



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

**PRESS RELEASE**

**No. 231/2020**

**Sonowal interacts with editors and senior journalists**

**Media must restrain itself before publishing news without authentication: CM**

**“Media is the conscience of the society and hence its role crucial”**

**Dispur, May 2:** The Chief Minister today held an interactive session with the editors and senior journalists of media houses of the state at Assam Administrative Staff College and sought their views and suggestion regarding overall situation of the state during the COVID-19 lockdown period and the way forward in case of relaxations and exemptions during the nationwide extension of lockdown period by two more weeks.

Calling on the media outlets to exercise utmost restraint while reporting news about administrative machinery engaged in the COVID-19 fight at the frontline without verification, the Chief Minister said that unauthenticated and unverified news could demotivate and discourage all those who were dedicatedly providing their services to contain the outbreak of the global pandemic in the state. He referred to the news about NSG soldier engaged in his security as infected by COVID-19 reported by certain media houses and said the report of the soldier was still awaited and such unverified news could create chaos and panic in the government machinery.

Terming the media as the conscience keepers and opinion moulders of the society, Sonowal said that that media's conscientious decisions would determine in which direction the society would move. He also appreciated the role played by media during the lockdown period by disseminating the right information to the people, generating awareness and also by acting as a bridge between the people and the government.

Saying that he himself travelled to the districts to encourage and motivate the district administration officials led by DCs and SPs, Sonowal stated that constant reviewing of preparedness measures helped in ironing out administrative issues faced by different districts and to take a unified approach. Due to the high work ethic and planned activities Assam was performing considerably well in containing COVID-19 and the roles played by health, F&CS, police, PHED, power departments in this time of crisis must be appreciated, he said.

The Chief Minister also referred to the slew of austerity measures taken by the State Government to cut down expenditures in the time of economic slowdown and said that guarded approach has been taken to relax certain economic activities to bring the state's economy back on track post COVID-19. Pointing out mask making activities by 15 lakh members of SHGs, mostly women, as a positive aspect during time of gloom in the state,

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Sonowal said that tea sector workers and farmers have resumed work following exemptions given to them. He also informed about his telephonic conference with sardars in several tea gardens of the state and their role in generating awareness among the tea community.

Highlighting the agriculture department's role in providing market linkage to the farmers to sell their produce on time, Sonowal said that necessary directives have been given to the department in this regard and he also highlighted the step to take private players onboard this time in managing the requirement of essential items and keeping the prices in control. He also informed that 49,462 vehicles carrying essential items and people have moved in the state during the lockdown under the supervision of transport department.

He also said that repairing works of embankments, which were stopped due to the lockdown, have also started in the state.

Welcoming the suggestions such as not to convert schools into relief camps for flood affected people during the forthcoming rainy season which would result in loss of teaching time for students, closing down rural roads in border districts which people take to sneak into the state from outside, COVID-19 testing of police personnel engaged in the field, social distancing and food supply in slums, regular payment of advertising bills due to the media houses etc, Sonowal thanked the participants for their valuable suggestions which would help in charting the future plan of action.

Minister of Health Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, in his speech, said that in comparison to worldwide and nationwide mortality and recovery rate of COVID-19 patients, Assam is in a safer position now. He informed that as per Union government notification, only Dhubri, Goalpara and Morigaon district fall under orange zone category while the rests are identified as green zone districts.

The Health Minister informed that the State government has already developed a strategy to facilitate movement of people of the State stranded at different places across the country giving preference to students, pilgrims and elderly persons and also for providing sustenance to migrant workers of Assam stuck across the country for next three months. He also informed that presently Rs. 4900 crore is available in the State exchequer inspite of economic slowdown and State government has decided to release full salary of government employees for the month of June and continue with regular appointment in government departments.

Editors and senior journalists representing 47 media houses of the State took part in today's interactive session and offered their suggestions for formulating revival plan of Assam's economy in the post COVID-19 scenario.

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Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Food and Civil Supplies Department Minister Phani Bhushan Choudhury, PHED Minister Rihan Daimary, Guwahati Development Department Minister Siddhartha Bhattacharya, Water Resource Minister Keshab Mahanta, Media Adviser to the Chief Minister Hrishikesh Goswami, Legal Adviser to the Chief Minister Shantanu Bharali, Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna, DG of Assam Police Bhaskarjyoti Mahanta, Principal Secretary of Finance Department Samir Kumar Sinha were also present in the meeting among others.

**Swakkhyar/BG/2.5.2020**