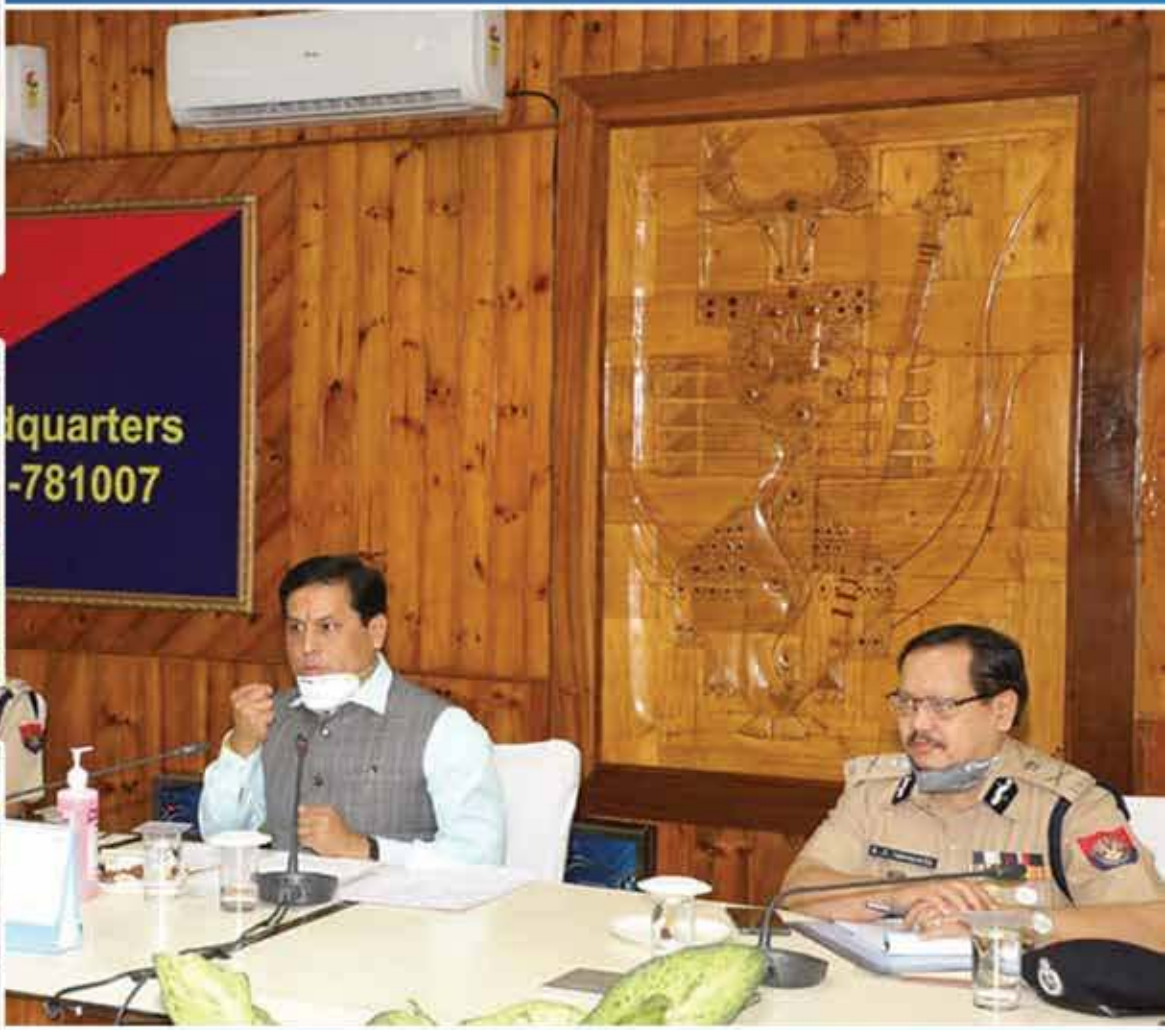




NEW DIMENSIONS IN POLICING

The Case of Assam Police as Frontline anti-COVID Workers



A Report on Assam Police by
centre for development and peace studies
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Team Assam: Working Together at a Time of Crisis

1.1. Background: The Coronavirus & its Spread

Viruses are perhaps more diverse in nature than humanity itself. One such virus, namely the coronavirus, is now wreaking havoc around the world. Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, these viruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal. Coronaviruses in humans were first found in the 1960s¹. The latest strain of coronavirus was first reported and linked to a pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The virus was named “severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)” by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) on 11 February 2020². On the same day, World Health Organization (WHO) announced “COVID-19” as the name of the disease caused by this virus³. It was declared a ‘Pandemic’ by the WHO on 11 March 2020⁴.

According to Chinese Government data, a 55 year old person from Hubei province of China may have been the first person to have contracted COVID-19 on 17 November 2019⁵. However, at that time doctors did not link his illness with coronavirus. It was only in late December that doctors realized they were face-to-face with a new disease⁶. And, then the number of cases began growing exponentially. On 13 January 2020, the first COVID-19 case outside China was reported in Thailand⁷. It was followed by reporting of cases in Japan on 15 January, Korea on 20 January and USA on 21 January. Italy recorded its first case on 23 January and Canada on 25 January. Soon confirmed cases were reported from Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Australia and Taiwan by 31 January. India reported its first case on 30 January. Iran reported its two first cases in 19 February. Confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported from European countries like Germany, Finland, Italy, Russia, Spain, France, Sweden, Belgium and United Kingdom from the month of February. Soon, cases started being reported from around the world. So far,

1 Kahn, Jeffrey S, McIntosh, Kenneth, “History and Recent Advances in Coronavirus Discovery”, *The Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*: November 2005 - Volume 24 - Issue 11 - p S223-S227, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16378050>

2 World Health Organization (WHO), [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it)

3 Ibid.

4 “World Health Organization Declares COVID-19 a ‘Pandemic.’ Here’s What That Means”, *TIME*, 11 March 2020, <https://time.com/5791661/who-coronavirus->

[pandemic-declaration/](#)

5 “China’s First Confirmed COVID-19 Case Traced Back to November 17”, *South China Morning Post*, 13 March 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3074991/coronavirus-chinas-first-confirmed-covid-19-case-traced-back>

6 Ibid

7 WHO Timeline – COVID-19, <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/08-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>

COVID-19 has affected around 210 countries and territories around the world.⁸

1.2. Response of the Indian Government

On 30 January 2020, India confirmed its first COVID-19 positive case. The patient was a student from Thrissur in Kerala who had returned from Wuhan, China.⁹ The efforts to contain the spread of the virus in the country began in the month of January itself, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the efforts from the front. He addressed the nation several times to lay down the roadmap for the fight against the disease. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), too began to immediately work on the modalities to contain the pandemic. Screening, contact tracing, testing and isolation became a matter of priority for the Government.

On 19 March 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a televised address to the nation announced a 14 hour “Janata Curfew” from 7 am to 9 pm on 22 March, urging people across the country to face the coronavirus pandemic with collective determination and patience. As millions stayed indoors to help check the spread of coronavirus, on 22 March, India reported a total of 360 COVID-19 cases (319 Indian Nationals and 41 Foreign Nationals) from 23 States/UTs.¹⁰

8 COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic
https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdUOA?Si

9 “Kerala Reports First Confirmed Coronavirus Case in India.”, India Today, 31 January 2020,
www.indiatoday.in/india/story/kerala-reports-first-confirmed-novel-coronavirus-case-in-india-1641593-2020-01-30.

10 “Coronavirus LIVE: India Records 360 Coronavirus Cases, Seven Deaths.” National Herald, 22 Mar. 2020,
www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/coronavirus-live-updates-covid-19-india-wuhan-us-italy-who-alert-novel-coronavirus-latest-news-22nd-march.

Lockdown 1.0: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a televised address to the nation, announced a lockdown in the country for a period of 21 days with effect from 25 March 2020 to break the chain of infection. A Rs. 15,000 crore stimulus was announced for healthcare spending devoted to boosting healthcare resources such as hospitals, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), isolation wards, beds and ventilators. On 2 April, the central Government launched an application called *Aarogya Setu* developed in public-private partnership to help track coronavirus infection among people.

