



SECOND THOMAS SHOAL – INTERNATIONAL REALTIONS

News: China and the Philippines reached a deal to deescalate tensions at the disputed Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea.

What's in the news?

- It is located approximately 105 nautical miles (195 km) west of Palawan, Philippines.
- It lies within the Philippines' **EEZ (exclusive economic zone)**.
- The shoal is part of the Spratly Islands, which are subject to **overlapping territorial claims by multiple countries, including China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Taiwan**.
- It is strategically significant due to its location in the **South China Sea, a major maritime trade route rich in natural resources**.

Geographical features and location.

- It is a submerged reef in the Spratly Islands of the **South China Sea**.
- It is a **tear-drop shaped atoll, 11 nautical miles (20 km; 13 mi) long**, from north to south and fringed with coral reefs.
- The **coral rim surrounds a lagoon**, which has depths of up to 27 metres (89 ft).
- **Drying reef patches** are found east and west of the reef rim.



Disputed claims in the South China Sea



Coral Reefs of the South China Sea.

- The South China Sea (SCS), a marginal sea in the centre of Southeast Asia, is surrounded by ten Asian nations: China, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia.
- The SCS contains over 250 small islands, **atolls, cays, shoals, reefs, and sandbars**, most of which have **no indigenous people**.
- The total reef area is **estimated at about 12,000 km²**, or **7% of the world's total reef surface area**.
- Home to an **estimated 571 known species of reef corals**.



Threats to these Reefs

- The **Geopolitical situation** hinders the scientific research in this region.
- Over **Fishing and use of destructive fishing methods**.
- **Harvesting of threatened species**.
- **Shipping:** The South China Sea contains the second most used **sea lane in the world**.
- **Oil and gas explorations**

Mitigation and Solutions

- Ecologically sustainable fishing.
- Ecologically sustainable tourism.
- Regionally coordinated management arrangements.
- Standardized environmental impact assessment procedures.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-and-the-philippines-announce-deal-aimed-at-stopping-stop-clashes-at-fiercely-disputed-shoal/article68431162.ece>

