

# From the Editor: Unearthing the Deep — The Discovery of *Iridogorgia chewbacca* and the Spirit of Scientific Exploration

Prof. S. K. Mehta

*Editor-in-Chief, Science & Technology Journal (STJ)*

Mizoram University, Aizawl, India

In the ever-expanding frontier of science, every discovery reminds us of how much remains unknown beneath the surface of our planet. In September 2025, marine biologists reported a remarkable new deep-sea coral species, *Iridogorgia chewbacca*, discovered in the tropical western Pacific Ocean at depths of 400–1000 m<sup>[1]</sup>. Its long, iridescent, hair-like branches inspired the name—a nod to the “Wookiee” character Chewbacca from *Star Wars*. This newly described species, together with *Iridogorgia curva*, expands our understanding of the genus *Iridogorgia* Verrill, 1883—deep-sea corals characterized by spiral axial structures and brilliant iridescence. The study by Xu, Watling, Zhan, and Xu (2025) combined morphological and molecular analyses to confirm two new species and clarify the taxonomy of ten related forms. Notably, the authors demonstrated that direction of growth (clockwise or counterclockwise) is not a reliable diagnostic trait, while 28S *rDNA* sequencing provided robust phylogenetic support<sup>[1]</sup>. Beyond taxonomy, this discovery highlights the unexplored diversity of deep-sea ecosystems, often overshadowed by terrestrial research. Deep-sea corals such as *I. chewbacca* serve as living archives of environmental history—their skeletal layers preserve chemical traces of past ocean conditions. These insights are essential as we confront rapid climate and ecological change in marine environments. The *Science & Technology Journal (STJ)* has long aimed to showcase the breadth of scientific innovation and curiosity across disciplines. This issue (Vol. 12, No. 2, June 2024) continues that mission through eighteen articles spanning computational science, nanotechnology, mathematical modeling, environmental monitoring, cultural astronomy, and healthcare research. Collectively, they echo the same spirit of exploration that led to the discovery of *I. chewbacca*—a reminder that whether in the depths of the Pacific or within the microcosm of a laboratory, science thrives on the courage to look deeper. As we transition from print to digital publication, the journal remains committed to providing open access to quality research and fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration. We thank our contributors and readers for their unwavering support in sustaining this scientific dialogue.

## Reference

[1] Xu, Y., Watling, L., Zhan, Z., & Xu, K. (2025). *Studies on western Pacific gorgonians (Anthozoa: Octocorallia: Chrysogorgiidae). Part 2: Unexpected diversity of the genus Iridogorgia in the tropical western Pacific with descriptions of two new species.* *Zootaxa*, **5689**(3), 451–486. <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.5689.3.3>