Lockdown 2.0: The second phase of the lockdown began from 15 April to 3 May, with certain economic relaxations. On 26 March, Government announced Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against COVID-19. On 16 April, lockdown areas were classified as “red zone”, indicating the presence of infection hotspots, “orange zone” indicating some infection, and “green zone” with no infections. The Government also announced certain relaxations from 20 April, allowing agricultural businesses, including dairy, aquaculture and plantations, as well as shops selling farming supplies, to open. On 29 April, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued guidelines for the states to allow inter-state movement of the stranded persons.

Lockdown 3.0: After a thorough examination of cases, the Government on 1 May extended the lockdown until 17 May with considerable relaxations in the orange and green zones. Inter-state movement of people via road and rail began during this phase of the lockdown. On 12 May 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his fifth televised address to the nation since March, announced the launch of ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’. It is a special financial package to revive the Indian economy with a total



Picture: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacting with Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and other Chief Ministers of the states on 27 April 2020 via video conferencing

outlay of Rs 20 lakh crore.¹¹

Lockdown 4.0: The fourth phase of the lockdown in the nation began from 18 May till 31 May 2020. Inter-state movement of people continued during this phase of the lockdown, with special flights too being allowed to transport stranded passengers.

Unlock 1.0: The Government announced the fifth phase of lockdown from 1 to 30 June. Also termed as **Unlock 1.0**, during this phase the lockdown restrictions were gradually lifted.

1.3. Team Assam: Fighting the Pandemic

While handling the COVID-19 pandemic, the various arms of the Government came together to work as one team. This ‘**Team Assam**’ was led by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. Health Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma; the Council of Ministers & other elected representatives; the civil administration, led by Chief Secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna; Assam Police, led by DGP Bhaskar

Jyoti Mahanta; Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Indian Railways, Airport Authority of India and Departments like Health & Family Welfare, Social Welfare, Food & Civil Supplies, etc, were all part of this Team Assam. A State Level Advisory Committee, under the Chairmanship of the Assam Chief Secretary, was formed to manage the state’s response. In fact, in Assam, the entire exercise of handling the pandemic was seamless from day one, with every department and agency working together in every step.

The Assam Government began preparing its response against the pandemic even before there was a single COVID-19 case in the state and the lockdown had not even started. Starting 15 January 2020, the state Government kept a total of 55 suspected persons who came from China under observation¹². This

12 “No case of coronavirus in Assam: Health Minister”, The Economic Times, 5 March 2020, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/no-case-of-coronavirus-in-assam-health-minister/articleshow/74486608.cms?utm_

11 Ibid.

was stated by Assam Health Minister, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, in a written reply to a question in the Assam Legislative Assembly on 3 March 2020. He had further stated that, “Out of 55 persons, 46 have completed the observation period. The remaining are under observation in home quarantine for the incubation period. Till now two persons have been admitted at the isolation ward of Guwahati Medical College and Hospital with mild symptoms. The samples have been collected and tested and the result was found to be negative.”¹³

Starting February, the state Government began readying its health infrastructure to handle COVID-19 cases. In March, at least 400 people in Assam were quarantined after they had come in contact with an American tourist who tested positive for COVID-19 in Bhutan after travelling through the state. Assam Police had also ensured quarantine of three Chinese nationals in Guwahati city during the same month.

The state Government constituted Rapid Response Teams in all districts of the state during the second week of March and imparted them training in handling of COVID-19 cases¹⁴. On 15 March 2020, the state Government ordered the closure of all educational institutions, cinema halls, multiplexes, gyms and swimming pools in Assam.¹⁵ The Government also decided to close all national parks, tiger reserves and sanctuaries in the state¹⁶.

source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 “Coronavirus: Assam Shuts down Schools, Malls, Gyms till March 29; No Confirmed Cases, Says Official.”, *The Hindu*, 15 March 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/coronavirus-assam-shuts-schools-cancels-exams-till-march-29/article31074035.ece>.

16 “Assam closes schools, gyms, national parks as preventive measure against Covid-19”, *Hindustan Times*, 16 March 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/assam-closes-schools-gyms-national-parks-as-preventive-measure-against-covid-19/story-oGQHwXrJQD4uwShjeGXSoL.html>

On 18 March 2020, the state Government issued ‘The Assam COVID-19 Regulations, 2020’¹⁷. Then on 21 March, it issued ‘The Assam COVID-19 Containment Regulations, 2020’¹⁸. These regulations were issued to deal with the measures to be taken to control and prevent further spread of the disease.

Lockdown 1.0: As the nation-wide lockdown was announced, the Assam Government began taking measures to enforce it. This involved sealing of state borders; suspension of public transport services; closure of all commercial establishments, offices, and factories; banning the congregation of more than five people at any public place; among others. Establishments providing essential goods and services were excluded from the lockdown restrictions.

The first COVID-19 positive case was reported in Assam on 31 March 2020. The patient was a 52 year old man with pre-existing health issues and history of travel from Badarpur in Karimganj district to Delhi via Guwahati and back. The man had visited Jama Masjid and Nizamuddin Markaz during his stay in Delhi, which had become a potent hotspot of COVID-19¹⁹. Majority of the initial COVID-19 positive cases in Assam were reported from among the *Tablighi Jamaat* returnees from Nizamuddin Markaz.²⁰ All these returnees were quarantined by

com/india-news/assam-closes-schools-gyms-national-parks-as-preventive-measure-against-covid-19/story-oGQHwXrJQD4uwShjeGXSoL.html

17 For the full text see: <https://assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-03/The%20Assam%20COVID-19%20Regulations%2C2020.pdf>

18 For the full text, see: <https://covid19.assam.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Prevention-and-Containment-of-COVID-19.pdf>

19 “Assam’s 1st COVID-19 Patient Visited Nizamuddin, 130 Quarantined.” *India Today*, 1 Apr. 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/coronavirus-assam-covid-19-patient-travelled-to-nizamuddin-1662092-2020-04-01>.

20 Aamir, Shahnawaz. “List of 16 Nizamuddin Attendees



Picture: Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and his Council of Ministers in a meeting to take stock of the situation arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, held at Guwahati on 30 March 2020

the Assam Government. Along with them, contact tracing of the COVID-19 positive patients was also carried out.

To facilitate timely quarantining of COVID-19 positive and vulnerable individuals, the Government of Assam converted the district hospital at Sonapur, on the outskirts of Guwahati city, and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital in Guwahati (barring a few departments) into dedicated COVID-19 treatment centres. A new 30-bed state-of-the-art ICU ward with ventilation facilities was created at the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. The state Government also set up a quarantine centre for 1000 people at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium and Sports Complex at Sarusajai in Guwahati.

Lockdown 2.0: On April 17, Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal launched ‘COVAAS,’ a mobile application developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) as a one-stop app for any COVID-19 related

information and help. On 20 April, the Assam government transferred Rs. 2,000 each to the accounts of 86,000 people from the State who were stranded across the country due to the lockdown. They also gave USD 2000 each to 34 Assamese people stranded abroad. The inter-district movement of people too was facilitated by the state government during this phase of the lockdown (details in Chapter 3 of this Report).

Lockdown 3.0: To revive the economy of the state and break the stagnation brought by COVID-19, the Government of Assam constituted an eight member economic advisory committee on 3 May to study various aspects of the state’s economy and provide recommendations to bring back economic buoyancy through systematic interventions. During this phase, Assam Government began community-based surveillance for Influenza-like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) across the state to contain the possible spread of COVID-19. The Government also began facilitating the inter-state movement of people from this phase of the lockdown (details in Chapter 3 of this Report). With

Who Test Coronavirus Positive in Assam”, News Live TV, 2 Apr. 2020, [newslivetv.com/list-of-16-nizamuddin-attendants-who-test-coronavirus-positive-in-assam/](https://www.newslivetv.com/list-of-16-nizamuddin-attendants-who-test-coronavirus-positive-in-assam/).



Picture: Assam Health Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, along with Mr. G.P. Singh, ADGP (L&O) and Mr. Samir Sinha, Principal Secretary, Health, in a Video Conference with DCs & SPs on 14 May 2020

the rise in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, the Assam government also notified several areas of the state as ‘Containment Zones’ under the Assam COVID-19 Regulations, 2020.

Lockdown 4.0 & Unlock 1.0: The state of Assam is now slowly limping back to normalcy. The government is making all its efforts to prevent the spread of the disease as well as revive the economy of the state. The Assam Government is now planning to provide Job Cards, under the Mahanta Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), to around five lakh migrant workers who will be returning to the State. Also, people are migrating from cities and towns to the rural areas of the state and the government is planning to give Job Cards to them as well. The inter-state movement of people is continuing.

