

PRESS RELEASE

INDIAN COAST GUARD'S HEROIC RESCUE OPERATION SAFEGUARDS PILGRIMS OF "GANGA SAGAR MELA" NEAR NAMKHANA, KAKDWIP

New Delhi, 16 Jan 24: In the early hours of 16 January 2024, the Indian Coast Guard executed a swift and commendable rescue operation by deploying hovercrafts from Haldia for rescue of approximately 182 pilgrims stranded on a grounded ferry near Namkhana, Kakdwip. The incident occurred as the pilgrims were returning from Ganga Sagar Mela after holy dip on Makar Sankranti, and the ferry ran aground due to extremely poor visibility.

At about 0530 hrs on 16 Jan 24, a message was received from District Magistrate, South 24 Paraganas at Coast Guard District Headquarters No. 8 at West Bengal, intimating about grounding of ferry at sea near Kakdwip. The ferry vessel namely MV Swasthya Sathi was ferrying about 400 pilgrims from Ganga Sagar Mela at Sagar Island to Kakdwip. Upon receipt of the information, the operations team of Coast Guard swung into action and after ascertaining the position immediately dispatched two ACVs (Hovercraft) from Haldia and Sagar island to provide rescue assistance.

The ACVs arrived the incident site at about 0840 hrs on 16 Jan 24 and post assessing the on scene situation, an evacuation plan was finalized. Simultaneously a Coast Guard Team also went to the stranded vessel to pacify the people, thereafter the personnel were briefed about the evacuation plan. The hovercrafts started evacuating personnel at about 0850 hrs, to the nearest point at Lot no 8 jetty, Kakdwip. The hovercrafts completed evacuation of 182 pilgrims onboard ferry by 1100 hrs on 16 Jan 24. Thereafter, the boat floated during high water and commenced movement with remaining pilgrims under guidance of ACVs to safe destination.

The Indian Coast Guard during the annual "Ganga Sagar Mela" held in Mid Jan 24, has deployed sea borne units at various strategic locations to ensure safety and security of personnel during the Mela. A rapid lifesaving action team of Divers with Gemini boat is positioned at Mela site for any eventuality. Additionally an Officer from ICGS Frazerganj is positioned at Sagar Island for coordination with the state administration and supervise seafront safety and security aspects.

The Indian Coast Guard's ability to swiftly and effectively respond to rescuing 182 people at sea reiterated its commitment towards safety of lives at sea and swift response to such incidents.

