

PRESS RELEASE

Indian Coast Guard Conducts 11th National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise "SAREX-2024" Off Kochi Coast

Kochi, 29 November 2024: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) successfully conducted the 11th edition of the National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX-2024) off the Kochi coast on 29 November 2024. The exercise was inaugurated by Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, IAS, Defence Secretary, and meticulously reviewed by Director General S. Paramesh, PTM, TM, Director General of the Indian Coast Guard. The event also saw participation from members of the National Maritime Search and Rescue Board and 38 distinguished foreign observers representing Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs).

SAREX-2024, with the theme *"Enhancing Search and Rescue Capabilities Through Regional Collaboration,"* highlighted the importance of international cooperation in strengthening maritime safety. The two-day event included a wide array of activities, such as a table-top exercise, workshops, and a seminar. These sessions encouraged in-depth discussions on key topics like passenger safety, operational readiness, emerging challenges, and forward-looking strategies to address maritime incidents. The presence of foreign observers from FFCs enriched these discussions, fostering a spirit of regional collaboration.

A major highlight of the event was the sea exercise, which simulated a large-scale contingency involving a passenger aircraft crash. The scenario portrayed an aircraft carrying 250 passengers that encountered severe technical failure, losing communication with Air Traffic Control (ATC) and vanishing from radar approximately 150 nautical miles northwest of Kochi.

A coordinated Mass Rescue Operation (MRO) was swiftly initiated, demonstrating the seamless deployment of resources, including ships and aircraft from the Indian Coast Guard, Indian Air Force (IAF), tugs from Cochin Port Authority, 03 water metros and 01 Garuda rescue and emergency craft from Kochi Water Metro and a water ambulance provided by the Kerala State Administration. Key actions included:

- Life raft drops by IAF aircraft and ICG ships.
- Passenger evacuation using Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH).
- Crew rescue operations utilizing Jason Cradle technology.
- The innovative deployment of drones to deliver lifebuoys.

The successful execution of these operations underscored the high level of coordination and preparedness among participating agencies.

SAREX-2024 aimed to validate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and best practices for conducting Mass Rescue Operations. It served as a vital platform to enhance mutual understanding, foster collaboration, and exchange effective strategies for managing large-scale maritime contingencies.

Over the years, the Indian Coast Guard has emerged as a leading maritime agency, driving India's efforts to build a robust Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR) framework. By consistently collaborating with various stakeholders, the ICG plays a pivotal role in enhancing maritime safety and security. These initiatives align with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India's vision of *Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)*, reinforcing India's reputation as a reliable and proactive maritime partner on the global stage.