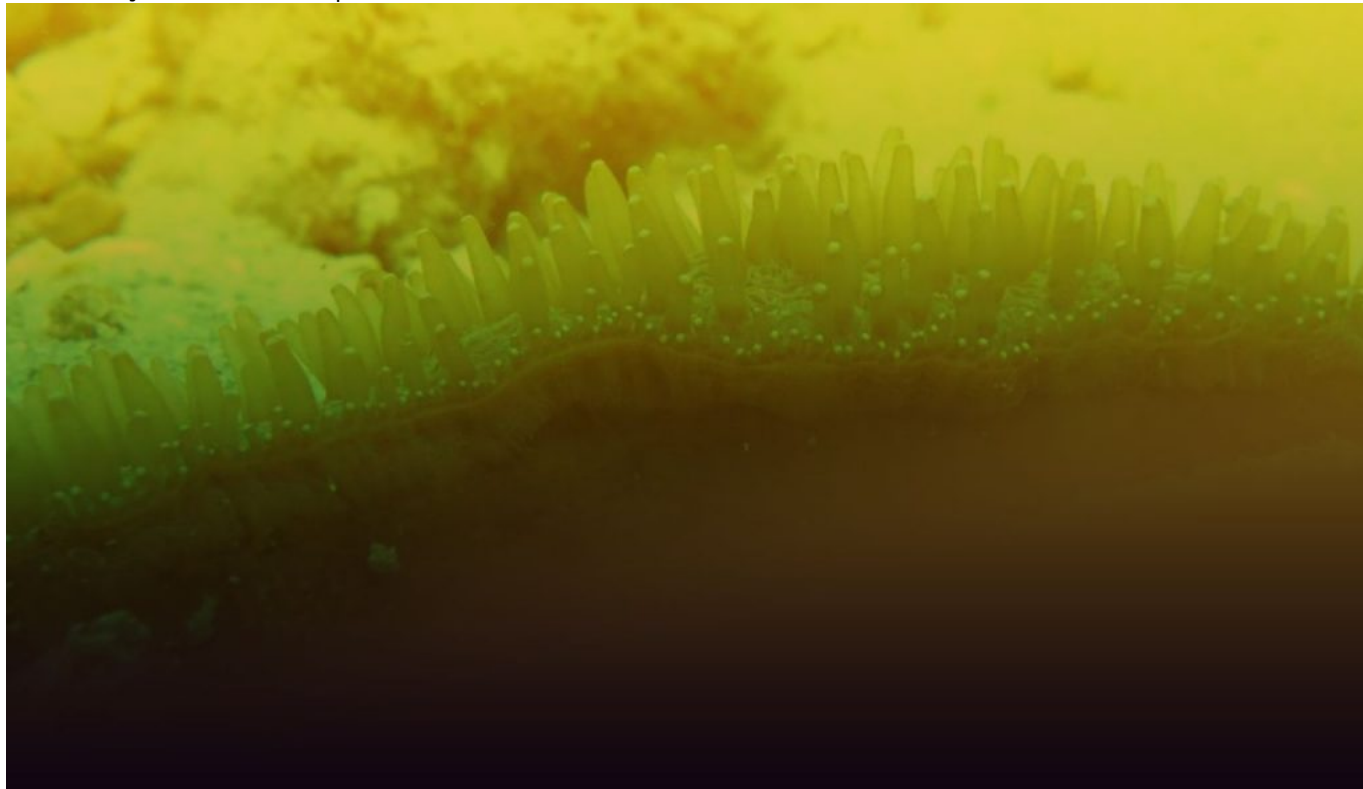


News Corals Recorded in Indian Waters

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[GS Paper 3 - Environment and Ecology]

Context - Scientists have recorded four species of azooxanthellate corals for the first time from Indian waters. These new corals were found from the waters of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Azooxanthellate corals are a group of corals that do not contain zooxanthellae and derive nourishment not from the sun but from capturing different forms of plankton.

Key Developments

- These groups of corals are deep-sea representatives, with the majority of species reporting from between 200 m to 1000 m. Their occurrences are also reported from shallow coastal waters.
- Scientists behind these new records said that all the four groups of corals are from the same family Flabellidae.
- *Truncatoflabellum crassum* (Milne Edwards and Haime, 1848), *T. incrustatum* (Cairns, 1989), *T. aculeatum* (Milne Edwards and Haime, 1848), and *T. irregulare* (Semper,

1872) under the family Flabellidae were previously found from Japan to the Philippines and Australian waters while only *T. crassum* was reported within the range of Indo-West Pacific distribution including the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf.

- Azooxanthellate corals are a group of hard corals and the four new records are not only solitary but have a highly compressed skeletal structure.

Corals in India

- There are about 570 species of hard corals found in India and almost 90% of them are found in the waters surrounding Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The pristine and oldest ecosystem of corals share less than 1% of the earth's surface but they provide a home to nearly 25% of marine life.
- Coral reefs in India are found in a lot of areas including the Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands. The Gulf of Kutch in the northwest has some of the most northerly reefs in the world.
- Patches of coral reefs are also found in Ratnagiri, Malvan and Redi, south Bombay and at the Gaveshani Bank located in the west of Mangalore.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change makes and ensures the guidelines and laws protecting coral reefs are followed properly. The State Wildlife department takes care of the corals if the coral reef region comes under a protected area.