

Bryum bharatiensis

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In news- Polar biologists at Central University of Punjab have discovered a new **native species of moss from continental Antarctica**.

More information-

- The species is named *Bryum bharatiensis* as a tribute to the country and **India's Antarctic station, Bharati**.
- Felix Bast, associate professor and head of the department of Botany, Central University, who was part of Indian Antarctic Mission 2016-17 as an expedition scientist, discovered it on the rocks near Bharati station at **Larsemann Hills, East Antarctica**.
- Studies confirmed it to be a new species of moss **discovered for the first time in the world**.
- Though there have been a number of discoveries of bacterial species in Antarctica, this is the **first time a plant species has been discovered in the four decades of the Indian Antarctic mission**, which began in 1981.
- India's first Antarctic station, **Dakshin Gangotri**, was established in 1984 but was **abandoned and decommissioned in 1990**.
- **Maitri station** was commissioned in 1989 while **Bharati station** in 2012, both are currently operational and year-round stations.
- This is the sixth species discovery from the research group of Felix Bast, all the earlier five were new species of marine seaweeds from Indian coasts.
- Though it is not known as how the moss survives under the thick snow during the six months of winter, it is likely that the moss "dries up to a dormant stage, almost to a seed" at this time, and germinates again during summer in September when the region gets sunlight again.