

FUTURE | RESCUE ■ **NGO's attempt to help rescue efforts during natural disasters**

Youths on coast trained in scuba diving

**DC CORRESPONDENT
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Mohammad Sadiq of Vizhinjam, a free diver, ventures as deep as 18 metres in the sea to collect mussels, but now he is undergoing scuba diving to equip him for underwater rescues during events like Cyclone Ockhi.

He has already completed the advanced scuba diving certificate course sponsored by NGO Friends of Marine Life as a part of their voluntary commitments to UNO.

"During normal dives, we stay underwater for a maximum of two minutes. The scuba diving was altogether different, and we could stay up to one hour," Mr Sadiq said.



His batch mates at scuba diving include Class XII students of Fisheries School at Valiyathura.

They learned to negotiate tight spots underwater, find directions, read and write underwater and operate as a group using sign languages.

When the cyclone devastated these fishing hamlets,

there was no scuba diving expedition to find remains as there were not many who do scuba diving as a part of disaster management.

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jobs in shipyards, marine biodiversity research and petroleum companies. They have already approached the government to include underwater skills in their curriculum.

"For instance, the underwater archaeological wing of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) needs around 100 archaeologists to study submerged ships, structures and landmasses. They presently have only six divers. Also, more underwater experts will be needed in India to study the

environmental impact of climate change," said Johnson Jament, programme coordinator of FML.

Presently, the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Kochi, sends their students as far as Goa and Visakhapatnam to take basic lessons in scuba as part of the curriculum.

There was a shortage of local pool of experts who could educate and contribute to the academics.

"Not even one-tenth of the underwater flora and fauna in India or Kerala has been identified. So we need underwater expertise in understanding the ocean beds," said A. Biju Kumar, the head of the department of aquatic biology and fisheries of the University of Kerala.