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Fisheries institute helps young cage fish farmer win award

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THE efforts of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to popularise its cage fish farming technology have won recognition with a farmer associated with the institute bagging the prestigious 'Thozhil Shreshta' award instituted by the state labour department.

P M Dinil Prasad, 28, from Kannur, who won the award for his excellent performance in the fisheries sector, has been undertaking cage fish farming under the guidance of the CMFRI.

Lured by the prospects of the method, he quit the job in the Indian Army and turned to cage aquaculture.

While the CMFRI introduced a ₹15-crore project funded by the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) to set up 500 cage farming units in Kerala in 2018, Dinil Prasad was the first to receive a unit under the project and upon CMFRI's guidance, he launched farming in the Anjarakandi river in Kannur.

Prasad was bestowed with the award that carried a purse of ₹1 lakh and a certificate for his tremendous achievement in cage fish farming with good harvest of pearl spots within a span of three-and-a-half years. This was made possible with regular training and guidance imparted by the mariculture division of CMFRI headed by Dr Imelda Joseph. Presently, he undertakes farming of 7,000 pearl spots in seven cages



P M Dinil Prasad who won the 'Thozhil Shreshta' award instituted by the state labour department



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P M Dinil Prasad

of 4X4m dimension and at least 150kg of yield is expected from each cage.

Along with cage fish farming, Prasad also runs a seed production unit for pearl spot and mussel farming. In addition, he provides consultancy service, including cage fabrication, site selection, species identification, etc. to those desiring to start cage fish farming.

Around 75 cage culture units were launched in many parts of Malabar region under Prasad's consultancy.

The young fish farmer said

his strong passion towards cage fish farming and determination were the secrets of his success.

"At the initial stage, many people accused me of quitting a good job and starting an aquaculture enterprise. But, with the success of the venture, they lauded my efforts and willpower and more youngsters started approaching me, wanting to emulate this model," he said, adding that he is indebted to CMFRI's support that was crucial to adopt this technology at its best and to secure his livelihood.

Covid restrictions never dampened his spirit as he took to social media to market his harvested crops.

"Social media platforms helped me a lot during the lockdown to reach the targeted consumers and sell the fish at a good price," Prasad said.