1.4. Assam Police: An Integral Part of Team Assam

The Assam Police, led by its DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, formulated and adopted a multi-pronged approach to handle the pandemic as soon as the

lockdown was announced. The DGP called the senior officers of Assam Police who formed his core team and had a detailed discussion, where he elaborated on the priorities of the Government and what should be the response of the Police to ensure proper lockdown and, at the same time, carry forward other policing duties. This core team of officers comprised of Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O); Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, ADGP (Admin/Security/M&L/Border), Mr. Deepak Kr. Kedia, IPS, IGP (L&O); Mr. Diganta Barah, IPS, DIG (Admin); Nitul Gogoi, IPS, DIG (MPC); Mr. Nimbalkar Vaibhav Chandrakant, IPS, AIG (Admin); Mr. Krishna Das, APS, AIG (L&O); Mr. Gaurav Upadhyay, IPS, AIG (Logistics). The DGP was also ably assisted by his staff, led by his Staff Officer, Mr. Rupam Bordoloi, APS.

During these initial meetings, the DGP, along with his core team, formulated the strategy to fight the pandemic. The core idea was based on certain basic leadership principles: identifying the right man for the right job; delegation of duties; decisive and clear-cut actions and orders; and vigorous communication.

The Police administration of the state went ahead with this in a very scientific manner.

The main objectives of the state police during this time were to:

- a) Ensure that the people of the state are safe and protected
- b) The state remains free of crime
- c) Work in tandem with other Government departments and agencies as part of Team Assam

In order to carry out its objectives, the Assam Police devised a strategy. The strategy was totally dynamic in nature. It kept evolving as the situation changed and also based on the guidelines issued by the central and state Government. For example, during Phase 1 and 2 of the lockdown, the core focus of the police was enforcing lockdown and helping the people in need. But, from Phase 3 onwards, the core focus has been on transportation of the citizens.

The main components of this strategy were:



(i) Communication Strategy

During any crisis situation, the eventual success depends on the communication strategy that has been developed and adopted. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, this was one of the earliest things that Assam Police did. They developed a communication strategy to effectively manage communication within the police force as well as with the citizens of the state. The need to manage communication with the public was more important because, at the end of the day, policing is a citizen-centric service delivery mechanism which wants to

serve the society. As much as the public needs to hear from the police, it is also necessary that police also hear what the public has to say. Hence, there was this need for opening of channels for communication and interaction with the public. For this purpose, they used their social media handles, which have a large number of followers. They also set up several helpline numbers as the lockdown progressed. Senior officers of Assam Police, including the DGP, went to various Television and Radio shows to engage in discussions on what the current situation was, what steps police was taking to tackle it and what steps the public should take to keep themselves and others safe. Always being the first responder, Assam Police's social media platforms and widely publicized Helplines provided the window for real-time interaction between the help seeker and the help provider. It also provided a platform to those persons staying abroad, whose old aged parents were alone in their home in Assam, to request for support in case it was required by the senior citizens staying alone.

On the other hand, the communication strategy with the police personnel was developed such that it ensured three things:

- a) The police personnel understood what they are up against
- b) They knew what was the strategy adopted to handle the situation
- c) They understood the tactics and operational requirements

Assam Police, thus, followed a multi-pronged strategy of sensitization, reaching out to the community to provide relief, and being a credible source of information in this 'Infodemic', not only for the people but also for the media as well. The response of the Assam Police to the infodemic fallout of COVID-19 has been multi-pronged too. They have been putting out regular Advisories to sensitize citizens on the menace of fake news and rumors.



Picture: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal interacting with police officers at the Assam Police Headquarters

They have also not allowed inimical elements to create mischief and confusion about the pandemic. Additionally, wherever required, they have also taken tough action against those who were engaged in rumor mongering and peddling fake news. In some cases, arrests were made, while in a majority of others, such persons were counseled and had the provocative or fake news content deleted.

(ii) Optimum Use of Resources

With strength of over 60,000 personnel, Assam Police has wide reach across the state. It was this extensive network that was fully leveraged during this pandemic and the police force became more than just enforcers of lockdown. With optimal use of the resources at hand, Assam Police became the protector of citizens, helping them during this time of crisis and showing them their humane face. While on one hand, they ensured that the lockdown was enforced and people followed the guidelines; on the other hand, they came forward to help the underprivileged and vulnerable section of the society. They coordinated and facilitated the movement of NGOs during their relief efforts. They helped provide food,

essential items and medicines; they helped feed the hungry; they helped in the transportation of people during emergency situations; carried out last rites of citizens whose body were not taken by their family; and various such works. Through these efforts, they became one with the civil society.

(iii) Enforcing the Guidelines

The Government of India as well as the Government of Assam has been issuing several guidelines during the various phases of lockdown in the country. One of the main focuses of Assam Police during this time was to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to. These guidelines formed the base of the lockdown and unless these were followed, the lockdown would not have the desired impact. Assam Police made sure that their strategy involved strict enforcement of guidelines.

(iv) Transporting the Stranded

When the nation-wide lockdown was announced, numerous people of Assam who were outside the state at that time, got stuck wherever they were. Gradually as the lockdown restrictions eased, Assam Police began to chalk out strategies to get the people



Picture: Assam Police providing assistance to the needy

back from other states. On 30 April 2020, Assam government formed a task force to facilitate the return of the people of the state stranded in different places across the country, which was headed by Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O). The Assam Police is now assisting the state government in facilitating and arranging the transport of stranded passengers from various parts of the country back to Assam. They are also facilitating the movement of outbound people from the state. Detailed SOPs have been prepared for this inter-state movement. (Details in Chapter 3 of this Report)

(v) Assisting the Needy

Devising measures to help the underprivileged and vulnerable section of the society during the lockdown was one of the major components of Assam Police's strategy. They ably assisted and supported those people who were left helpless because of the lockdown by providing them food, rations, medicines and other essential supplies. Assam police also helped feed stray animals like dogs, monkeys as well as cows. They rescued injured animals, arranged for their treatment and transported them to shelter homes. As transportation was restricted during the initial

phases of the lockdown, Assam Police also helped in movement of people during emergency situations. This role of Assam Police in assisting the needy is elaborated in details in the next two chapters.

(vi) Ensuring Safety of the Police Personnel

A key focus of Assam Police's strategy was to ensure that the Police personnel and their families stay safe from COVID-19. In this regard, the Assam Police Headquarters prepared detailed advisories and SOPs and circulated it among its personnel. Protective items were procured and distributed among the Police personnel. It was also ensured that the police stations, the police colonies as well as the police vehicles are regularly sanitized.

During this pandemic, the Assam Police found itself staring at a new dimension of policing, something it had not experienced before. However, they took up the challenge and using three Mantras of '**Reach, Response and Relevance**', Assam Police has been able to help the citizens in these difficult times. With its proactive and multi-pronged strategy, Assam Police continues to strive to serve the people as an integral part of Team Assam.

Assam Police: Implementing its Strategy

With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and announcement of a nation-wide lockdown by the central government, the Assam Police developed a strategy to deal with the situation. A slew of tactics were then deployed to implement this strategy. As the various phases of the lockdown progressed, the strategy and tactics kept changing based on the situation as well as based on the guidelines issued by the central and state governments. If we analyze these, it can be seen that there are eight main facets to it, which covers all the phases of the lockdown. These eight facets can be illustrated through the following figure:



2.1. Devising Tactics & Operations

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this Report, DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, along with his core team of officers, devised a strategy to deal with the pandemic. Once this strategy was formulated, several tactics were deployed to implement this strategy on the ground. The DGP regularly reviewed the progress and collected feedback from the officers. Based on the feedback and responses he received, further improvisations were also carried out if needed.

After formulating its strategy, Assam Police devised several tactics to implement this strategy on the ground. All these efforts were led by DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who during an interview²¹ done as a part of this Study, said, “My approach in any crisis situation is to ensure a few things right from the beginning. The first is choosing the right man for the right job. Once that is done, ensure clear and specific tasking of the man. Next and very importantly, delegation and empowerment so that the person can do his/her job effectively.”

