

Marine heatwaves cause intense coral bleaching in Lakshadweep: Researchers

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Marine heatwaves are triggering widespread bleaching of coral reefs in the Lakshadweep Sea, wherein corals lose their vibrant colours due to stress—a concerning phenomenon, according to a new study.

Survey results from various Lakshadweep Islands revealed that a considerable percentage of the hard coral species have undergone severe bleaching, researchers of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) said.

The bleaching was primarily due to a prolonged period



of marine heat waves affecting the region since late October 2023, they said.

Marine heatwaves are rare extreme weather events that involve prolonged periods of abnormally high ocean temperatures, the CMFRI said in a statement here.

These temperatures often

exceed the 90th percentile of typical regional ocean temperatures based on historical data, it said.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this level of DHW poses a substantial risk of coral bleaching, threatening the region's diverse marine ecosystems.

"Such heat stress levels signify a severe threat to coral health, leading to extensive bleaching where corals lose the symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae), compromising their survival by depriving them of essential nutrients," said Dr K R Sreenath, Senior Scientist of CMFRI.