



THE HINDU

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CMFRI research team surveys squid biodiversity in Antarctica

Our Bureau

Kochi

Battling three cyclones, rough seas and extreme windy cold weather, a research team of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) is continuing its survey to investigate the squid biodiversity in the Antarctic zone. They are part of the 12th Indian scientific expedition to the Southern Ocean.

Geetha Sasikumar, Principal Scientist, and KK Sajikumar, Technical Officer at Shellfish Fisheries Division of CMFRI, have completed 36 days at sea, estimating the relative abundance and distribution of cephalopods, mainly squids, and understanding their role in the Antarctic ecosystem.

The collected samples will be used for detailed analysis at the CMFRI laboratory to find out about biodiversity in the Southern Ocean and determine the squids' age by



SEA STORY. Researchers Geetha Sasikumar and KK Sajikumar with the automatic squid jigging machine during the expedition

analysing the growth rings in their “ear bones (statoliths)”.

STUDIES VITAL

These studies are vital for understanding the distribution and ecological significance of these species in the region, paving the way for their sustainable management, said Geetha Sasikumar.

The team is employing various methods to investigate the distribution and abundance of flying squids in the region.

A total of 16 research institutes and universities from India and abroad are

participating in the expedition, organised by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It is led by Anoop Sharad Mahajan (IIT-M) and Sabu Prabhakaran (NCPOR).

The expedition, with 42 researchers, is covering 26 pre-fixed locations for sampling along the cruise track, Sasikumar said.

Sampling at low temperatures (-22°C) and navigating through icebergs and floating sea ice was challenging at times, Sajikumar said, highlighting the extreme conditions they endured.