New fish varieties described

Researchers from Kochi have described four marine fish species from the Kerala waters. The newly discovered species were named as *Chelidoperca manculicauda, Opistongnathus pardus, Plectranthias alcocki* and *Pempheris sarayu.*

Chelidoperca manculicauda, Opistongnathus pardus, Plectranthias alcocki, Pempheris sarayu

The samples of the fishes were collected from various fish landing centres of Kovalam, Kochi and Kollam.

The discovery was made by a collaborative research team consisting of Dr.A. Gopalakrishnan, the Director of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, N.G.K. Pillai, E.M. Abdussamad and Akhilesh of the institute, J.K. Jena, the Director of National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources and K.K. Bineesh of the Kochi Centre of the Bureau.

John E. Randall of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii, too had partnered in the research programme. The results of the study were published in the international taxonomy journal Zootaxa, Journal of the Ocean Science Foundation and Aqua- international journal of ichthyology.

The identification and description of a new species is a time-consuming process and it took around four years for completing the scientific assessment process, said Dr. Bineesh.

Researchers would first compare the morphological features of the fish with known samples of the species and later genetic studies would be carried out. The findings would be later peer-reviewed by international researchers. The UK-based International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature had laid down procedures for describing and naming news species, he said.

The researchers also used the opportunity to honour W. Alcock, one of the doyens of fish taxonomy who had made significant contributions to the understanding of deep-sea fauna of Indian seas. They named the species *Plectranthias alcocki* after the veteran researcher.

Though the newly described species didn't have commercial importance, they contributed to the rich marine biodiversity of the country, he said.