary is the outcome of long history of border conflict between the British and the Bhutanese since 1775. A treaty was signed at Sanchula in 1865 between Bhutan and Great Britain. The British annexed Bhutanese territory along Bengal, Koch-Bihar, and Assam border. Through this treaty, Bhutan was awarded Rs. 50,000 per annum as a British subsidy to Bhutan which was raised to Rupees one lakh in June 1911.

India's friendly relation with Bhutan are based on the Treaty of 1949 which provides a sound framework to ensure 'perpetual peace and friendship'. Under the treaty, India has got the rights to protect Bhutan's sovereignty and defend its borders. Indian army units are permanently stationed all along the Bhutan–Tibet border.

India–Myanmar Boundary

The boundary between India and Myanmar is 1458 km. long which runs from India-China-Myanmar tri-junction in the north to the southern tip of Mizoram (**Fig. 16.5**). This boundary runs roughly along the watershed between the Brahmaputra and Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy). This border passes through the thickly forested hills along the borders of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The boundary was delimited precisely by a bilateral treaty signed on March 10, 1967. Some difficulty came near Diphu Pass, the tri-junction between India, Myanmar, and China. India's claim has been that the Dipuh Pass is not the tri-junction but rather a few kilometers south of it.

Insurgency and smuggling are the main problems along the India–Myanmar border. On the Myanmar side, the Communist supported rebels are playing a significant role in instigating Kernes, Kachins and Shans to fight for their independence from Myanmar. Similarly, on the Indian side, the Nagas and Mizos, etc. are receiving aid and encouragement from the Chinese and Burmese Communists. Moreover, a lot of smuggling of drugs and narcotics is going on along this border. Barring a few minor incidents, the Indo–Myanmar border has remained peaceful.

India–Sri Lanka Boundary

India Sri-Lanka boundary is a maritime boundary. It is separated by a 30 km wide shallow sea called the Palk Strait (**Fig. 16.6**). The nearest points of the two countries are Dhanushkodi in Tamil, Nadu (India) and Talai Mannar in Jaffna (Sri Lanka).

Historically, the India–Sri Lanka boundary has remained generally peaceful. Some bitterness was, however, created over the ownership of Kachchitevu Island (area 1.92 sq. km) in the Palk Strait which was given to Sri Lanka by India in 1974. The maritime boundary has become lively with the insurgent activity of LTTE which is demanding a separate homeland for Sri Lanka Tamils.

