

## VXL seeks subsidy to market safety device

The product is based on design and technology supplied by ISRO

VXL Technologies, a S. K. Birla group company, is seeking subsidy for marketing a life-saving safety device manufactured by it based on design and technology supplied by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). At least 2,000 such devices, called the disaster alert transmitter (DAT), have already been supplied to many State governments for fitting onto fishing boats.

A DAT installation could have prevented 26/11 type of attacks, S. K. Birla, Group Chairman, said at a joint press conference with S. S. Valdiya, Group Director, Space Application Centre (SAC), ISRO, and S. Chakraborty, a senior official of the Indian Coast Guard.

“We have written to the governments at the State and the Centre, urging them to extend subsidies as fishermen would rather take risk with their lives than make the Rs. 10,000 investment needed to fit the small device onto their boats. The principal buyer would thus be the government,” he said.

B. D. Bose, Executive Director, VXL, said that the product was now being sold at cost-price but a subsidy of perhaps 90 per cent would be needed to popularise it. Mr. Valdiya said that the challenge was to make it cost-effective, light-weight and on a reliable technology platform. He said that the price of the device would come down once production volumes were stepped up in tune with demand.

DAT is an indigenously developed low-cost search and rescue beacon which has been developed by the SAC, ISRO, over the last five years. It operates on India's disaster frequency with the signals being directly received through INSAT-3A at the Chennai-based Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre which activates the rescue with the help of the Coast Guard.

India has 1.6 lakh motorised and mechanised boats which go out to the high seas. Of these 21 per cent are in Kerala, 19 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 18 per cent in Gujarat, 15 per cent in Karnataka and 8 per cent in West Bengal. Mr. Bose said that the Gujarat Government had shown interest in buying the boats.

Ghosh, Chief Operating Officer, VXL, said that since its first use, DAT, which is a floatable device, had already saved lives.

He said that ISRO took the 2,000 devices and distributed them to the State governments.