

Fishermen make a dash to enrol for Coast Guard boat race

Competition, planned for second week in February, could become annual feature

S. Vijay Kumar

ON BOARD ICGS SARANG: For the first time, the Coast Guard will organise a boat race for fishermen of Tamil Nadu.

The event, being held as part of the 'Coast Guard Day celebrations', has evoked tremendous response, forcing organisers to conduct preliminary rounds to shortlist contestants for the finals.

Inspector General and Commander Coast Guard (Easter Region) Satya Prakash Sharma said on Sunday the race would be held off the Marina in Chennai for three categories of boats – Vallam (country boats), mechanised and fibreglass.

"The response is so large that we are finding it difficult to manage. We are inviting the family and friends of the fishermen to cheer them during the race. This is one of our initiatives to remain connected with the people, particularly the fishing community," he said.

While the winners would get trophies, others would receive participation certificates. "This competition planned in the second week of February is for the fishermen in Tamil Nadu. We want to make the boat race an annual feature. We remain in constant touch with the fishermen...to rescue them in distress is one of our primary duties," he said.

Joint exercises

Commander Sharma said Coast Guard would soon have joint exercises with its Japanese counterpart along the Eastern Coast. 'JCGS Settsu' with a 59-member crew on board would participate in the joint exercises that would basically focus on relief/rescue skills, anti-piracy operations and pollution management.



ON A MISSION: Coast Guard demonstrating its skills in rescue operations off Chennai coast on Sunday. – PHOTO: R. RAGU

Besides showcasing its artillery power, the Coast Guard demonstrated how skilfully it rescues fishermen in distress.

While helicopters swiftly manoeuvred to pick up 'survivors' and dropped them on moving ships, Dornier Maritime Surveillance Aircrafts indulged in precision firing on simulated targets on high seas.

Commander Sharma said not a single death was reported in the sea when the 'Thane' cyclone struck, thanks to the timely alert and effective coordination with State agencies and

fishermen.

"We coordinated with the Fisheries Department and sensitised fishermen on the dangers of venturing into the sea during the cyclone. It was ensured that no fishing boat got caught in the storm. The awareness created was such that there was hardly any search or rescue operation," he said.

Besides ICGS Sarang, Coast Guard Ships 'Sagar,' 'Vishwat,' 'Vajra,' and 'Sarojini Naidu' were also deployed on sea to mark the 'Day At Sea' programme organised by the Coast Guard Eastern Region on Sunday.



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