(a) Lockdown 1.0

At the very onset, the Assam Police formed six different teams to handle the pandemic. Six senior officers were put in charge of these teams. Each of them was given clear directives and areas of

21 See Chapter 6 of this Report for the full interview

responsibility. The six teams and the nodal officers appointed were as follows (the details of the work carried out under each team are mentioned in Chapter 3 of this Report):

1. **Police Nodal Officer:** Mr. Deepak Kr. Kedia, IPS, Inspector General of Police (Law & Order) was nominated as the Nodal officer to ensure effective communication, collation and dissemination of instruction related to Covid-19.
2. **Essential Goods:** Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) and Mr. M.P. Gupta, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Guwahati, were nominated to liaise with Central and State Governments to ensure smooth movement of essential commodities across the state.
3. **Welfare and Helpline for Police Personnel:** Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, Additional Director General of Police (Security/Admin/M&L/Border), was nominated as the nodal officer for looking after all welfare measures for Assam Police Personnel during the present COVID-19 crisis. He is assisted by Mr. Diganta Barah, IPS, DIG (Admin) and Mr. Nimbalkar Vaibhav Chandrakant, IPS, AIG (Admin). Furthermore, a helpline was created in all districts to cater to the requests of families of Police Personnel who were serving in districts other than their hometowns.
4. **Relief Measures:** Different civil society groups and NGOs came forward to extend help to the underprivileged and vulnerable section of the society. Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Security), was nominated as the nodal officer to coordinate and facilitate all such efforts.
5. **Assam Police COVID-19 Helplines:** Mr. A.P. Tiwari, IPS, Managing Director, ASTC (Assam State Transport Corporation) and Mission Director, ASDM (Assam Skill Development Mission) was appointed as nodal officer to liaise amongst DIAL 100, and State Disaster Management Control Room, so that distressed persons both in Assam and people who are stranded outside Assam receive the necessary help. Mr. Gaurav Upadhyay, IPS, AIG (Logistics) and Mr. Shwetank Mishra, IPS, SP (SB) are also a part of this team.
6. **Contact Tracing:** A team was formed under the leadership of Mr. Deepak Kumar, IPS, Additional Director General of Police (STF) to carry out contact tracing of those COVID-19 affected people who have returned from *Tablighi Jamaat*. Mr. G.P Singh, IPS, was also entrusted to coordinate all contact tracing efforts. Mr. Sumeet Sharma, IPS, SP, too is a part of this team.

(b) Lockdown 2.0 onwards

As the Centre issued notification allowing movement of people stranded in various parts of the Country, the focus of the strategy shifted towards transportation of the stranded people. The State Level Empowered Committee, Assam, on 30 April 2020, designated Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, as the Nodal Officer for the entire exercise of transporting people back to Assam. Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, was designated as alternate Nodal Officer. They are now leading the efforts of bringing the stranded passengers back to the state. (Further details in Chapter 3 of this Report)



Picture: DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta interacting with police personnel in Bongaigaon

2.2. Communication Strategy

Assam Police used its dedicated SMART Social Media Centre – Nagarik Mitra – to create awareness, nullify fake news, and extend help to the elderly parents of people of Assam who are working outside the state but whose parents are staying in Assam without care and assistance of their children. Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, is in charge of this Centre. Apart from handling regular queries, this Social Media Centre also responded to people who were reaching out to the police for help through Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. From providing life saving medicines to food and ration, the social media team coordinated with the concerned Districts Police to facilitate the delivery of essential items to people in need. All the district arms of the police were also running their own relief campaigns and providing assistance to the needy.

Assam Police also set up a total of 13 helpline numbers to deal with calls and messages from people

within the state as well as from those people from Assam who were/are stranded outside the state. Of these 13, four numbers were used as senior citizens helpline to cater to their health-related assistance, such as medicine delivery or transportation to hospital during medical emergencies. Separate mental health helpline too was set up by the Assam Police, with a team of Clinical psychologists being entrusted to run six different helpline numbers and provide tele-counselling. (Further details in Chapter 3 of this Report)

2.3. Briefing & Sensitizing the Police Machinery

There was the need to bring the entire state police machinery on the same page, so that everyone understood and carried out their duties. All these personnel were made aware of the strategy adopted by the police headquarters besides making them understand the Do's & Don'ts. The DGP visited all the districts and interacted with the policemen working on the ground. This was done both to make



Picture: The usually busy G.S. Road in Guwahati lies deserted during the lockdown²²

them aware of the strategy as well as to ensure that the morale of the force remained high.

Clear and specific instructions with proper and scientific SOPs (Standard Operating Procedure) were created and circulated through the rank and file of the Assam Police. Multiple Video Conferences were held with the SPs & DCs of all the districts of Assam. The DGP, along with his senior officers, made several field visits across the state.

Phone calls, text messaging, WhatsApp messages were all used (still being used) for communication among all the police personnel of the state. Several WhatsApp groups were created for better coordination and transmission of messages. Instructions were passed along through these WhatsApp groups as well. Use of Video Conferencing increased. The SPs interacted with the in-charges of the police stations and outposts in his/her respective district through these video

conferences.

The DGP and his core team also met daily to review the situation and take measures accordingly. The DGP also directly called and complimented those police personnel who performed in an exemplary manner, which went beyond their call of duty. These gestures kept the morale of the force high while managing the pandemic.

2.4. Enforcing Lockdown

While enforcing lockdown, Assam Police followed its motto - *Jana Heete, Jana Sewarthe* – i.e. for the welfare of the people, for the service of the people. An ecosystem was created wherein the police force felt proud of its ethos and the service delivery attitude emanated from within the force.

As the lockdown was announced, police began keeping strict vigil. During the initial days, strict action was also taken against the offenders. However,

it was done not in the form of a show of force but as a service to the people of the state. The lockdown was strictly enforced mainly for the protection of the citizens, so that they stay safe and not infected by the virus. It was more of a kind of service, then a containment measure. Along with it, the police was also involved in generating awareness about the lockdown guidelines among the people. This was done through social media as well as by various police teams who went around their respective jurisdictions to make the people aware of the lockdown guidelines as well as the precautions they need to take to stay safe from the disease (More details in Chapter 3 of this Report).

2.5. Supporting Healthcare Professionals

One of the core aspects of the strategy devised by Assam Police was to ensure the safety and security of the healthcare professionals. Mr. Deepak Kr. Kedia, IPS, IGP (L&O), was appointed as the overall nodal officer to redress all issues related to the healthcare professionals. Assam Police personnel were entrusted with the responsibility of security and protection of the healthcare professionals when they were discharging their duties as well as when they were off-duty. The police personnel were deployed at the Quarantine Centres and they helped the healthcare workers in managing these centres and the isolation wards. They helped the health professional in ensuring home quarantine of vulnerable individuals. They accompanied them from village-to-village when they went for community-based surveillance to contain the possible spread of COVID-19. Along with these, the movement of healthcare professionals, medicine and other essentials during the lockdown was taken care of by Assam Police, in many cases using its own infrastructure. (More details in Chapter 3 of this Report)

2.6. Assisting the Needy

Another core component of the strategy devised by the Assam Police was to assist and support those people who were left helpless because of the lockdown. These included destitute, daily wage earners, elderly people who lived alone, people of Assam stranded outside the state and those from outside who got stuck in Assam, among others. The requests received through social media too were responded to immediately and the needy provided with food, materials and medicines as the case required. The help was not only limited to humans but also to animals and birds. Assam police helped feed stray animals like dogs, monkeys as well as cows. They rescued injured animals, arranged for their treatment and transported them to shelter homes. For this, Assam Police established two teams – one for undertaking relief measures and the other to set up and run a contact centre for the stranded people. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the first team was led by Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, and the latter by Mr. A. P. Tiwari, IPS. Both these teams were provided with detailed guidelines by the Assam Police administration and the measures taken by these two teams brought the Police more close to the citizens of the state. (Details on relief measures undertaken by the Assam Police and the response to the helpline numbers is detailed in Chapter 3 of this Report.)

