Changing geo politic scenario

Why in news?

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Two back to back high profile visits-one by Bangladeshi Prime Minister and the recent Australian prime minister’s visit has elevated the regional cooperation to a new level.

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How is India spear heading change?

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- These visits indicate India’s changing perspective of two regions: one, from South Asia to the Bay of Bengal littoral and the other, from the Indian Ocean to the Indo-Pacific.
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- Together, they promise to change the way India imagines the physical spaces around it.
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- SAARC has become dysfunctional due to Pakistan’s reluctance to embark on even minimal mutually beneficial economic cooperation.
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- New Delhi on other hand has started concentrating its eastern sector through various policies like Act East Policy.
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- With India’s growing links with East Asia, the Bay of Bengal has begun to replace South Asia as the primary vehicle for pursuing regional cooperation.
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- Thus integrating the waters and hinterland has emerged as a key new element of the bilateral agenda.
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How is India engaging with Pacific Ocean nations?

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For promoting regionalism in the Indian Ocean and strengthening regional maritime security have been prominent themes in Delhi's deepening partnership with Australia and Japan in recent years.

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- Meanwhile, as India's economic footprint and with it, the scope of its maritime interests widen, the idea of the Indo-Pacific has begun to transcend that of the Indian Ocean.
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- The term Indo-Pacific allows the recognition of two important changes in the regional structures around us.
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- One is the fact that Chinese economic interests and naval presence in the Indian Ocean have grown over the last decade.
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- The other is the slow but certain rise in India's economic and security profile in the Pacific.
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- The pace and intensity of the integration between the two oceans has been enhanced by China's Belt and Road initiative that seeks to connect China with the Indian Ocean through overland and maritime corridors.
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- China has also acquired its first overseas military base in Djibouti, is building dual use facilities in different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral and cultivating special political relationships.
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- India, on its part, is trying to consolidate its traditional special relationships in the Indian Ocean while building new partnerships in the Pacific.
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- India has stepped up engagement with them, not only in the bilateral framework, but also in the trilateral framework.
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- During Modi's visit to Australia at the end of 2014, the two sides outlined a broad plan for security cooperation with a special emphasis on maritime issues and shipping information.

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- This agreement also included naval exercises, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief, peacekeeping and diplomatic coordination in regional maritime forums.
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- The joint statement issued recently by both PM’s reaffirms many of these commitments.
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- But there is one area the two sides need to put greater emphasis considering China’s growth in this area.
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- It is about developing their island territories in the Bay of Bengal and the eastern Indian Ocean.
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- Canberra is debating plans to develop two Indian Ocean territories the Cocos (Keeling) and Christmas Islands for strategic purposes.
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- Delhi for its share has been doing the same with the Andaman and Nicobar Island chain, but progress has been rather slow.
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- The prospects for strategic cooperation between Delhi and Canberra have been limited for decades by physical and political distance.
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- But recent renewed ties along with sharing of facilities and information can vastly improve the naval reach of India and Australia.
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- It can contribute to the construction of a stable maritime order in the Bay of Bengal and the eastern Indian Ocean.
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Source: Indian Express

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