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CHIEF MINISTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CELL, DISPUR**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Sonowal takes stock of arrangements of ASTC buses for transporting stranded people**

**Skilled youths can ensure turnaround of state's economy in post-lockdown period: CM**

Dispur, May 5: With the lockdown being relaxed, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today asked the Transport Department to do a mapping of its fleet of ASTC buses in proportion to the people stranded in different places of the state and country to ensure their safe movement.

Chairing a meeting to review the preparedness of the Transport Department to push its fleet of buses into service to transport the stranded people of the state to their respective destinations at the conference hall of Assam Skill Development Mission at Gorchuk here today, Sonowal said that in this time of extraordinary health emergency, the Transport Department should provide qualitative services in line with the advisories given by the Health Department. Thanking the Transport Department for being on the frontline in providing emergency and essential services during the lockdown, Sonowal emphasized that the management and movement of the buses should be made judiciously to mitigate the hardships of the stranded people.

Transport Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary giving a snapshot of different activities performed by the Transport Department during the lockdown period, told the Chief Minister that his department during eight days from April 25 to May 2, moved 2090 buses to transport 32444 number of passengers. He also drew the attention of the Chief Minister that for the benefits of the passengers and transporters besides giving a permission of opening 45 *dhabas* along the highways, 85 garages were permitted to be opened during the lockdown period. He also said that ASTC besides facilitating operation of 200 city buses, took steps for plying 284 inter-district buses.

MLAs Mrinal Saikia, Rituporna Baruah, Bimal Bora, Additional DGP (Security) Harmeet Singh, Commissioner and Secretary Transport Dr. K.K. Dwivedi and other senior officers were present at the meeting.

Talking to the reporters on the side line of the meeting, Chief Minister Sonowal said that to ensure that no resident of Assam faces any encumbrances during the lockdown period, Government of Assam helped Food Corporation of India to bring 5 lakh MT rice to the state. He also said during the same period FCI brought 6.5 lakh MT rice for the entire Northeast. He also said that during this period besides 452 railway rakes, 44,732 goods laden trucks entered the state. Sonowal also informed the press that during lockdown period for transporting essential food stuff to different parts of the state 53118 trucks were pressed into service.

Chief Minister Sonowal also stated that during the initial period of coronavirus outbreak in the state, though people were seemed to be more circumspect, now with the steps taken by the Health and Family Welfare Department and other line departments people seemed to have

gained confidence to fortify the system to fight against the viurs. He also attributed the unstinted cooperation of the people of Assam to the success of the first and second phase of lockdown which apparently have slowed down the progress of the viral infection in the state. He also sought cooperation for the success of the third phase of lockdown as well. He also said that to infuse vitality in the sluggish economy, though government has conceded some relaxations, people should not construe them as freedom or relief from the virus. He, therefore, urged upon the people to adhere to social distancing protocols. He also underscored the State government's efforts to ensure that no academic year is lost in the name of COVID 19.

In view of the dent perpetrated by the novel coronavirus pandemic in the economy of the state, Chief Minister Sonowal said that State government is working very sincerely to upskill the local youths to agro-economic activities.

Sonowal later visited the Prem Singh Brahma Inter-State Bus Terminus and talked to the passengers. He also took stock of the arrangements made by the ASTC for the operation of the fleet of buses.

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