2.7. Ensuring Safety of the Police Personnel

Keeping the personnel of the force safe from COVID-19 was another core aspect of the strategy of Assam Police. At the very onset, Assam Police prepared and issued an advisory to all its field officers so that they can take care of the safety of the personnel under their command. The SOP thus prepared contained guidelines as to what the field officers need to do to maintain hygiene, social distancing, taking care of the families of the



Picture: Assam Police personnel providing food to the homeless

police personnel, quarantine measures of the force personnel, etc. (See Chapter 3 for main points of this SOP. For the complete SOP, see Annexure)

Assam Police also procured protective items for their personnel. In initial stage, it included masks, gloves and sanitizers. Later on PPE kits too were procured for the personnel. Sanitizing materials like Sodium Hypochlorite and Bleaching Powder were also procured, along with Spray Machines. These materials were distributed among the police forces in all the districts and the battalions. (More details in Chapter 3 of this Report)

2.8. Transporting the Stranded

As mentioned earlier in this Report, Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, was designated as the Nodal Officer for the entire exercise of transporting people back to Assam. A Committee too was formed, headed by Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, which included Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS,); Mr. A. P. Tiwari, IPS, MD, ASTC & MD,

ASDM; Mr. A.S. Manivannan, IAS, CEO, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA); Dr. Laxmanan S, IAS, MD, National Health Mission (NHM), Assam; and Mr. Adil Khan, IAS, Commissioner, Transport Department, Assam.

A Command and Control Centre has been set up at the ASDM office in Gorchuk, Guwahati. This Centre is currently running and coordinating all transportation operations regarding the movement of stranded passengers. (More details in Chapter 3 of this Report)

The eight points mentioned above formed the crux of the strategy devised by the Assam Police. The Police also received the support from the Assam Government in this regard. This fact was reiterated by DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta during his interview – “I continue to have the unwavering support of the Hon’ble Chief Minister and his entire Government. The idea here is to ensure that I am able to provide them with Policy Level backing so they feel secure



Picture: DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, along with other senior police officials, at the Command and Control Centre at Gorchuk, Guwahati

and do not have to look over their shoulders every time. That's my job, to be their rearguard, so they can go on an all-out offensive against the crisis."

Thus, with the swift formulation and execution of a sound strategy, the Assam Police was able to fight this pandemic. The fight is still going on, but a clearly defined strategy has helped the police personnel in this battle. The next chapter of this Report details as to how the Assam Police worked in various spheres and how it ensured that the lockdown is properly enforced with minimum discomfort to the public.

Assam Police: Fighting the Pandemic

Police forces around the world are always the first responders to any situation. So, when the pandemic hit India and government declared a lockdown, it was the Police who was one of the first agencies in the forefront of this fight. Under the dynamic leadership of the DGP, the Assam Police chalked out a strategy and went ahead to execute their new role as frontline anti-COVID workers. They undertook several duties and responsibilities, many of which were new to them, while some were never done on such a large scale. As they went ahead with their duties, the citizens of the state saw a new humane face of the Assam Police, an aspect which was not easily visible till few months ago. The people of Assam are now in full praise of their police force for carrying out such exemplary work amidst this crisis situation.

The various roles, duties and responsibilities undertaken by the Assam Police as frontline anti-COVID workers are detailed below. While some of those duties have remained the same irrespective of the lockdown phase; some of these are mentioned Lockdown-wise, as the response varied during various phases of the lockdown.

3.1. Enforcing Lockdown

(a) Lockdown 1.0 & 2.0

Once the lockdown was announced, the state police machinery began its work of enforcing it. It meant ensuring that the guidelines issued by

the government are followed by the public. Police mounted strict vigil on the roads as the lockdown period started, making sure that the people who were out for non-essential purposes are sent back to their homes. Along with the healthcare professionals, they took on the duty of spreading awareness about the disease, the precautions that needed to be taken as well as the need for social distancing. Plying of vehicles was regulated and constant checking done to ensure that only those vehicles involving essential services or with valid passes were allowed to move on the road.

Police also had to take actions against people who were violating restrictions; registering cases against some of them as well as arresting a few. This included people who were out on the streets without any valid reason, not wearing masks in public places, shopkeepers who kept their shops open beyond the stipulated time, etc. Overall, in the state of Assam, during the lockdown, a total of 3255 cases were registered, 4635 people were arrested, 33642 vehicles and 34 boats were detained, while a total of Rs. 4,23,82,750 was collected as violation fines by the Assam Police during the lockdown (as on 24 June 2020)²³. There were also certain instances where it was perceived that the police had used excessive force, but it was more of an exception than a norm.

23 Assam Police Official Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/police.assam/>



Picture: Assam Police personnel on duty during the lockdown

The role of the VDPs (Village Defence Party) was also crucial in enforcing the lockdown and other related issues. The Village Defence Organizations in Assam function under an Act called the Assam Village Defence Organization Act, 1966. The VDPs are volunteers of this organization who act as a force multiplier for Assam Police and act as eyes and ears of the Police. They ably assisted the Assam Police personnel in ensuring that the lockdown guidelines are followed by the citizens. They also played a major role in guarding the inter-state border during the lockdown.

The Assam Police personnel gave their best in ensuring that the lockdown is enforced in the state, with minimum inconvenience to the public. However, with a police-population ratio of only 236 in Assam (i.e. 236 policemen per lakh of population)²⁴, it was not an easy task. They had to face numerous challenges while enforcing the lockdown.

The biggest challenge was the fact that this was all very new. It was an unprecedented situation

and there was no reference point or SOPs to deal with such a crisis. Governments as well as the law enforcement agencies around the world were trying to devise strategies to deal with the situation and same was the case here in India and Assam too. This was the first hurdle that the police had to cross to begin with.

Another major challenge was the lack of awareness among people about the need for lockdown and the Do's & Don'ts in such a situation. During the initial days, this lack of awareness was witnessed among the police personnel as well, but as soon as they received specific instructions from their top brass, with proper and scientific SOPs, they began to understand their duties and responsibilities. However, the lack of awareness among the public was clearly visible. People were going out for morning and evening walks; people were on the road driving cars and two-wheelers without valid passes; shopkeepers were keeping their shops open beyond permitted times; and, there were also instances when people were being transported concealed in vehicles meant for distribution of essential items.

During an interview²⁵, Mr. Mridul Hazarika, OC,

24 Data on Police Organization (as on 1 January 2019), Bureau of Police Research & Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202001301028101694907BPRDData2019-19forweb-2.pdf>

25 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Mridul Hazarika, OC, Mikirbheta Police Station, Morigaon, held on 28 April 2020

Mikirbheta Police Station, Morigaon, said, “There are many *char* (riverine) areas under my police station. The people living here have very low level of education and many are illiterate. They totally lack awareness about the concept of lockdown and social distancing. When the lockdown was declared, we began making announcements in these areas to make the people aware. We are still doing it. We have talked with their local leaders/*mattabars* in this regard. We are also taking the assistance of VDP (Village Defence Party) personnel of the area. We have made the people aware about the necessity to wash hands, use sanitizers and wear masks. Now, gradually the people are beginning to understand.”

This lack of awareness, however, also had another facet. There were many instances when the on-duty police personnel found that some people, though fully aware of the restrictions, acted as if they are unaware of the guidelines issued by the government. These types of cases too had to be handled by the police. The police personnel sensitized such persons about the need to stay inside their homes.

Another challenge was the lack of manpower. According to Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) data, Assam Police has a sanctioned strength of 78,898 personnel, while the actual strength is 64,998; which indicates a vacancy of 13,900 (as of 1 January 2019)²⁶. Due to lack of manpower, at times, it was difficult to effectively enforce and ensure lockdown throughout the state. This issue was stated by several SPs who gave in their responses via a structured interview questionnaire formulated as a part of this Study. Also as duty hours and shifts increased during the

lockdown, the police personnel had to face shortage of vehicles to commute. There was also shortage of items/gadgets like Public Address (PA) system, Torch Lights, Reflector Jackets, provision for resting kiosks, etc. Also, due to the lack of proper infrastructure, reaching all the nooks and corners of the state in a timely and adequate manner was a challenge for the Assam Police. These issues, however, had been sorted out gradually.

Another challenge which was faced by the police personnel on the ground was that as they did not have proper protective equipment during the initial days of the lockdown, they had to face the risk of exposure to the coronavirus while transporting a vulnerable individual in the police vehicle. Later on, however, the police personnel were provided with proper PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) kits.

The police also had to face certain hardships while carrying out their duties. There were sometimes lack of food and water while the police personnel patrolled the streets, as the eateries were closed. Also, with longer duty hours, sometimes they had to stay away from their home and families, which was a type of emotional challenge for many. The police also faced an ethical dilemma while prosecuting people who were just trying to make a living and had broken the rules out of compulsion.

