**BlyInvitation**

**Why the Andaman Sea is back in the spotlight**

**Changing geopolitical dynamics are reviving interest in the waterway and the Bay of Bengal littoral**

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For The Straits Times

As it feels the effects of the mounting tensions — economic, political and military — in the region, Asia, including some of its most significant players, is increasingly looking to the Bay of Bengal as a means of navigating the geopolitical challenges that are reshaping the region.

India, for instance, is repositioning itself as a player with a stake in the region’s strategic and economic future. A recent invitation to the Maldives to become a member of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multilateral Economic Cooperation) is a clear indication of this.

The Maldives is a small island nation that is heavily dependent on foreign investment and tourism to sustain its economy. By joining BIMSTEC, it would have access to a larger market and a more stable political environment, which could help it to diversify its economic base and reduce its dependency on foreign aid.

The邀请 came just days after the Maldives signed a $1.5 billion agreement with China to build a deep-sea port and airport on the island of Hambantota.

This move is seen as a way to counter the increasing influence of China in the region, particularly in the South China Sea, where Beijing has been building artificial islands and military facilities.

India’s move to include the Maldives in BIMSTEC reflects its growing concern about China’s expanding influence in the region. The Indian government is also aware of the economic benefits that could come from increased trade and investment in the Bay of Bengal region.

For its part, the Maldives is eager to take advantage of this opportunity. By joining BIMSTEC, it would have access to a larger market and a more stable political environment, which could help it to diversify its economic base and reduce its dependency on foreign aid.

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