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INCOIS to set up info boards at 12 harbours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Service (INCOIS) will set up information display boards at 12 fishing harbours in Kerala as part of an understanding with the State Fisheries Department to establish infrastructure to forewarn fishermen about possible natural calamities like Cyclone Ockhi.

Minister for Fisheries J. Mercykutty Amma inaugurated the first of the display boards for the Munamabam fishing harbour ahead of a stakeholders' meet on fishermen's safety here on Wednesday at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

The stakeholders' meet was part of SAFARI-2, an international symposium on remote sensing and fisheries.

The digital display systems at the fisheries harbours would provide tsunami and cyclone warnings, give information on potential fishing grounds and tuna fishing zones, sea swells, high waves, said Balakrishnan Nair, senior scientist from INCOIS, at a presentation during the stakeholders' meeting.

The Indian Space Research Institute has made available a satellite-based communication system for fishermen, which was tested successfully off the coast of Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam early January.

He said 500 such devices should be available by the end of January. The number would go up to 1,000 by February. The State-owned electronics corporation Keltron has been entrusted with the task of production of the communication device for deep-sea operations with ISRO providing the technology backup, the Minister added.

Mr. Nair said that Kerala was found lagging in utilisation of information whereas States like Maharashtra were using the technological facilities. He said text messages and a map of the sea off the coast of Kerala would be available in Malayalam. The State government had provided over 42,000 mobile phones. Messages would be sent to these phone numbers from the new information system.

The problem of digital display boards in the past had been dogged by problems of power supply and the new systems will tap solar energy for their operations.