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Staff Reporter

Initiative will benefit around 20,000 fishermen in Kollam district

Labour Minister Shibu Baby John, on Sunday, inaugurated a programme which provides daily marine weather forecasts for seagoing fishermen in Kollam district. The forecast will be broadcast thrice a day through Radio Benziger, a Kollam-based community radio station. In his address, Mr. John said he would strive to extend this 'unique initiative' across the State. Kollam Bishop Stanley Roman delivered the benedictory address and Mayor Prasanna Earnest spoke.

The broadcast, the first of its kind in the country, is expected to benefit at least 20,000 fishermen of the district and several migrant fishermen operating from the harbours of Tangasseri, Shakthikulangara and Neendakara in addition to several minor fish landing sites along the Kollam coast.

John Thekkayam, the architect of the programme, said that in spite of having a 7,500-kilometre coastline and a marine fisher folk population of 3.57 million spread across more than 3,000 marine fishing villages in the country, there was no regular marine weather broadcast for fishermen.

He said that all weather forecasts were directed at farmers and the general public. This, despite the fact that marine fishermen worked in an environment where the weather had the potential to turn hostile any moment. Such weather broadcasts were common in developed countries, he added

Mr. Thekkayam, a former merchant navy navigation officer, said marine weather data received from the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services would be translated into simple Malayalam for being broadcast through Radio Benziger.

The programme is conceived and promoted by the Rotary Club of Tangasseri. The broadcasts, which will forecast swell, wind, and tides, will be in the morning, noon and at night for the next 24 hours.

But if wind with a speed of more than 38 km an hour is forecast, it will be broadcast frequently.

Safety tips

Club president Shaji Vishwanath and secretary Lester Fernandez said that in addition to the weather forecast, the club would also provide sea safety tips for fishermen through Radio Benziger. These broadcasts will be available to fishermen residing along the Kollam coast from Thanni in the south to Azheekkal in the north and for more than 30 km into the sea.

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