

MARINE WONDER

Tricolour coral display beneath the sea ignites curiosity

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

On the eve of Independence Day, marine scientists announced the discovery of a natural coral assemblage in tricolour in Indian waters, offering critical insights into how the species adapts to climate change.

The underwater image captured from Minicoy in Lakshadweep during a marine mammal survey by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute shows two coral colonies appearing in tricolour — orange, white and green — coming together naturally. The institute released the image on Friday.



A natural coral assemblage beneath the sea resembling the Indian tricolour. DH PHOTO

The species were identified as *Lobophyllia corymbosa* with orange colour and *Lobophyllia radians* in white and green.

The underwater image, scientists say, provides valuable insights into the contrasting response of corals to environmental stress. While one *L.*

radians colony underwent bleaching after losing its symbiotic algae, its neighbouring colony remains healthy despite growing in close proximity.

"This tells the stark story of resilience and vulnerability to climate stress. While one colony of the coral species bleached due to rising sea temperatures, its direct neighbour of the same species remains healthy and green," said Grinson George, director, CMFRI.

"This variation in thermal stress tolerance offers crucial insights for ongoing reef restoration and climate adaptation research."

Emphasising the urgent need to tackle these climate impacts,

he said the institute was taking multiple measures toward coral reef restoration. This includes rapidly scaling up the deployment of artificial reefs along coastal waters to revive degraded habitats, enhance coastal biodiversity, and support the livelihoods of artisanal fishers.

Restoring natural habitats through artificial reefs is expected to support the marine ecosystem and build a robust, climate-resilient marine ecosystem.

Simultaneously, efforts are on to replenish wild stocks of ecologically and economically vital marine species through marine fish breeding, seed production, and sea ranching programmes.