

93 new seaweed spotted on island off Jamnagar coast

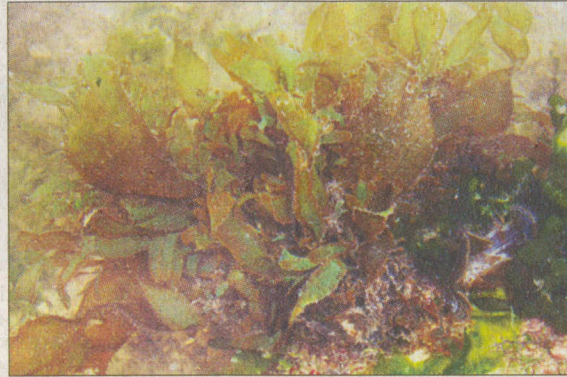
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Vijaysinh Parmar | TNN

Bhavnagar: In yet another feather in their cap, after spotting 24 new seaweeds off the Saurashtra coast recently, Scientists of Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavnagar, have discovered as many as 93 different species of algae on a remote island off Vadinar coast in Jamnagar district in Gulf of Kutch. The scientists discovered these species during a seaweed census in marine-protected area in the gulf as part of a national mapping programme of marine biodiversity along Indian coast.

This is a maiden effort by CSMCRI, a national laboratory working under the aegis of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi, to bring out a comprehensive document on the seaweed biodiversity of islands based on primary data collection. The Kalubahar island off Vadinar coast spread over 5,900 hectares of land was surveyed for the last two years.

According to Dr C R K Reddy, scientist, discipline of marine biotechnology and ecology, CSMCRI, the phycoecology team of CSMCRI collected 93 different species belonging to green,



Two species of algae that have been discovered off Vadinar coast

brown and red algae. "Of the total 93 identified, 14 were new to Gujarat coast and 11 to Indian coast and one species in all probability is new to the world. The new species has been identified and named as *Codium spiralis* due to its spiral nature. This new discovery holds great promise, as secondary metabolites having blood anticoagulant properties have been known from several species of genus *Codium* from Indian waters. The other important discoveries include record of species from important genre such as *Ulva*, *Sargassum*, *Hy-*

droclathrus and *Rosenvingia*," Dr Reddy told TOI. He added "The findings of this survey have inspired the expansion of the scope of study area covering other islands namely, Azad, Bhaidar Dhani, Dideka Khara Chusna, Pirotan for unravelling the seaweed biodiversity."

The southern part of the Gulf of Kutch along the Jamnagar coast has a varied coastal environment with 42 islands having diverse habitats and unique biota. Many of these islands remain submerged during high tide and get exposed for few hours in low

tide time. "The growth of seaweed in islands is much superior to main land Gujarat coast," he said.

Scientists are in a process to make discoveries on all 42 islands which falls in the marine protected area along the Jamnagar coast. "We are hopeful to unravel more new seaweed biodiversity from unexplored islands along the coast. The marine protected areas have been extensively studied for mangroves, corals, sponges and other marine fauna including fish," the scientist said.

He further explained: "Also, the

National Herbaria being set up at CSMCRI

CSMCRI also has created a facility called 'Seaweed Taxonomic Reference Centre' for storing seaweed herbaria (museum of herbs) as reference material for identification. Specimens of all seaweed collected from all over India and those obtained from abroad will be displayed at this centre and made available for researchers engaged in pursuit of taxonomy of seaweed. CSMCRI officials said the entire data on seaweed biodiversity of India will be digitised and hosted on CSMCRI website for public use in near future. TNN

rapid industrial development along protected area makes significance to this study as we should know about how much biodiversity we have in it and its importance for conservation. It is an urgent need to conserve and monitor it regularly." Jamnagar, with the second largest coastline in Gujarat, has witnessed unprecedented developmental activities and has undergone a tremendous change in the habitat structure.