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LIFESTYLE (/LIFESTYLE), PETS AND ENVIRONMENT (/LIFESTYLE/PETS-ENVIRONMENT)

Sea slugs spotted first time in India

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

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Upcoming port could be endangering ecosystem, finds survey.



Glossodoris Rufomaculatus

Thiruvananthapuram: A marine biodiversity survey conducted by citizen scientists on the coastal stretch from Kovalam to Mulloor has found four species of sea slugs, normally found in other parts of the world, for the first time in India.



Goniobranchus annulatus

The news is accompanied by an alarming piece of information — that the ecosystem close to Vizhinjam coast where these were found could be in danger. According to a press release issued by Thiruvananthapuram-based Friends of Marine Life which conducted the study, it “will soon be lost forever as the new commercial transshipment port is going to be built here reclaiming this seabed.”

The organisation’s founder Robert Panipilla says, “It might be too late to save the seabed ecosystem along this 7 km coastline. However, some attention should be devoted to the rich marine diversity in the seabed along 583 km of Kerala’s coastline. The government should start with documentation of species.”



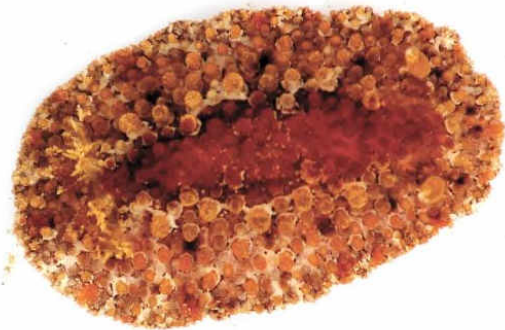
Hypselodoris nigrostriata

The species were identified by A. Biju Jumar, head, department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala. These include

Glossodorisrufomaculatus, Goniobranchusannulatus, Hypselodorisnigrostriata, and Hoplodorisflammea.

"These are reef-associated species and will disappear if reefs are destroyed," he said.

He presented the study at 'World Congress of Malacology 2016' held at Penang, Malaysia. The participatory marine biodiversity survey with photo and video documentation concluded towards the end of November. Dredging which Adani Ports started in December was stopped in May due to rain, but the construction of breakwaters is going on, the release says. It is likely that the reef and species has already disappeared.



Hoplodoris flammea

"We have identified that of the 38,823 sq km of Kerala's land area, 10,000 sq km is ecologically sensitive. Kerala has 13,000 sq km of sea under its jurisdiction, but is yet to identify the key biodiversity areas in the sea. Even though India is a signatory of Convention on Biological Diversity," says Panipilla.

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