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**CHIEF MINISTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CELL, DISPUR**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**CM Dr. Sarma reviews Inland Water Transport (IWT)**  
**Finalises a series of measures to ensure safety of passengers in water vessels**  
**Government to bear cost to replace all single engine vessels with marine engines across**  
**state: CM**

Dispur, September 12: In the aftermath of the boat capsizing incident at Nimatighat in the Brahmaputra, the review meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma at the conference room of his office on Saturday evening decided on a series of safety measures as part of Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for plying of vessels between Nimatighat and Majuli and elsewhere in the state.

As a part of the SoP, plying of private vessels with single engine, except those with marine engines with reversible gear will remain suspended. Six government vessels including two Ro-Pax, shall remain in operation between Majuli and Jorhat. One dredger will be used to maintain the channel/gradient for smooth ferry services even in lean season. All 19 private passenger vessels plying between Majuli and Jorhat will be fitted with marine engines with reversible gear at the expense of the government within six months. All passengers will be required to wear life jackets before departure of the vessel. Minimum two ramps/ temporary jetties will be maintained at each ghats of Majuli and Jorhat for docking and mooring of boats. One Magistrate in Majuli and one in Jorhat will be detailed to be present during departure and arrival of the ferries. The magistrate will submit the daily report to the concerned DC.

Ticket will be issued to every passenger and his name, address and contract number will be maintained in the register before boarding the vessel. In order to avoid conflict of interest and other difficulties, the fuel for vessels will be made free from ceiling by Finance Department.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Majuli and Jorhat will frequently visit and inspect the arrangement made at the Ghats. Director, IWT and other senior officials of IWT and Transport Dept will regularly visit the Ghat to ensure that the ferry services are operating smoothly. Basic amenities like toilet, drinking water, waiting area shed etc. shall be provided at each ghat.

Safety audit shall be carried out for vessels by competent IWT Officials before being put to use. The vessels shall be inspected for their overall fitness, availability of firefighting and lifesaving equipment, competency of crew members etc. These certifications shall be recorded in the surveyor declaration form before issuing survey certificate and registration certificate. Safety announcements be given by the master of the ferry through a loud hailer on the do's and don'ts, emergency procedure, procedure for wearing a life jacket, handling of life-buoy etc. Written script will be provided and promulgated by IWT. There should be one life-buoy ring against four passengers. The life-buoys should have a rope attached having at least 30 feet length. These to be kept on the guard rails for immediate throwing towards people in the water. Vessels should be equipped with the loud hailer, siren, aldis light, whistle, cell phone etc. Reliable communication network should be maintained between the master and in-charge of

the ghat and they should regularly remain in contact over phone. SIM cards will be provided by the government to the master and in-charge of the ghat. PA systems should be used to make passenger safety related announcements at the ghats and inside the vessels. First aid box should be available on the vessels.

Every boat should have minimum two anchors with flexible manila rope and more than 10 per cent of the strands of each rope which should not be damaged. There should be one CO<sub>2</sub> and one foam type fire extinguisher in the engine room space. Suitable anchoring equipment to be available on board, such as anchor, cables, ropes etc. to prevent drifting of vessels during calm weather in general and cyclonic condition in particular.

Training of all the masters and crew to be undertaken on the basic navigation stability, related rules in the water, firefighting, emergency operation etc. One SDRF team will be stationed at Majuli and it will be kept in readiness to respond any emergent situation. Each vessel must have a signboard prominently displaying the load capacity of passengers, bicycle, motorcycle, car, truck and other permissible items etc. Overloading should not be allowed under any circumstances.

Master (In-charge of the Boat) of passenger ferry will not be allowed to be changed without prior approval of competent authority of the IWT. Medical camp will be setup at the ghats and ANM will be detailed with necessary medicines etc.

Moreover, besides the above, the meeting also decided on a series of measures to streamline ferry service and enhance the safety across the state. Government will provide marine engine to 850 private passenger vessels, free of cost, that have applied under Jibondinga Scheme. Marine Engine will be fitted after survey of the fitness of the boat by the surveyor appointed by DIWT Assam.

DIWTA in consultation with DC concerned will assess the requirement for more than one ramp /temporary jetties at each Ghat and arrange to construct accordingly. DC, DIWTA and other senior officers will frequently visit and inspect the arrangements made at the ghats to ensure that the ferry service are operating smoothly.

Principal Secretary Transport Dr. KK Dwivedi, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Samir Kumar Sinha, Commissioner Transport Adil Khan and other senior officers of transport department were present at the meeting.

SD/ September 12, 2021.