There were also certain area-specific challenges faced by the police. For example, the Paltan Bazaar police station had to arrange for accommodation of travellers who had arrived at the Guwahati Railway Station after the lockdown was announced. The police also had to arrange shelter homes for the destitute, who live on the streets.

Another challenge faced by the Assam Police was that as the state is still an insurgency-affected region, it was not possible to withdraw forces from Counter

26 Data on Police Organization (as on 1 January 2019), Bureau of Police Research & Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/202001301028101694907BPRDDData2019-19forweb-2.pdf>



Photo: Security Personnel guard a Containment Zone in Fancy Bazaar, Guwahati²⁷



Picture: Home Quarantine Stamp being put on a person's hand in Guwahati²⁸

Insurgency (CI) operations. The force had to continue with its duties to contain the pandemic as well as deploy personnel for CI operations as well.

As the restrictions eased considerably since the second phase of the lockdown, the focus of the police increased on ensuring home quarantine and managing the containment zones.

3.2. Ensuring Home Quarantine

As the number of people being kept under Home Quarantine is increasing in the state, Assam Police is making all efforts to ensure that the people adhere to the guidelines and stay at home. For this they have initiated a 'Home Quarantine Monitoring Project' in Guwahati. Under this project, they have tied up with Pratishruti Cancer & Palliative Trust, a NGO. This NGO have trained more than 100 volunteers within the community, who have a basic understanding of the pandemic situation and are well-equipped with soft skills. The NGO has also signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement for safe handling of the personal data of the individuals in home quarantine.

The volunteers trained under this project are given a list of around 8 to 10 persons in Home Quarantine, along with their names and phone numbers. The volunteers then make calls to these individuals through video/audio calls twice a day and ensure following things.

- Compliance to the Quarantine rules by the persons
- Imparting of education and awareness on sanitation and hygiene
- Psychological counselling
- Noting of their other medical, social, economic problems
- Administering a research questionnaire/feedback form

27 Photo Source: PTI

28 Photo Source: AFP

The data collected by these volunteers during this process are then collated and processed by a group of data entry operators. These operators too have been trained and managed by the same NGO.

Apart from these measures, a Geo-fencing app, developed by Innefu Labs, an Indian private IT service management company, has been installed in the smartphones of the people kept under Home Quarantine. This app creates a geo-fence to ensure that the person do not break quarantine and wander outside. The app uses the phone location of a person to set a virtual perimeter and in case the person moves beyond the defined area, it alerts the authorities. The app also has the provision for daily report generation to check compliance to Home Quarantine guidelines. In case, a person does not have a smart phone, the neighbours are being motivated to give the feedback to the volunteer assigned for that particular person.

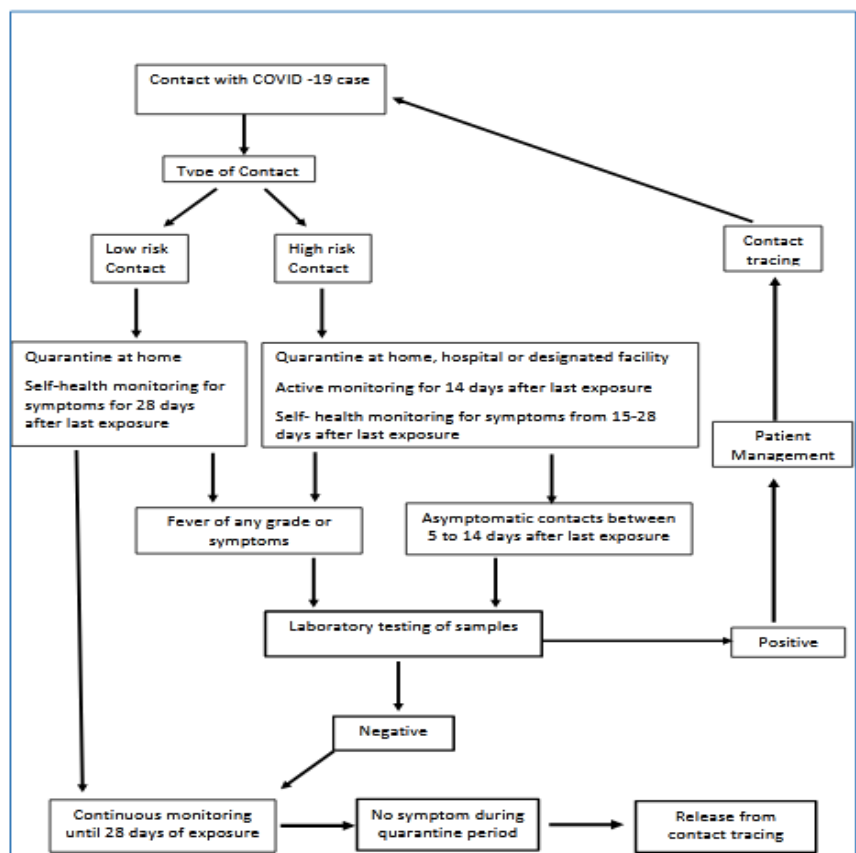
In order to monitor the various activities involved in this project, the OCs of police stations in Guwahati have been assigned the role of ‘Incident Commanders’ in their respective areas of jurisdiction. It is their duty to ensure that people adhere to the Home Quarantine guidelines. The VDPs in the rural areas are also playing a major role in ensuring that the people in Home Quarantine stay indoors and do not flout the norms.

3.3. Contact Tracing

People in close contact with someone who is infected with Coronavirus are also at risk of becoming infected themselves, and of further infecting others.

As such, it is important to trace the contacts of a COVID-19 positive patient. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “When systematically applied, contact tracing will break the chains of transmission of an infectious disease and is thus an essential public health tool for controlling infectious disease outbreaks.”²⁹

In order to effectively carry out the process of contact tracing, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare devised detailed SOPs³⁰, which are being followed by all the states. The algorithm developed for this purpose is shown below:



29 “Contact tracing in the context of COVID-19”, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/contact-tracing-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

30 For detailed SOP see, “SOP -Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Cases”, National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Assam, https://nhm.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/nhm_lipl_in_oid_6/portlet/level_2/sop_for_contact_tracing.pdf

As soon as the first COVID-19 positive case was identified in Assam on 31 March 2020, the process of contact tracing began in the state. Assam Police set up a team under Mr. Deepak Kumar, IPS, ADGP (STF) for contact tracing. The coordination effort on ground was put under the charge of Mr. G. P. Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O). The Assam Police then leveraged on some of their existing technologies that they usually use in a very different context. They reoriented the focus of the team to use the same technologies for contact tracing.

In order to expedite the process of contact tracing, a meeting was held between the top brass of the Assam Police and representatives of the telecom operators in the state. In the meeting, it was decided that the telecom operators would provide Call Data Records (CDR) of those individuals which is asked by the Assam Police³¹. Following this, a WhatsApp group was created wherein the participants included representatives of Assam Police and an assigned nodal officer from each telecom company. Through this group, Assam Police coordinated with the telecom companies in order to gather call records of the COVID-19 positive patients³².

In order to trace the contacts of the patient, his/her travel history is carefully recorded and they are asked to name the people they had met. Then their CDR is used to prepare a list of persons they had contacted and then each and every person in this list is called. As the number of cases has increased in the state, text messages are also being sent to the people in the call list. Once it is confirmed that a person has come into physical contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, the respective district authorities are informed. The algorithm (mentioned earlier in this

31 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Deepak Kumar, IPS, ADGP (STF), held on 9 May 2020

32 Ibid.

Chapter) is then used by the healthcare professionals to deal with the contacts.

