

2020



drishti

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

9th March - 14th March



1. Indian Ocean Commission

Why in News?

India has been accepted as the 5th observer of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

- India's status as an observer assumes significance as IOC is an important regional institution in the Western Indian Ocean.

Indian Ocean Commission

- Indian Ocean Commission was created in 1982 and was institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Agreement.
- The IOC acts as a platform to protect the interests of the Western Indian Ocean Islands.
- The commission has a secretariat located in Mauritius.
- It consists of five African Indian Ocean nations:
 - Madagascar
 - Comoros
 - La Réunion (French overseas territory)
 - Mauritius
 - Seychelles
- The Commission now has five observers — India, China, European Union (EU), Malta and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF).

Significance of this status for India:

- India will get an official foothold in a premier regional institution in the western Indian Ocean, boosting engagement with islands in this part of the Indian Ocean.
- It boosts cooperation with France that has a strong presence in the Western Indian Ocean.
- It lends depth to India's **(Security and Growth for all in the Region)** SAGAR policy.
 - SAGAR is an articulation of India's vision for the Indian Ocean which aims for enhancement of capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories & interests; deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral; action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism.
- The move also strengthens western flank of the Indo-Pacific and is a stepping stone to security cooperation with East Africa.
- The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) is home to one of the key chokepoints in the Indian Ocean- the Mozambique Channel.

2. Doha Agreement

Why in News?

- Recently, the United States has signed a deal with the Taliban, in Doha Qatar.
 - The deal might end the long drawn war in Afghanistan.

Background

- The war in Afghanistan started in 2001 after the 9/11 attack, when the US-led forces waged war to overthrow the Taliban (particularly Al-Qaeda)
- The war effort in Afghanistan was derailed as the focus shifted to Iraq from 2003 onwards.
- In 2014, the U.S. announced the withdrawal of the bulk of soldiers but a few thousand US soldiers were to stay behind to “advise, train and assist” the Afghan security forces under **Operation Resolute Support**.
- In 2017, the U.S. President Donald Trump laid out a strategy for “Afghanistan and South Asia”.
- Since October 2018, Taliban representatives and US officials have been meeting to chalk out a peace treaty.

Key Points

- Comprehensive Ceasefire between the Afghan Government and Taliban has been agreed.
 - The agreement facilitates intra-Afghan dialogue.
 - The participants of intra-Afghan negotiations will discuss the date and modalities of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, including agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan.
- The timeline for the withdrawal of all foreign forces, over the next 14 months, from Afghanistan will be carried out.
 - The withdrawal is conditional to Taliban’s adherence to security guarantees and ceasefire.
- Taliban (including Al-Qaeda) cannot use Afghanistan’s territory against the security of the United States and its allies.
- In turn, the Taliban has demanded the release of 5000 fighters from Afghan-run jails.

India’s Concerns

- Security of India:
 - The deal prevents the use of Afghanistan territory by any group against the security of the United States and its allies.
 - However, it is unclear whether India, which is not a formal U.S. ally, is included in this guarantee.

- The deal also promises to take Taliban leaders out of the UN Security Council's Sanctions List.
- This could considerably bring down the number of terrorists harboured by Pakistan.
- This might benefit Pakistan during the June 2020 FATF Plenary and will also increase India's security challenges.
- **Sidelining of Intra-Afghan Dialogue:**
 - The US has committed to withdrawal of troops and it intends to submit to the Taliban-led government.
 - Priority to Taliban led government may sideline the "Intra-Afghan" dialogue and India's support for the election process for leadership in Afghanistan.

3. **Greek Island of Lesbos**

- Lesbos (also called Mitilini) is a greek island.
- It is the largest island after Crete and Euboea in the Aegean Sea.
- The island is largely volcanic in the west, and numerous thermal springs indicate the unstable subterranean structure that has caused severe earthquakes throughout history.
- The irregular coast of Lesbos is penetrated by two narrow-mouthed bays:
 - Geras - southeast
 - Gulf of Kallonis - southwest
- The principal peak here is Mount Lepethymnus (3,176 feet).

4. **Katchatheevu Island**

- It is an uninhabited off-shore island in the Palk Strait.
- It was part of the Ramnad Kingdom of India.
- During the British rule, it was administered jointly by India and Sri Lanka.
- In the early 20th century, Sri Lanka claimed territorial ownership over the islet, so in 1974 India ceded the island to Sri Lanka, through a joint agreement.
- The island is used by fishermen of Sri Lanka and India to dry their nets.