

CMFRI team identifies two new species of needlefish

The Hindu Bureau

KOCHI

Researchers at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) here have scientifically described two new species of needlefish from Indian waters. They found that the previously identified flat needlefish (*Ablennes hians*) is actually a complex of at least three distinct species. Genetic and molecular analysis and taxonomic examination confirmed that these newly-identified species have unique characteristics.

The new fishes have been named *Ablennes joseberchmansis*, after the alma mater - St. Berchamn's College, of the CMFRI researcher Toji Thomas and his teacher, and *Ablennes gracalii*, after the researcher's mother Grace and his friend Alina, CMFRI sources said. The research was carried out under the guidance of E. M. Abdussamad, principal scientist.

The study focused on specimens collected from



(Top) *Ablennes joseberchmansis* and (above) *Ablennes gracalii*.

Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu.

These commercially valuable fishes are known for their palatability and nutritional content. Primarily caught using hook and line, they are identifiable by their green spines and elongated beak with sharp teeth. Their market price is around ₹400 a kg.

Found abundantly along the Indian coast, these fishes are pelagic resources and are available for fishing in the upper waters (0-20 metres depth). According to CMFRI, further research

is needed to understand the distribution and population patterns of the newly identified fishes in Indian waters. Given their high demand, the researchers believe these fishes have the potential to benefit the country's marine fisheries sector.

The research team also included Shijin Ameri, Badarul Sijad and K. K. Sajikumar from CMFRI. Their findings were published in the journal of Regional Studies in Marine Science, said a communication from CMFRI here.