In Assam, the contact tracing process gained momentum after Delhi's Nizamuddin Markaz was identified as a COVID-19 hotspot and it was found that many of the attendees were from Assam. After detailed investigations, police found that 825 Tablighi followers from Assam were in attendance at Nizamuddin. The Special Branch of Assam Police carried out the contact tracing of all these Tablighi followers and the identities and locations of these followers were verified and action taken accordingly. Out of these 825 followers, 250 returned to Assam; of these, 143 were home quarantined and the rest 107 were quarantined at institutional centres of the state.³³ Among these, 16 were found COVID-19 positive. They are now cured of the ailment and have been discharged from hospitals.³⁴ The remaining 575 were stranded in 11 different states of India and the matter was taken up with the Police chiefs of those states.³⁵

The Special Branch also collected details of 771 Tablighi followers, who had visited places other than Nizamuddin and who were stranded in 14 different states of the country.³⁶ The matter was then taken up with the Police Chiefs of those states for their safety and return. Furthermore, details regarding 10 Tablighi followers from Assam who had visited

33 Data provided by Special Branch, Assam Police

34 "Police training programme needs thorough revaluation: Interview with Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, DGP, Assam", *The Week*, 17 May 2020, https://www.theweek.in/theweek/specials/2020/05/08/police-training-programme-needs-thorough-revaluation.amp.html?fbclid=IwAR2iGg-6LF-nntBeD6_P6JpISH6vrswk5ljk8IL6dh2v0qAgqD-22luMbgOQ0#aoh=15890358481145&csi=1&referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com&_tf=From%20%251%24s

35 Data provided by Special Branch, Assam Police

36 Ibid.



Picture: Mr. Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, IPS, DGP, and Mr. Hiren Nath, IPS, IGP (SB) during a visit to a Quarantine Centre in Hojai

countries like Tanzania and Saudi Arabia were also collected. These persons have now safely returned to Assam. Also, 249 Tablighi followers from 13 different states of the country were found to be present in Assam³⁷. Necessary assistance regarding their safety, subsistence and consequent return to their native states is also being carried out by Assam Police.

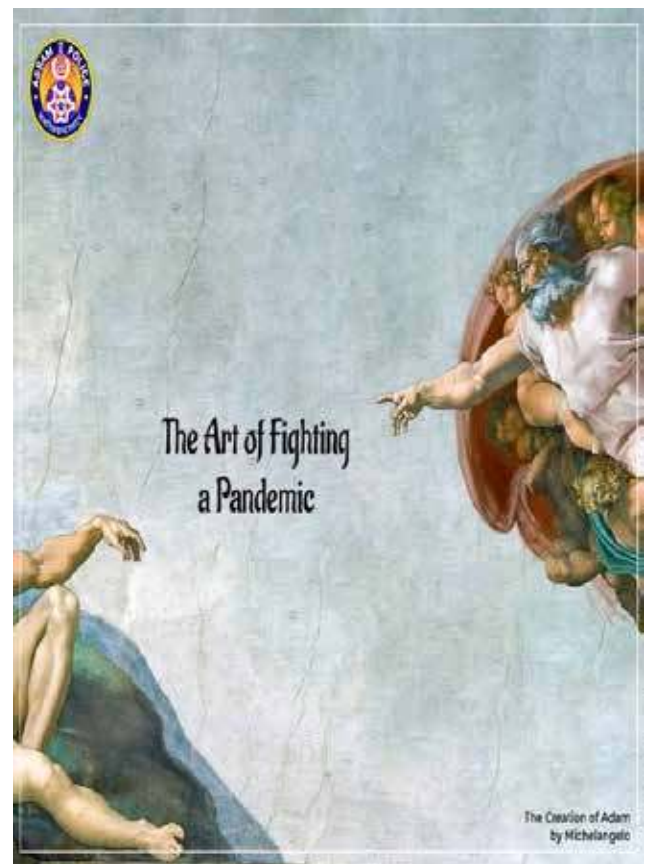
The police personnel of the districts, from where these Tablighi followers belonged, too played an important role in tracing and quarantining efforts. They summoned all the Masjid Committee Members and community leaders for a meeting, made them understand the issue, co-opted them into a team and made them responsible, along with a Gazetted Police Officer and a Magistrate, to find out all such persons and their contacts. Police put notices outside their

homes informing that the people inside were being home quarantined. They also informed the village headmen about it and asked them to keep vigil. They regularly visited the villages as well as called the headmen to ensure that home quarantine was not violated.

During contact tracing it was also seen that some people had already left the state. These people were then advised home quarantine in the respective places where they were in. Mr. Deepak Kumar, ADGP (STF), who is in charge of the team involved in contact tracing, said during the interview³⁸ done during this study that, “Guwahati’s first COVID-19 positive patient, Manish Tibrewal, had come in contact with a Spanish national. When we called him, we found that he was in New Delhi at that

37 Ibid.

38 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Deepak Kumar, ADGP (STF), held on 9 May 2020



Picture: Assam Police Social Media Team used famous paintings like 'Mona Lisa' and 'The Creation of Adam' to sensitize people about the use of masks & gloves as well as social distancing

time. The Spanish national informed that he knew that Manish had tested positive for the disease and that he had quarantined himself in a hotel in Delhi.”

There were also few challenges faced by the police during the process of contact tracing. Around five to six COVID-19 positive individuals did not have a mobile phone. As such, it took time to find the people who were in contact with these individuals. There was also the risk of infection of the police personnel on the ground, who were involved in the contact tracing process as well as in bringing such people to the medical and quarantine centres. Initially police personnel did not have the PPE kit; they used masks, gloves and hand sanitizers. It was only after a few days that PPE kits were procured and distributed among the police personnel, under the active initiative of DGP Assam.

3.4. Social Media

Assam Police have managed to form a bond with the citizens through its various social media platforms. Through these platforms, they have helped curb the spread of fake news, spread awareness about numerous issues, formed a mode of direct interaction with the public through which it can gather as well as disseminate information. The activities of Assam Police in the cyber world have received praise from within as well as outside the state and from celebrities from various fields like film and sports. Assam Police had also launched its SMART Social Media Centre called 'Nagarik Mitra' in June 2018 to open a communication channel with the citizens and augment its citizen-centric services. Led by ADGP Harmeet Singh, the social media efforts of Assam Police have also landed them with various awards,

such as the Social Media for Empowerment Award for Community Mobilization in 2019. At present, Assam police has over 1.4 lakh Facebook followers, around 59,000 Twitter followers and over 20,000 Instagram followers.

During this pandemic, Assam Police effectively used its social media handles to help spread awareness about COVID-19 as well as nullify fake news. As explained by Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, ADGP (Admin), “As the pandemic began to spread, newspaper hawkers refused to deliver papers and many people also stopped subscribing to newspapers due to fear of infection. So, one credible source of information for the public went for a toss. At this point, we stepped in to become a proper source of information as the people needed to understand what was happening and how the government was responding to this threat. As we had a large social media following, we used it (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube) to provide the public with credible information on the situation. Gradually, the electronic media (both television and digital media) started relying on these as the credible source of information and began disseminating it to the public.”³⁹

Assam Police also established a protocol wherein every piece of information that they wanted to share with the public was disseminated to each of their personnel as well as the VDP members, who in turn spread the information to their own contacts and groups in WhatsApp. Considering the fact that Assam Police have over 60,000 personnel and around 2 lakh VDP members, the reach of these messages was immense. Also, from the time

this pandemic started to spread till now (22 June), the post reach of Assam Police in Facebook has been over 31 million. And, there have been around 8.4 million views on the videos posted by Assam Police (till 31 May).

Through its posts, which are witty as well as composed of humorous twists to popular film adages, Assam Police have been sensitizing people of the state about the pandemic as well as the lockdown guidelines. The posts that are being put up on its social media platforms are also sent to the police personnel on the ground, so that they too can forward it to other people and groups.

The Assam Police also used its social media handles to request people to stay indoors and not violate the restrictions imposed by the government; its witty posts reminding the citizens what will happen if they break the rules. This has ensured that people adhere to the guidelines and stay indoors, unless absolutely necessary.



Picture: Through a hilarious twist on the trending ‘Bulati hai, magar jane ha nahi’ meme, Assam Police asked its citizens not to venture outside their homes

39 Interview with Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, ADGP (Admin), held on 26 May 2020



Picture: Tweets from Citizens thanking Assam Police for their help and service during the lockdown

Assam Police are also getting numerous requests for help on its social media handles. The district police also have their own social media handles in Assam and they too are getting such requests. In order to deal with such requests a protocol was devised in which the SMART Social Media Centre - Nagarik Mitra – and the district police social media coordinated their efforts to deal with the incoming queries. Once verified, all such queries and requests are being handled by the police. Assam Police personnel are also delivering food, essential items, medicines, etc, once request are being made

by someone by tagging Assam Police. Thus, through its Nagarik Mitra Centre, Assam Police have been able to further strengthen its citizen-centric service delivery mechanism.

Assam Police through its social media handle is now reaching out to over 31 million people on Facebook and around 2.5 million on Twitter.

