

Tricolour assemblage in Dweep points at coral response to environmental stress

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: In an intriguing spectacle of marine life, a natural coral assemblage beneath the sea with a striking resemblance to the Indian tricolour has been found in Minicoy, Lakshadweep.

The underwater image captured during a marine mammal survey by ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) shows two coral colonies appearing in tricolour — orange, white and green — come together naturally, reminiscent of the national flag.

The species were identified as *Lobophyllia corymbosa* with its vibrant orange colour, and *Lobophyllia radi-*



The underwater image was captured during a marine mammal survey by ICAR-CMFRI

ans in white and green colours.

Captured by CMFRI research scholar Alvin Anto, the underwater image provides valuable insights on contrasting responses 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.

“Though this assemblage is a symbol of India’s rich marine biodiversity, it also carries an urgent message about ocean health. It tells the stark story of resilience and vulnerability to climate stress,” said CMFRI director Grinson George.

“While one colony of coral species bleached due to rising sea temperatures, its direct neighbour of the same species remains healthy and green. This variation in thermal stress tolerance offers crucial insights for the ongoing reef restoration and climate adaptation research,” he added.