

Japan plans to build its own island

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Japanese officials reportedly plan to grow an island on an isolated reef 1,000 miles south of Tokyo to win a political dispute.

Scientists plan to implant coral "seeds" on the reef in an effort to raise the reef's ranking to that of an official island, The Times of London reported Tuesday. An island designation would give Japan economic rights to 162,000-square miles of ocean that occupy a crucial strategic position.

The territory, known as Okino-Torishima is a coral reef three miles long and a mile wide. But, The Times noted, as an island it would secure Japan's rights to an Exclusive Economic Zone in a 200-mile radius.

So now, Japanese scientists are to harvest about 300,000 "eggs" of three varieties of coral from Okino-Torishima, and grow them in warmer, less turbulent seas near Okinawa before they are returned to the Okino-Torishima reef to transform it into an island.

"It is hard to say growing coral will directly result in our holding on to our territory," Toru Noda, of Japan's Ministry for Land, Infrastructure and Transport, told The Times. "But it should help to preserve the island."

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