

समुद्री उत्पाद निर्यात विकास प्राधिकरण

(वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)

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## **MPEDA-supported mudcrab hatchery to come up in Maharashtra**

Mumbai, Mar 4: A hatchery for mudcrabs will come up in Maharashtra to boost the country's seafood production, as the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) is set to support the facility in coastal Sindhudurg district of the western state.

The Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture (RGCA) under the Kochi-headquartered MPEDA owned by the Government of India will lend technical aid to the hatchery with an annual production capacity of ten lakh mud crab. The facility is to be set up in Vengurula taluk of the Konkan region.

To be built at swampy Vageshwer village known for its mangrove forest that is the ideal habitat of mudcrab, the hatchery (500 km south of Mumbai) will provide additional livelihood to the fisherfolk without damaging the ecosystem.

The Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, under which the 1972-incepted MPEDA functions, has given the go-ahead to build the hatchery in association with the Maharashtra government's Department of Fisheries.

The move to install the facility comes in the wake of increased demand for the mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) in both domestic and international seafood markets. With its robust size and dense meat content, the mudcrab fetches high market value also owing to its taste, nutritive value and texture.

The upcoming nursery will rear crab instar to juveniles of marketable size by fattening them in eco-friendly ponds. The hatchery will stick to the standards set by the Tamil Nadu-based RGCA, which is a research and development arm of the MPEDA that coordinates fishery production and allied activities between the central and state government establishments. The RGCA's state-of-the-art mud crab hatchery at Thoduvai in Nagapattinam district is the country's only such facility.

The Union government has renewed its focus on mud crab production in the wake of its over-exploitation that has led to a stagnation of fisheries production of the species across India. Maharashtra is high-potential state for mud crabs, as the state has long stretches of land suitable for brackish-water aquaculture along its 720-km coastline with 22,000 hectares of mangrove forests.