

Govt. plans 'ISRO-like' ocean mission

The abyss: Divers training for a deep exit from a submersible off the Bahama Islands. | Photo Credit: [The Hindu](#)

Looking to emulate the success of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in designing and launching satellites, the Centre has drawn up a five-year, 8,000 crore plan to explore the deep recesses of the ocean.

The Union Earth Sciences Ministry — tasked with coordinating the exercise — unveiled a blueprint of the 'Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)' on Friday.

Among the key deliverables to achieve these goals are an offshore desalination plant that will work with tidal energy, and developing a submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres with three people on board.

"The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago," the report notes.

India's share

India has been allotted a site of 1,50,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN). These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt. "It is envisaged that 10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years. It has been estimated that 380 million metric tonnes of polymetallic nodules are available at the bottom of the seas in the Central Indian Ocean," the report adds. India's Exclusive Economic Zone spreads over 2.2 million square kilometres and in the deep sea, lies "unexplored and unutilised."

Madhavan Rajeevan, Secretary, Earth Sciences Ministry, said he had outlined his plans to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The focus will be on technologies for deep-sea mining, underwater vehicles, underwater robotics and ocean climate change advisory services, among other aspects.

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