



Provide tech to track fishing boats in sea: Min to research institutes



CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan showing Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma an 'Ottal', a fish trapping tool, at the Aqua-Agri-Food fest as part of SAFARI-2 in Kochi on Wednesday

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FISHERIES Minister J Mercykutty Amma on Wednesday urged research institutes to provide the government with the technology to track fishing boats venturing into the sea and record details of the fishermen in each boat to ensure effective rescue operation during a crisis.

The minister was speaking at a special stakeholders' workshop on disaster management organised by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) as part of the international symposium on 'Remote Sensing for Fisheries.' "The Fisheries Department will also utilise the technology provided by research institutes like ISRO, INCOIS and CMFRI to improve fish production and ensure better income to fishermen," she said. On the occasion, Mercykutty Amma announced the government will distribute the Navigation with Indian Constellation (Navic) gadgets developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) among fishermen to facilitate effective communication with them while they are at sea.

The government's move comes two months after Cyclone Ockhi ravaged the state's coastal areas and claimed several lives. "As many as 500 Navic devices provided by ISRO will be distributed to fishermen at a function on January 30. Keltron will manufacture the gadgets using the technology provided by ISRO and 1,000 such devices will be distributed to fishermen in February. In the first phase, the devices will be provided for free," she said.

Mercykutty Amma said the gadget was used on experimental basis in fishing vessels operating from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Kochi harbours. "The device enabled communication with fishing boats up to 96 nautical miles (177.79 km) in Kochi, 92 nautical miles (170.38 km) in Kollam and 60 nautical miles (111.12 km) in Thiruvananthapuram. However,

the fishermen complained they could not understand the message as it was in English," said the minister who requested the ISRO authorities to take steps for enabling communication in local language.

Electronic display board at 12 harbours

The minister also inaugurated an electronic display board developed by INCOIS (Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services), Hyderabad, which will provide information on potential fishing zones, climate change, depression in the sea that trigger cyclones, tsunamis and high wave alerts. The board will be installed at Munambam harbour in Ernakulam. Fishermen can collect information from the display board before venturing into the sea. INCOIS will provide 11 more display boards which will be installed at 11 important fishing harbours in the state, the minister said.

'Kerala not keen on using Centre's data'

INCOIS Information Services and Ocean Sciences division head T M Balakrishnan Nair said though the Centre was providing information on potential fishing zones and climate change, Kerala was not keen on utilising the data. INCOIS will organise workshops in all districts to create awareness among fishermen about the data, he said.

CMFRI principal scientist A P Dinesh Babu said around 70 per cent of trawlers in Kerala and Karnataka were fishing outside territorial waters. "There should be regulations on fishing operations considering the depleting marine resources as it will lead to conflicts. Climate change and global warming are increasing the ocean temperature and the phenomenon is changing. The south-west coast of India is expected to shift to new, high-temperature climatic regimes with significant impacts," Babu said.

CMFRI WORKSHOP

Give us two-way communication gadgets, demand state's fishermen

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REPRESENTATIVES of fishermen in the state have demanded the fishermen be provided with two-way communication devices which will help them contact officers and fellow fishermen during crisis. The representatives, who attended a workshop organised by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute on Wednesday, said the Navic gadgets – which have been developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation and which the government is planning to distribute among fishermen – were only good for receiving communication.

"The wireless sets provided by the Fisheries Department work only up to 20 nautical miles (37.04 km) and Navic devices are only good for receiving information. There should be a provision for us to contact people at shore in case of emergency," said Fishing Boat Operators Association president Peter Mathias at a session during the workshop.

"In Kollam, the boats are using a sea mobile which can operate up to 50 nautical miles (92.6 km). The installation cost is ₹33,000. This should be extended to 100 nautical miles (185.2 km)," he said. Most of the fishermen's representatives expressed willingness to cooperate with the decision to launch a token system to have a database regarding the fishermen and vessels venturing into the sea from each harbour. Many complained the weather warnings provided by authorities were inaccurate and said the warnings should be classified according to the gravity of the situation. Dayanandan, a traditional fisherman, sought the introduction of a mechanism for responsible fishing to protect marine resources. He also demanded the number of fishing boats and fishing hours be regulated.

P V Pavithran, another fisherman, demanded the implementation of a fisheries package and distribution of subsidy for procurement of fishing equipment. He said fishing harbours should be developed every 15 km along the coastline to help fishermen reach shore safely during sea surge and cyclones. N P Radhakrishnan, a fisherman from Kozhikode, demanded steps to create awareness among fishermen on the facilities provided by the government. The state government should form a separate disaster management authority for the fishing sector. Ambrose from Kollam demanded the recruitment of educated people from the fishermen community to the Coastal Police and Marine Enforcement Wing for better coordination during rescue operations. CMFRI principal scientist Shyam S Salim was the moderator of the session.

3-day SAFARI-2 Int'l Symposium concludes

Kochi: The second International Symposium of Societal Applications in Fisheries and Aquaculture using Remote Sensing Imagery (SAFARI-2) organised by the CMFRI, which held wide-ranging discussions on the use of remote sensing data from satellites to ensure the fishers' safety, concluded here on Wednesday. As many as 63 papers and 48 posters including those on biodiversity; aquatic environment and ecology; harvest fisheries; fisheries management; socio-economic, communication technologies in disaster management and aquaculture were presented during the various technical sessions held at the three-day seminar. Scientists working on ocean satellite data, technocrats, oceanographers, marine experts and policy makers from across the world presented their views.

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— Peter Mathias, Fishing Boat Operators Association president