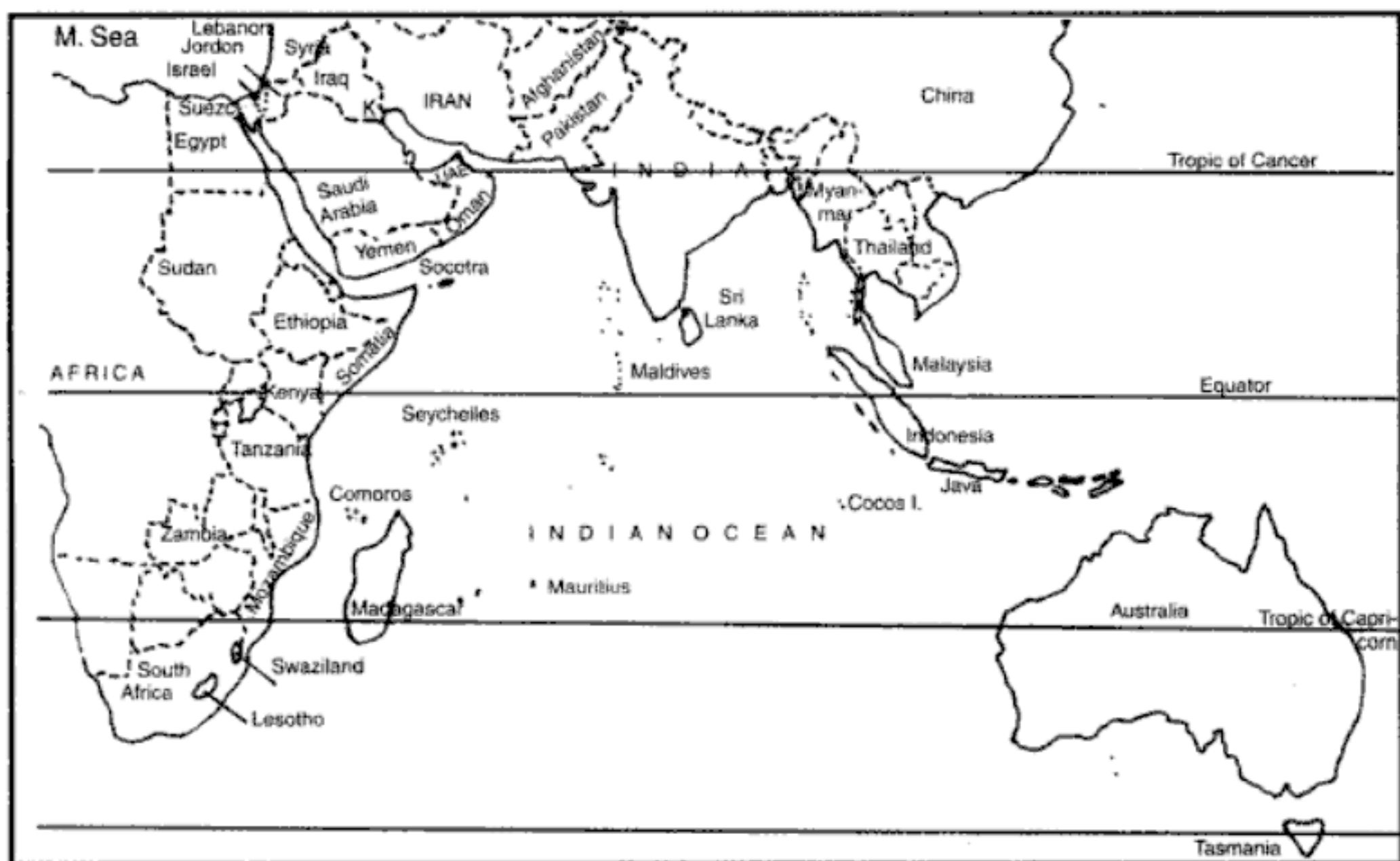


Fig. 16.7 Indian Ocean and Adjacent Countries

The Indian Ocean consists of marginal seas of Andaman Sea, Arabian Sea, Arafura Sea, Lakshadweep Sea, Malagassi Sea, Red Sea, Sawu Sea, and Timor Sea. The main gulfs of the Indian Ocean are: Bay of Bengal, Great Australian Bight, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Carpentaria, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Martaban, Persian Gulf, and Gulf of Spencer. The important straits are: Bass Strait, Malacca Strait, Mozambique Channel, Palk Strait, Singapore Strait, Selat-Sunda Strait, and Tore Strait. In comparison to other oceans, it has the largest number of marginal seas-touching warm water.

The Oceanic ridges in the Indian ocean are Socotra Ridge, Chagos Ridge, Madagascar Ridge, Sefchelles Ridge, St. Paul Ridge, 90° Ridge, Kerguelen Plateau, Prince Edward Island (Ridge), and Seychelles-Mauritius Ridge.

Economic Significance

The economic importance of the Indian Ocean may be appreciated from the following facts:

1. Agricultural Products

The littoral countries of the Indian Ocean are the leading producers of some of the important cereal and cash crops. The Indian Ocean countries produce 77 per cent of rubber, 76 per cent of tea, 60 per cent of dates, 55 per cent of cashew-nuts, 45 per cent of wool, 27 per cent of cotton, and 20 per cent of coffee of the world. There is much demand of these cash crops in Europe, America, and Japan. Moreover, Rice, wheat, maize, millets, pulses, dates, coconut, arecanut, oilseeds, sugarcane, are the other important crops grown in the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean (Fig. 16.8). Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand are among the leading exporters of heavy wood.