

Haldia port disinfected

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Haldia: Haldia port authorities sanitised the dock complex, office buildings, as well as vessels stationed at the inner jetties beginning on Saturday in an operation, which was assisted by the Haldia fire brigade extinguishers loaded with sanitiser, that concluded on Sunday morning.

It was undertaken after an engineer from a private cargo handler who worked at the dock tested positive for Covid-19 at a Haldia hospital after having returned on March 24 from the Nizamuddin event in Delhi.

“We put extra emphasis on sanitising berth 13, where the handler’s colleagues worked, as well as adjoining berth 12,” said general manager (administration) Amal Datta.

“On Friday, nearly 300 workers had fled from the dock after hearing the news of his diagnosis. But we will communicate with them soon and inform them that it is safe to return to work,” he added.

Operations at Haldia have suffered a two-day backlog following Friday’s incident, leaving at least three vessels



A fire engine disinfected the port on Sunday

stranded at the inner jetty. Sources said the automated unloading of gas and petroleum via pipelines from the outer jetty had been continuing as usual. Among the commodities that could not be unloaded since Friday — for the lack of crane handlers — were manganese, coal and limestone.

“Some liquid cargo including food oils were able to be unloaded on Saturday,” said a port official.

On Friday, eight port employees not including casual workers were identified by of-

ficials as having been in possible proximity to the patient on the evening he returned from Delhi and reported at the dock’s office complex to discuss the unloading of a manganese carrier later that week.

“We scanned CCTV footage in more detail and it was later seen that he came in close proximity with only three persons. However, these three persons came forward voluntarily to be put into quarantine,” said Datta, adding that a portion of the dock’s guesthouse was being used for the same purpose.

On Sunday, Trinamul-backed workers’ unions at the port said that they would refuse to be hurried back into work at the port, given the circumstances.

“Our safety comes first. We will not come back until we are convinced it is safe,” said INTTUC working president Shibnath Sarkar.

“Social distancing is the need of the hour. We were willing to work on an emergency basis, but after Friday’s incident, even we will need to be careful,” said a worker on condition of anonymity.