

Puducherry to receive 2 hovercraft soon

New version is 21 meters in long and can achieve a speed of 45 nautical miles per hour ^{Puducherry}

C. Jaisankar

PUDUCHERRY: The Coast Guard station in Puducherry will soon receive two hovercraft built in the United Kingdom for increasing maritime security along the Puducherry coast, said Suresh Mankotti, Commanding Officer.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Commandant Mankotti, who is to hand over charge to Commandant Somasundaram before moving to a

new assignment in Gujarat on Saturday, said the process of acquisition of hovercraft was in an advanced stage and the new vessels are expected to reach Puducherry within few months.

Multifarious tasks

Stating that hovercraft was a handy vessel especially in shallow waters, Mr. Mankotti said the vessel was capable of undertaking multifarious tasks such as surveillance, interception of

unknown and suspicious boats, search and rescue and rendering assistance to fishermen in distress. Since the shore along Puducherry was shallow in patches, the hovercrafts would prove to be a good asset for enhancing maritime security.

The hovercraft could not only be operated along Puducherry but also neighbouring coast in Tamil Nadu. It would enable the Coast Guard personnel to carry out sorties to attend to

emergency calls involving ships, seafarers and fishermen.

A hovercraft, which is also known as Air Cushion Vehicle, can be operated on water, land, mudflats, backwaters and other surfaces.

It is operated by creating a cushion of high pressure air between the hull of the vessel and the surface below.

The new version of hovercraft is said to be 21 meters in long and can achieve a

speed of 45 nautical miles per hour.

10 crew members

Each hovercraft would have strength of 10 crew members. A team of pilots had undergone training in United Kingdom to familiarise themselves with operational nuances of the vessels.

They had been trained in search and rescue operation, maintenance, berthing and others.

Commandant Mankotti said this was the first time that hovercraft were allotted to Puducherry.

They would increase the number of patrolling vessels in Puducherry to four and the number of personnel to 60.

The hovercraft would be berthed at Veerampattinam, where the Coast Guard has 3.4 acres of land in seafront area. Steps have been taken to create berthing facilities for the hovercraft.