

Water world

Interested in the unknown under water world? Scuba diving is an interesting career option to explore. **Nuzhat Aziz** guides you

TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD Jitu Khupse loves the mysterious life under water. His passion grew as he heard his father's stories of working as a commercial diver. And that's when Khupse made up his mind to become a commercial scuba diver. Though there are not many recognised institutes, which teach scuba diving in Mumbai, Khupse reveals that after graduating from Mumbai University four years ago, he signed up for a basic training course at the Thane Diving Club. "But basic training is not enough for one looking to take up scuba diving as a career," he says. Later, Khupse signed up for a Commercial Diver's course at Under Water Centre in Tasmania, Australia. "It was a three-month course and I learnt a lot from the institute. There were several other advanced professional courses which one could opt for," he says.

And for many like Khupse who share the enthusiasm to explore the world of the unknown and pursue it as a full time career option, here are some tips.



Vijay Patwardhan's training camp

ABROAD

Professional Diving Academy in Scotland Professional Scuba

■ The HSE approved Professional Scuba qualification is required by all professionals who extend their work underwater including media film makers, actors and presenters, archaeologists, marine biologists, oceanographers and inspection engineers

Commercial Surface Supplied (CSS) Diver

■ This is a commercial qualification allowing divers to dive to 50 metres breathing air using surface supplied diving equipment and allows divers to work in the inshore diving market.

Other courses and specialisations

■ Maintenance and Technician Training, Assistance with Proof of Competence and other special courses.

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Parvin Dabas scuba diving in South Africa, off Cape Town

THE FIRST STEP

Vijay Patwardhan started the Thane Scuba Diving club in 1982 and obtained the American Canadian Underwater Certifications (ACUC) last year. "I train students in the basic and advanced scuba diving course," he says. He adds that if one is interested in commercial diving or wants to pursue a career, he must take at least 20 to 25 hours of diving lessons from a reputed institute. "However, one must be certain what one wants to do. Recreational diving and commercial diving are different aspects," he warns.

BEYOND MUMBAI

Prahlad Kakkar's Lacadives is a diving school located in the Lakshwadeep islands of Kadmat and Bangaram. CMAS — the World Underwater Federation, which grants diving licenses, has nominated Lacadives as its authorised centre in India.

The courses offered here are: beginner, rescue, dive master, assistant to an instructor and instructor. Piyush Godkari, head of marketing, says that Lacadives gets a large number of applicants during the November to May period. "We have enthusiasts between the ages of 14 and 75 years. We offer

various diving packages and absorb students in our academy. Initially, the instructors get paid quite poorly but gradually as one gains experience the pay package improves," he says.

OPTIONS

Patwardhan says that if one is interested in pursuing a career in commercial diving he needs to get an advanced training certification abroad. "Twelve of my students are working in Dubai, France, South Africa and United Kingdom," he says. He adds, "The starting salary is Rs 10,000 per day. In fact, they get paid much more abroad. But there's plenty of demand for commercial divers in India as well. Khupse says that one can opt for diving and under water services at places like Dolphin Offshore, one of the most popular organisations in India. "If you are serious about your career and have an advanced certificate, you can get paid as much as Rs 7,000 per day," says Khupse.

ALTERNATE OPTIONS

Actor Parvin Dabas who has taken up underwater photography as a hobby says that he got hooked on to scuba diving when he was in Phuket. "I took up an advanced course in Goa and practiced under water photography." He reveals that under water photography as a career option is quite an exciting job.

"I don't have the time to pursue it as a full time career. It is a passion for me. But for those interested in a career, it's an unexplored exciting world," he says. However, there are certain nuances one must pick up while taking pictures under water. "One must have camera housing and handle lights. It's very difficult, but equally exciting," he says.

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Jitu Khupse as a commercial diver

COURSES

THANE DIVING CLUB

- ACUC Scuba Experience (Non-Certification Course)
- ACUC Scuba Diver (Optional Certification Course)
- ACUC Open Water Diver (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Mandatory Level Certification Course)
- ACUC Divemaster
- ACUC Assistant Instructor (Optional Professional Level Certification Course)

For more information: www.acucindia.com

LACADIVES

- CMAS Underwater Photography.
- The following CMAS courses are offered at Kadmat and Bangaram: Four-day (minimum) certification course for beginners. 12 to 15 days intensive course for certified 2 Star divers.
- Certifies divers as CMAS Dive Master.

For more information, log on to www.lacadives.com