

## Study: dredging hurting seabed biodiversity

- Special Correspondent

Friends of Marine Life (FML), an independent group conducting studies on biodiversity in the seas off the Thiruvananthapuram coast, says that the ongoing dredging for the Vizhinjam international seaport is causing serious damage to the Sabellaridae tube work colony in the seabed some 500 metres into the sea close to Chowara.

The group, which had conducted underwater studies in the area from December 26 to January 2, likens the situation underwater in the area to a 'war zone'. While an underwater study conducted in the area in February last year had shown vibrant biodiversity in the area extending some 300 metres in length and 50 metres width, the study done last week had shown that the colonies of Sabellaridae are now covered with sand and sediments. No other nearby area has such a vast Sabellaridae (*Neosabellaria cladesnatina*) colony, Robert Panippilla, coordinator of FML's research programme said here on Thursday, citing the changes in pictures taken on February 13, 2015, and on January 2.

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