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### ***Radars to bolster coastal security***

Kalyan Ray, New Delhi, August 10<sup>th</sup> 2011, DHNS:



OBZERV ARGC-2400 Camera

**After a gap of more than 10 years, the Centre is now set to establish 46 coastal radar stations from September with a promise of putting the entire network in place within a year, a step that will plug loopholes in coastal security.**

Considered to be the most critical element in India's coastal security, 36 of 46 radar stations would be placed along the mainland coast whereas four would be on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and six along Lakshadweep.

Establishing the network requires constructions of 13 new towers for housing the radar, of which eight have been completed so far. Also, 21 lighthouses are required to be installed with adaptors for housing the radar but they have been installed in only seven of them. Two new stations would also be set up.

Moreover, price negotiations have been completed with an Israeli company, Controp, and a Canadian firm, Obzerv, to purchase the sensors in a Rs 602 crore deal, officials said, adding that the project was likely to start in a month and completed in a year.

At the same time, a Rs 132 crore contract has been finalised to put in place 84 automatic identification system (AIS) stations along the coast beginning with Gujarat. All vessels with tonnage between 100 and 300 tonnes and all fishing vessels more than 20 metres in length have to install an on-board AIS, which would be tracked by these stations.

Before the Mumbai attack, coastal security was not a priority for the government. The Centre, for

instance, did precious little in the last ten years on the static radar network, proposed by the group of ministers on the national security system set up after the Kargil episode.

The project received momentum after the 26/11-terror strike and was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in February 2009.

#### **Field evaluation**

Field evaluation of a coastal radar system developed by Bangalore-based Bharat Electronic Limited began in December 2009, but was suspended in February 2010, due to unsatisfactory performances of thermal imager, low-light television and charge-coupled device camera.

Subsequently, field trials of electro-optic sensors of four vendors were carried out in June and August 2010 at Chennai.

The thermal imager of Controp and CCD camera with low light TV of Obzerv met the government criteria in the trials. Defence Minister A K Antony on Wednesday reviewed the coastal security scenario to find out the implementation status of various projects approved by the CCS in February, 2009.

The review took place in the wake of the undetected entry of the Panamanian vessel MT Pavit in Mumbai last week, which exposed the gaps in maritime security.

The defence minister asked the Navy and Coast Guard chiefs to ensure that incidents like MT Pavit drifting into Indian territorial waters did not recur. The unmanned Panama-flagged vessel, abandoned by its crew off the coast of Oman, drifting on Indian waters for close to 100 hours before it hit the Mumbai shoreline. The incident exposed the vulnerability of India's three-tier coastal security mechanism.

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