

Fishers reap benefits of sea cage culture



First Attempt, With Technical Help From NIOT, Proves Successful

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Excitement was palpable on Tuesday morning as fishermen of Olaikuda, a small village located 4km from Rameswaram, geared up to harvest fish that they have been raising in an open cage 2km off the coast for the past eight months.

The day began early and the first catch arrived at the village around 9.30am. By the end of day, a total of nearly 6.25 tonnes of fish landed in the village. The quantity was lesser than their expectation, but it did not disappoint them as it was their first ever attempt, with some technical support from the researchers of National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai.

As many as 500 families of Olaikuda adopted the NIOT technology to raise fish in iron cages.

NIOT scientist R Kirubakaran said, "Except for technical expertise from NIOT, the villagers did everything by themselves starting from investing to procuring small fish (seed), feed and maintenance."

Fishermen of Olaikuda formed a federation to take up the cage culture. "Every family contributed to the capital fund and carried out maintenance of the cages and feeding the fish," said president of the federation, S Sahayaraj. They invested around ₹25 lakh. "We are going to divide the returns into two. Half of the money will be used as capital for the next season and the rest will be divided as dividend among the families," he said. The buyer, a resident of Thangachim-



Pics: K. Antony Xavier

GOOD CATCH: Olaikuda fishermen raised the fishes in an open cage 2km off the coast; they caught nearly 6.25 tonnes of fish on Tuesday

adam, will take the catch to Kochi from where it is expected to be exported, they said.

The villagers have already raised 1500 fish in another cage which will be ready for harvest in the next six months. "Such venture will provide a solution to fishermen facing problems from neighbouring Sri Lanka," said Kirubakaran.