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DeepDATA: A Citizen-Science App to Map India's Deep-Sea Life

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DeepDATA: A Citizen-Science App to Map India's Deep-Sea Life

23 July 2026 · 4 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

*The has launched **DeepDATA**, a citizen-science mobile application to document deep-sea fishes and build a national digital repository. Developed under the **Deep Ocean Mission** with funding from the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, the app pairs expert validation with crowd-sourced observations to open up one of India's least-explored frontiers.*

WHAT IS DEEPDATA

DeepDATA is a **mobile app** designed to gather, verify and archive records of India's deep-sea fish life. Its model blends two strengths:

- **Crowd-sourced observations** from fishers, divers, students and coastal citizens who upload sightings and specimens.
- **Expert validation** by CMFRI scientists, so that the growing database stays scientifically reliable.

The result is intended to be a **national digital repository** of deep-sea biodiversity, filling a major knowledge gap for a country with a long coastline but limited deep-water documentation.

Built on a Recent Discovery

The launch follows CMFRI's recent discovery of a new fish species, **Cyttopsis indica**, given the common name the "**Indian dory**." It was recorded off the coast of **Kerala** at depths of **350 to 500 metres**, a reminder of how much of India's deep-sea life remains unnamed and unstudied.

THE INSTITUTIONS BEHIND IT

BODY	ROLE	PARENT MINISTRY
ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi	Launched DeepDATA; marine fisheries research	ICAR (Ministry of Agriculture)
Deep Ocean Mission	Funding and mission framework	Ministry of Earth Sciences

CMFRI is headquartered in **Kochi** and functions under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, which sits within the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. The **Deep Ocean Mission**, however, is led by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, so DeepDATA is a cross-ministry collaboration linking agricultural marine research with India's flagship ocean programme.

THE DEEP OCEAN MISSION CONTEXT

The **Deep Ocean Mission**, approved in **2021**, is India's dedicated effort to explore and sustainably use the deep sea. It is organised around **six pillars**, which include:

- **Samudrayaan**, India's manned deep-ocean mission.
- The manned submersible **Matsya-6000**, designed to carry a crew to significant ocean depths.
- Deep-sea mineral and biodiversity exploration, ocean-climate advisory services, and marine-technology development.

India's deep-sea ecosystems are **largely unexplored**, and documenting the life within them is a prerequisite for both conservation and the responsible development of the **blue economy**.

WHY CITIZEN SCIENCE MATTERS HERE

Deep-sea surveys by research vessels are expensive and infrequent, so a great deal of India's deep-water catch passes through fishing harbours without ever being scientifically recorded. By turning coastal communities into observers, DeepDATA:

- **Scales up data collection** far beyond what research ships alone can achieve.
- **Democratises conservation**, giving fishers and students a direct role in science.
- **Speeds up species discovery** and helps track changes in marine biodiversity over time.

This model of **citizen science for conservation** has been used successfully for birds and butterflies on land; DeepDATA extends the approach into the ocean depths.

STRATEGIC READING

DeepDATA sits at the intersection of **marine-biodiversity documentation** and the **blue economy**. Knowing what lives in India's deep waters is the foundation for sustainable fisheries, for identifying species of conservation concern, and for making informed choices as India expands deep-ocean exploration. It also strengthens India's scientific claim to understanding and stewarding its Exclusive Economic Zone.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 (Environment and Science & Technology): Marine biodiversity conservation, the blue economy, India's Deep Ocean Mission, and the use of citizen science and digital tools in ecological documentation.

Prelims pointers:

- **DeepDATA** is a citizen-science app launched by **ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi**.
- **CMFRI** is headquartered in **Kochi** under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- The **Deep Ocean Mission** (approved 2021) is led by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** and has **six pillars**.
- **Samudrayaan** is India's manned ocean mission; **Matsya-6000** is its manned submersible.
- **Cyttopsis indica**, the "Indian dory," was discovered off Kerala at **350 to 500 metres**.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

CMFRI was established in 1947 and is India's premier marine fisheries research institute.

The blue economy refers to sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, livelihoods and ocean health.

Samudrayaan aims to send humans to a depth of about 6,000 metres aboard Matsya-6000.

Citizen science is scientific research conducted with participation from the general public.

India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline.

Sources: ICAR-CMFRI official site, Ministry of Earth Sciences on Deep Ocean Mission, The Hindu on DeepDATA launch

Source: DeepDATA: A Citizen-Science App to Map India's Deep-Sea Life — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs

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