

Highlights from the region

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Two geo-political developments over the past week will send a strong signal against China's territorial claims and hegemonistic designs in the Indo-Pacific Region. The United States, Japan and Australia are planning a joint navy drill in the South China Sea off the western Philippines this week to underscore their commitment to the rule of law in the region after a recent show of Chinese aggression. To deter China, USA at a Camp David Summit also sought to put in place a trilateral comprising itself-Japan-South Korea something which was unthinkable given Japan-S Korea ties. The three leaders discussed shared concerns about China's actions that run counter to the rules-based international order. Meanwhile, the Philippine armed forces said it would again seek to resupply troops stationed in a rusty World War II-era ship on a reef in the South China Sea, after China blocked a previous attempt with water cannons. Experts are also suggesting that Vietnam and Philippines should join hands to counter China in the South China Sea region. In Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sought to reassure Singaporeans on Sunday that his government would continue to take care of their needs, as the country faces mounting global challenges.

[US, Japan and Australia plan joint navy drills in disputed South China Sea, Philippine officials say](#)

Associated Press | 20th August 2023

The United States, Japan and Australia are planning a joint navy drill in the South China Sea off the western Philippines this week to underscore their commitment to the rule of law in the region after a recent show of Chinese aggression in the disputed waters, Filipino security officials said Sunday. On Aug. 5, Chinese coast guard ships used water cannons against Philippine vessels in the contested waterway where disputes have long been regarded as a potential flashpoint and have become a fault line in the rivalry between the U.S. and China in the region. The drill will include three aircraft and helicopter carriers sailing together in a show of force and undertaking joint drills. Their commanders are set to meet with Filipino counterparts in Manila after the offshore drills, two Philippine security officials told The Associated Press.

[FOCUS: Japan-South Korea-U.S. summit symbolic but judgment of history awaits](#)

Kyodo News | 19th August 2023

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida may not have foreseen standing amicably together with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol at the U.S. presidential retreat of Camp David quite so quickly when they first held formal talks in Tokyo just five months ago. But whether this was truly a historic event will not likely be determined for some time to come. What is clear is that U.S. President Joe Biden chose to host

the trilateral summit at a symbolic location and that the three leaders unveiled a host of new initiatives to prevent the current positive momentum in their ties from going backward. Biden, Kishida and Yoon also discussed shared concerns about China's actions that run counter to the rules-based international order and touched on its "dangerous and aggressive behavior" in the South China Sea.

[Defiant Philippines will resupply South China Sea troops despite Beijing's block](#)

South China Morning Post | 20th August 2023

The Philippine armed forces said it would again seek to resupply troops stationed in a rusty World War II-era ship on a reef in the South China Sea, after China blocked a previous attempt with water cannons. "This exercise of our sovereign rights and jurisdiction is a testament to our firm belief in the rules-based international order that underpins regional peace and stability," armed forces spokesperson Medel Aguilar said in a statement. Manila filed a diplomatic protest against Beijing this month after China's coastguard used water cannon and "dangerous" moves to prevent the Philippines from sending supplies to a handful of troops in the Second Thomas Shoal.

[South China Sea: could Philippines and Vietnam bond over assertive Beijing?](#)

South China Morning Post | 20th August 2023

A silver lining could yet emerge for Philippines-Vietnam ties from an increased regional focus on outwardly aggressive Chinese activities in the South China Sea, analysts say, as the common threat both countries face brings them closer together. But before any enhancements to maritime security cooperation between the two Southeast Asian nations can occur, they urgently need to find common ground on handling their overlapping claims in the resource-rich waterway, experts say.

[NDR 2023: From housing to retirement, PM Lee provides reassurances amid anxieties and storms](#)

The Strait Times | 20th August 2023

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sought to reassure Singaporeans on Sunday that his government would continue to take care of their needs, as the country faces mounting global challenges and growing anxiety over jobs, housing and costs of living. His tone of reassurance ran across all three of his speeches during the National Day Rally at the Institute of Technical Education College Central.

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