

TIGER-PRAWN HATCHERY FACILITY NEAR MADRAS

A Hatchery for large-scale production of the seed of tiger-prawn *Penaeus monodon* is being developed at Kovalam near Madras by CMFRI. The tiger-prawn is a high-priced species much in demand for export. But the production of this species from the marine capture fisheries is very low compared to other penaeid prawns. *P. monodon* is relatively more abundant along the east coast in the States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal compared to the maritime states on the west coast.



For the first time, in the experimental hatchery at Kovalam, the CMFRI scientists have succeeded in breeding the tiger-prawn and rearing the larvae to stocking size. Initially the spawners were collected from the wild for the production of seed. It has now been possible to build up a broodstock in the laboratory itself by adopting unilateral eye stalk ablation. Two batches of breeders have been developed by this process and the larvae have been reared through various stages by feeding them with appropriate planktonic organisms mass cultured in the laboratory.

The success achieved in hatchery production of tiger-prawn seed has immense prospects for increasing production of this highly valued species through culture. CMFRI has accomplished this through a crash programme at its Kovalam Laboratory. In spite of the priority assigned by the States and the interest shown by

Shri P. Gangadharan Farmer from Nagapattnam receives the first consignment of P. Monodon seeds from Shri. Lakshmikanth an Barathi, IAS, Commissioner and Secretary, Forest and Fisheries Government of Tamil Nadu

entrepreneurs as well as small and marginal farmers, prawn culture is yet to make a mark in terms of production. One of the major constraints has been the uncertainty of seed availability in the wild. CMFRI has developed hatchery facilities for the white prawn *P. indicus* at Narakkal near Cochin and would concentrate on *P. monodon* hatchery at Kovalam on the east coast, both in view of the natural abundance of the species and also the suitability of the ecosystem for its culture. These two facilities would act as centres for the transfer of hatchery technology both to the States and private sector and also to fishermen co-operatives.

The brackishwater area of 93 acres in Muttukad including

the Kovalam backwater area handed over by the Tamil Nadu Government to CMFRI would be developed into a major R & D centre for mariculture. When the facility is fully developed it would form a useful farm service centre for the fish and prawn farmers of the State on the eastern seaboard of India. A beginning has already been made by free supply of *P. monodon* seed to a farm at Nagapattnam in July and the feed back data are being obtained. The prawn culture team consisting of S/Shri K. Devarajan M. Kathirvel, N. Neelakanta Pillai and S. Kulasekhara Pandian under the leadership of Shri K. H. Mohamed, Scientist S-3 of CMFRI has been working hard for the last three months to achieve this breakthrough.