

## Press Release

Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam

P &RD Minister Ranjeet Kr. Dass addresses GP Presidents and Secretaries through VC

### **“Our village, our fight: together we will win over COVID.”—Minister Dass**

**Guwahati, May 22:** “We should render our services with an aim to make our villages COVID-19 free. To be safe we must maintain social distancing and at the same time we should try to reduce our emotional distance. Only then we can serve with full dedication to curb this grave pandemic situation.”—stated Ranjeet Kr. Dass, the Minister, Panchayat and Rural Development (P&RD), Assam while addressing the GP Presidents-Secretaries and other field officials of P&RD, Assam in a webinar from P&RD Commissionerate regarding containment and prevention of COVID-19.

Praising the proactive initiatives taken up for containment and prevention of COVID-19 by Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam and the Health Minister Keshab Mahanta, Minister Dass said that though the disease was earlier confined in the urban areas, with time it has spread to the rural areas too. Therefore, as frontline workers for the development of villages, Gaon Panchayats have to play a pivotal role in the fight against COVID-19.

The fight against COVID-19 should be taken up as a *Jan Andolan*. For this, the Minister emphasized that the GPs have to be proactive. They have to take initiative for conduct of COVID tests for individuals in the villages. Moreover, they have to identify the causes for the spread of the virus and take preventive measures to curb and eliminate the possibility of COVID-19 transmission in the villages, for which the panchayats need to extend necessary help to the active cases, sanitise the GP areas, ensure tests for the migrant people, distribute free masks to the needy etc. He also advised the GP Presidents and Secretaries to prepare a detailed plan for the above works. In the meeting, the Minister announced that to carry out the preventive measures to fight with the pandemic, 10% of the untied fund of the first installment under the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission Grants has been allocated. He also emphasized on cent percent fruitful utilization of this fund.

Minister Dass also advocated for establishing a ‘War Room’ in every GP. He directed the GPs to take up an awareness campaign regarding COVID-19 protocol like wearing of face masks, maintaining social distance, frequent hand washing and use of sanitiser. He also stressed upon creating awareness through miking, banners, leaflets etc. In this regard, the GPs may also mobilize the women SHGs for helping in the fight against COVID-19. Minister Dass further suggested to constitute a Task Force in every ward of the GPs and to work in coordination with the VDPs. He expressed immense hope that if all functionaries came

together, maintaining all COVID protocols, breaking of the chain will be possible and the spread of the virus will be successfully curbed.

In the webinar, Minister Dass also reviewed the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and PMAY-G. He said that successful implementation of these schemes will not only provide economic support to the rural poor population, but also provide them with the basic necessity of shelter. He urged all officials and other concerned to render their services dedicatedly and with accountability. Negligence towards duty will not be tolerated at any cost and that strict action will be initiated against such officials. Adding to this, he stated that if any official is found complacent and not delivering his/her duties diligently, then he/she may apply for VRS.

The Principal Secretary, P & RD, Dr J B Ekka, the Commissioner, Hemen Das and other senior officials of the department were present in today's webinar and from the field the CEOs, ZP, PDs, DRDA, BDOs, GP Secretaries and Presidents and also other officials were present. It may be mentioned that this was the first meet of the Minister, P &RD with the field officials of the department through virtual media after taking the charge of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Assam.

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