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FORMATION OF SAND BAR AT MADRAS FISHERIES HARBOUR*

Madras Fisheries Harbour was established in 1983 at a cost of Rs. 12 crores and 60 lakhs. It is enclosed by breakwaters on either side with a ground area of 24 hectares and water area of 48 hectares. It has a long jetty of 495 m length and a water depth of 6 m during the low tide. About 50 small trawlers can berth at this jetty. On an average about 150 trawlers go out for fishing from this fishing harbour daily. Regular dredging is done to keep the bar mouth always open.

In the beginning of July, 1986 sand started piling up in front of the outlet and by the end of first week, a sand bar of 2700 m² was formed (Fig. 1) leaving only a narrow channel through which only one vessel could pass at a time (Figs. 2-4). The number of trawler

units operated decreased to less than 100 during the period and consequently landing of fish also showed a corresponding decrease.

A meeting was organised by the fishermen on 23-7-'86 and a resolution was passed urging the authorities to take immediate steps to clear the sand. The Port Trust started dredging operations from 26-7-'86. By 15-8-'86 the sand was completely removed and normal fishing operations were resumed.

The exact cause for the formation of sand bar is not known. It might have formed due to strong current or drift. During the same period in a fishing village at Kovalam about 40 kilometres south of Madras there was heavy erosion of the coast and many coconut trees which were there for the past 30 or 40 years had fallen. Another unusual phenomenon during the same period was the heavy landing of mackerel in Madras.

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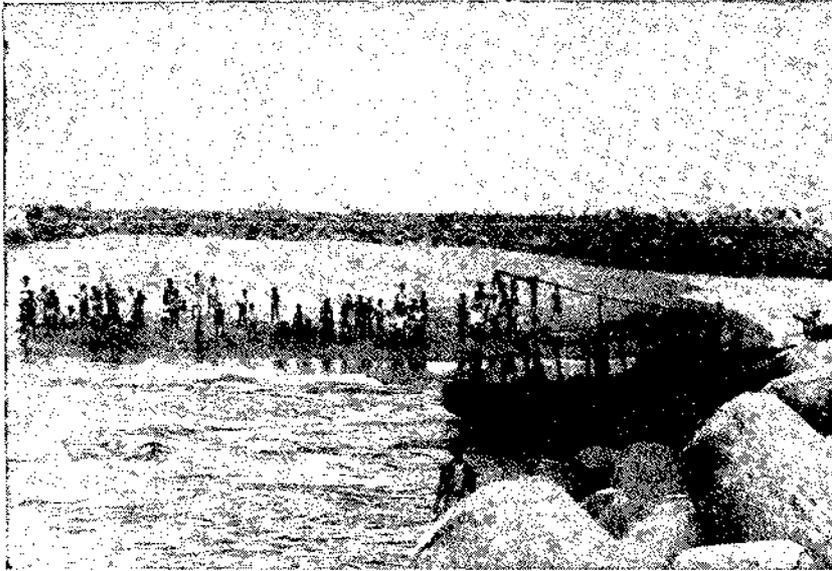


Fig. 1. The sand bar formed at Madras Fisheries Harbour.

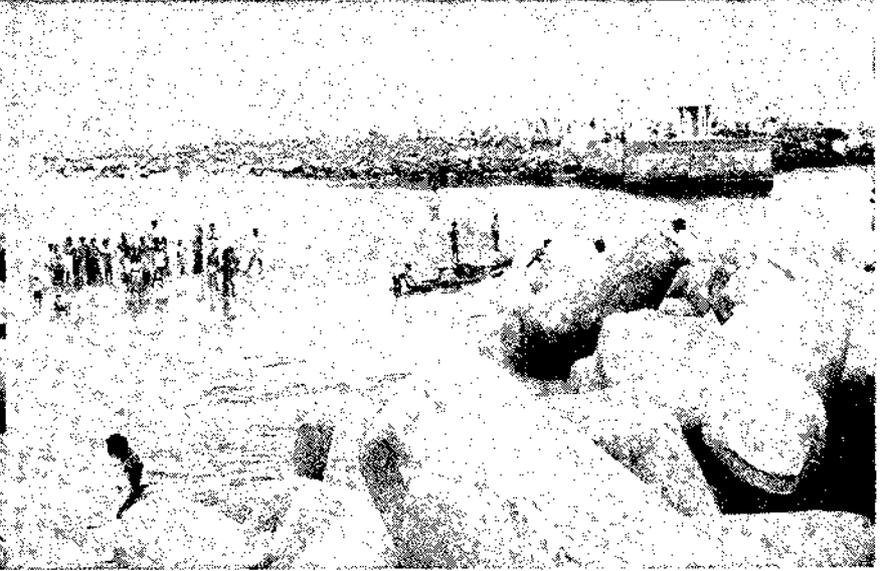


Fig. 2. Another view of sand bar with a catamaran being dragged through the channel.

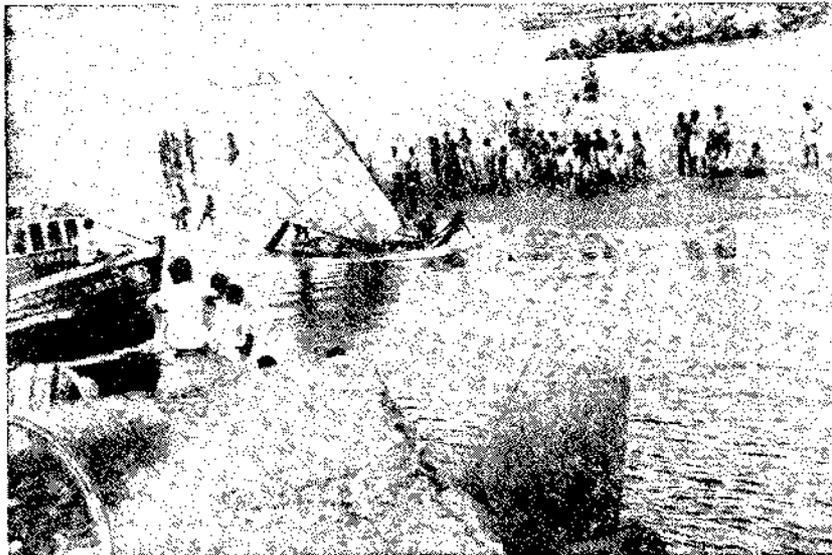


Fig. 3. A catamaran with a sail passing through the narrow channel.



Fig. 4. A fishing trawler passing through the channel.