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Low-cost Distress Alert Transmitters handed over to five fishermen



HANDY DEVICE: Fisheries Minister K.R.P. Samy (second left) handing over a Distress Alert Transmitter, to a boat owner in Chennai on Tuesday. (From left) Director of Space Applications Centre, ISRO, R.R. Navalgund, and Commander, Coast Guard, Region East, Rajendra Singh. - PHOTO: S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

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CHENNAI Fishermen in distress in high seas can alert the Indian Coast Guard with the introduction of a low-cost device. Distress Alert Transmitters, developed by ISRO's Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad, is a satellite-based system. Fisheries Minister K.P.P. Samy on Tuesday handed over five such transmitters to boat owners at Royapuram here.

The hub station at the ICG, Chennai, will receive alert messages sent from boats and ships through INSAT-3A, and facilitate rescue. The station has been built by Bharat Elec-

tronics Limited, Bangalore, and the transmitters manufactured by VXL Technologies Ltd., Faridabad.

Inspector-General Rajendra Singh, Commander, Coast Guard, Eastern Region, told *The Hindu* that it was proposed to give out 10 such transmitters to fishermen in Rameswaram, an equal number to those in Thoothukudi and five in Nagapattinam. Five transmitters would be given to fishermen along the Andhra Pradesh coast. Tamil Nadu would receive the maximum number of transmitters from the first batch, each transmitter costs below Rs.10,000.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, the Inspector-General said the ICG would demonstrate the equipment in coastal States. He requested the State Governments to subsidise the transmitters and give them out to fishermen.

In India, about 60 lakh fishermen, belonging to 3,930 villages, fish in the exclusive economic zone comprising 2.04 million square kilometres. There were about two lakh traditional craft, 55,000 beach landing craft with outboard motors and 51,000 mechanised fishing vessels. They are not covered by international conventions. Dis-

stress safety and communication rules covered only vessels above 20 metres.

The average length of a mechanised vessel in India is between 15 and 18 metres.

States had their own laws governing safety. Fishermen could not afford safety equipment. Hence, their safety at sea took a backseat when they were in distress.

Thanking the ICG, the Minister said the device would enable fishermen protect themselves in times of danger. Director, Space Applications Centre, R.R. Navalgund, said the alert system was developed indigenously.