

MUD BANKS AND FISHERY

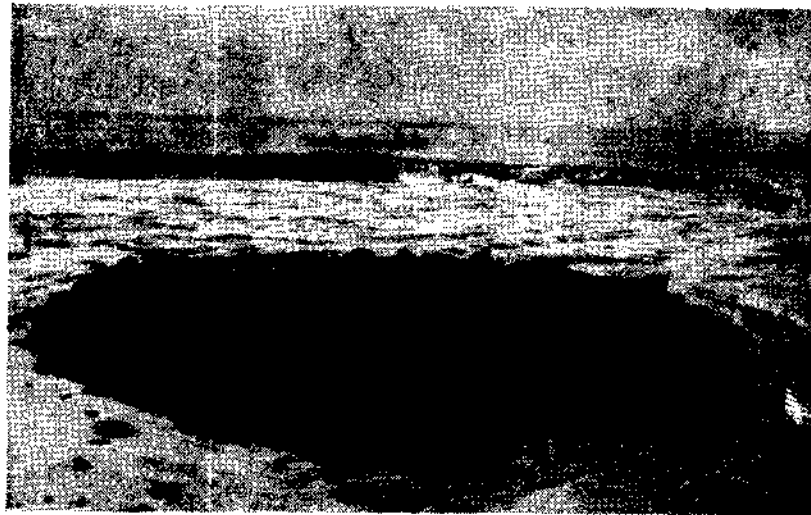
The formation of mud banks is a unique phenomenon occurring only at definite localities between Calicut and Quilon on the southwest coast of India and is reported from nowhere else in the world. The first authoritative account of it is a report by Mr. R. C. Bristow in 1938, of the occurrence of four mud banks, one off Alleppey, one off Cochin and two at or near Calicut.

Mud banks are those in-shore areas having the special property of giving complete quiescence to the waters above even in the roughest weather during the South West Monsoon. These areas may extend miles along the shore and perhaps miles out to sea. They may be submerged or may cover up to surface. They are usually the immediate result of a heavy weather. The water in the area is generally discoloured in the initial stage with churned-up mud. But after this stage is passed this seems to settle down and the area becomes clear like the rest of the neighbouring sea. The mud bank provides a calm area for safe navigation

and quiet anchorage even in the roughest weather. The mud banks may shift their positions and may move (always southward) miles.

The scientists differ in their opinion of the causes of the formation, maintenance and dissolution of the mud banks. The earlier investigators have

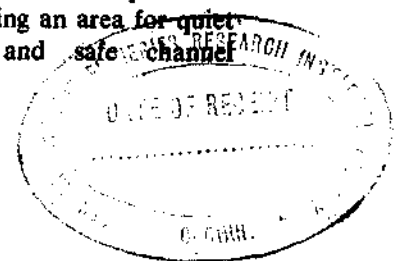
ble lifting of the bottom mud by vertical acceleration. But the recent investigations undertaken by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute are now tapering down to the conclusion that the mud banks are the result of the subterranean mud brought up in the form of "volcanoes" or huge mud cones.



Mud cones are formed, though rarely, even on the intertidal zone.

attributed their formation to depositing of material brought down the rivers through the river mouths or to the proba-

The mud banks are of increasing economic importance. Besides being an area for quiet anchorage and safe channel



Mud banks-

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among many other interesting facts about the formation and dissolution of the mud banks, a clear picture of the mudbank fishery. It is evident that the formation of the mud bank is dependent on the southwest monsoon. If the monsoon starts with its usual intensity, in time, say, May-June, the mud banks are formed in May-June, too. These early mud banks are usually associated with a good fishery. This is accounted by the fact that the formation of the mud banks coincides with the period when the prawns and fish of our coastal waters are on a shoreward migration and are available in abundance in the nearshore regions. But, owing to inclement weather, the fishermen are not able to get them. The mud banks being tranquilised areas help them to fish either from within the area or from areas adjacent to them, more so from the latter. For, it is often found that fishermen bring in their catches from those areas lying outside the limits of the banks using the latter merely as a safe channel for navigation.

The delayed monsoon in Kerala this year, although it had its own undesirable effects, was indeed a godsend to the mudbank scientists. The dependence of the mudbank formation on the southwest monsoon was not more clearly evident before. Consequent on the very delayed monsoon locally, the formation of the mud banks was also equally delayed. Again, when the monsoon arrived in Kerala it was very weak compared to the previous years, so also the for-

S. Rajagopalan Appointed as Senior Administrative Officer

Shri S. Rajagopalan, Administrative Officer of the Institute, has been appointed on promotion as the Senior Administrative Officer. Shri Rajagopalan has assumed charge of the new post on Saturday, October 9, 1976.

Seminar on Bioenergetics

The Institute participated in the seminar on Bioenergetics held at the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, between 12 and 14 July 1976. The following papers were read:

1. Analysis of the marine catches of clupeoids of different feeding habits in India with reference to the concept of ecological efficiency. — by K. V. Sekharan.
2. Primary production and ecological-efficiency factor in the Indian seas. — by P.V. Ramachandran Nair, C. P. Gopinathan, K. J. Joseph and V. K. Balachandran.

Dr K. V. Sekharan chaired the session on Energy Budget at the seminar.

mation of the mud banks. Yet, very interestingly, there was the usual good fishery during May-June, which the local papers reported as chakara. This was in spite of the fact that there was no trace of a mud bank during this period. It is thus evident that if the monsoon is delayed or erratic the mud banks are delayed or erratic, too, and are not then banks are delayed or erratic, associated with a fishery.