Assam Police is also strictly monitoring various posts being made on the social media. Cyber Analysis Cell of the Special Branch is working towards detecting and taking corrective action regarding any



Picture: The need for social distancing explained through the use of a famous song from the film 'Titanic'

objectionable posts. Action is being taken against those persons who have been writing provocative, communally-sensitive posts as well as spreading rumours and fake news. As of 31 May 2020, Assam Police have registered 96 cases on this matter and 50 persons have been arrested. They are also counselling the people posting such materials as well as pulling down such posts from the internet.

3.5. Setting up Helpline Numbers

As the lockdown progressed, Assam Police decided to set up helpline numbers for the public. This was in addition to the social media outreach it was already engaged in. On 21 March, Assam Police launched a WhatsApp number and an email address as a helpline for senior citizens who are residing alone in the state. The email address was 'osm-cyberdome@assampolice.gov.in' and the WhatsApp number was 9132699735. Then another WhatsApp Helpline Number was provided on 30 March. On that day, the Helpline Number 9435215029 received around 16,000 messages. More than 95 per cent of these messages were from people who were stranded in different

states outside Assam requesting Assam Police to facilitate their return to Assam. Few messages were found to be frivolous in nature. In order to have a more focused and dedicated response mechanism to all its Citizens, state-wide helpline numbers were established on 31 March 2020.

When the inter-district and inter-state movement started, Assam Police realized that they would need more helplines. So the number of helplines was increased. District-wise helpline numbers too were established. State-wise helpline numbers were established for the people stranded in different states. In fact, Assam Police adopted a dynamic strategy such that as the situation kept evolving, they kept updating their response.

Assam Police set up a total of 13 helpline numbers to deal with calls and messages from people within the state as well as from those people from Assam who were/are stranded outside the state. These helpline numbers were manned 24 x 7. Of these 13, four numbers were used as senior citizens helpline to cater

to their health-related assistance, such as medicine delivery or transportation to hospital during medical emergencies.

Till 30 June 2020, Assam Police received more than 21,000 calls and 27,000 messages for help from stranded people as well as more than 5,000 calls and 29,000 messages for relief. Also, during this period, Assam Police provided necessary help to more than 2500 senior citizens.

The requests received in the helpline numbers varied from the genuine need for food or medical supplies to queries around the Do's & Don'ts, to requests for travel. Being a scientifically designed system, Assam Police was able to carry out a trend analysis and word cloud analysis from the calls received in these helpline numbers. This established the need for geo-segregation as well as segregation based on the nature of the queries. In order to streamline the requests, the various states were divided into clusters and each of the 13 different helpline numbers were assigned a separate cluster, which was then communicated to the public through social and electronic media.

The requests received at the helpline numbers were reported to assigned officers who would then liaise with their batchmates, friends, renowned NGOs in different states and Assam Bhawans (wherever available) as well as the respective state governments to provide the required assistance. In case of inter-state travel, they were taken up on a case-to-case basis and were addressed on the basis of the merit of the requests.

Apart from the above mentioned helpline numbers, separate mental health helpline too was set up by the Assam Police. It was done after it was seen that a lot of callers were reaching out to the helpline numbers in sheer panic and dismay. So in order to cater to such callers, a team of Clinical psychologists



The poster is yellow with black text. At the top right is the Assam Police logo. The main text reads: 'FEELING ANXIOUS, SAD OR DISTURBED DUE TO #COVID19 PANDEMIC? Speak to a Mental Health Professional.' Below this is a table of helpline numbers for two time slots: 9 AM - 3 PM and 3 PM - 9 PM. At the bottom, it says '#MentalHealthMatters' and lists social media handles for WhatsApp (9132699735), Twitter (@assampolice), Facebook (/police.assam), and Instagram (@assampolice).

9 AM - 3 PM	3 PM - 9 PM
6026901053	6026901056
6026901054	6026901057
6026901055	6026901058

Picture: Assam Police displayed the Mental Health Helpline Numbers through its Social Media Accounts

were entrusted to run six different helpline numbers and provide tele-counselling. This was done under the guidance and supervision of DGP Assam, with assistance from Mr. Diganta Barah, DIG (Admin). Till 15 May 2020, more than 500 people received professional help from the helpline numbers.

The mental health problems that were reported on these helpline numbers included morbid preoccupations about negative implications of lockdown, anxiety related to transmission of the virus, apprehensions about the future, low mood, depressive features, panic and exacerbations of past psychiatric illness, fear of rejection in jobs, somatic symptoms of headache, body-ache, insomnia, behaviour problems which are difficult to stop like anger, aggression towards family, conflicts in relationships and suicidal ideation and even contemplating suicide with various lethal means⁴⁰.

40 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Dr. Mythili Hazarika, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology, GMCH, Received on 28 April 2020

In order to handle these mental health problems, the counsellors used behaviour therapy and cognitive restructuring strategies. Activities were allotted to them and guidance and suggestions of doing exercise, mindfulness training, and writing thoughts in a diary was given. Self-help techniques in handling anxiety were taught. Some of the callers also required medicines and they were given the numbers of the concerned psychiatrists for tele-medicine. If there was any emergency issue, the counsellors advised the family for hospitalization. If someone displayed suicidal tendencies, they were given therapy and it was informed to the Assam Police

This mental health helpline played the role of crisis counsellors and supportive therapists in facilitating the transition of the vulnerable people towards normalization and helped regain their lost stability in work and personal relationships.

3.6. Relief Measures

Around the world it has been seen that a lockdown is the only effective method to control the spread of the coronavirus. Until a vaccine or a cure is developed, lockdown measures seem to be the only answer to contain the virus. The Indian government too had announced a lockdown from March 2020. But, this lockdown also brought forward a new challenge – feeding the hungry and taking care of the poor. This challenge was not something which could be easily overcome but the government and the civil society came forward in this need of the hour.

The Assam Police was also not too far behind. It appointed Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security) as the nodal officer to coordinate and facilitate the various relief measures. In this aspect, Assam Police received tremendous help from various civil society groups and NGOs, who came forward to extend help to the underprivileged and vulnerable section of the society.



Picture: Assam Police personnel distributing rations among the needy



Picture: Assam Police personnel feeding the destitute maintaining social distancing norms

Assam Police arranged for as well as helped in the distribution of food (both cooked and dry ration) and medicines. During the lockdown (till 5 May 2020), Assam Police, with the assistance of various NGOs, civil society organizations as well as private individuals, supported over 2 lakh families and over 6 lakh people. Over 15 lakh kg of food materials were distributed during this time, which include rice, pulses, edible oil, vegetables and fruits. Apart from this, Assam Police provided medicines to over 8,000 individuals⁴¹. Also around 15,000 animals too were fed during this period. In Guwahati city alone, around 2000 plates of cooked food was served daily to the destitute⁴². These efforts were carried out by various NGOs, Societies and *Gurudwaras* and Assam Police supported these initiatives. The Special Branch (SB) and Smart Protection Unit (SPU) personnel were divided into several teams and they carried out

these drives all around the Guwahati city.

Police in several districts of Assam ran community kitchens so as to provide cooked meal to the needy and poor people (See Chapter 7 for Case Studies on some such initiatives). Police also assisted Senior Citizens, females, physically challenged and other needy persons to buy essentials items and assisted them by dropping them at their homes. They also distributed Masks and Sanitizers to the public as a token of awareness and personal self care

Assam Police also arranged for transportation of various citizens who had to travel because of some emergency, especially medical emergency. They arranged accommodation for the stranded travellers. Senior citizens, most of whose children were staying outside, were provided with medicines. They arranged for fruits for those patients who needed it for maintain their diet as per doctor's advice. Also, when medicines were not available in one district, Assam Police arranged those in Guwahati or other

41 Data collected from Assam Police Headquarters

42 Interview with Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security), held on 25 April 2020

districts, and sent it to the required places.

Assam Police also engaged the VDPs and outposts to have a better understanding of the needs and requirements of the people. They also established a sort of network with various NGOs in all the districts of Assam to help provide assistance to the needy. Assam Police used its own manpower and infrastructure in supporting these initiatives.

Assam Police also received calls from people who were from another state but were working in Assam. Most of these people worked in private companies and after the lockdown was announced, they found it difficult to procure food and rations. After verifying their credentials, Assam Police helped such people by providing them with dry rations and other essential items.

Assam Police also introduced the concept of Individual Social Responsibility, wherein every member of the force was asked to provide help and assistance to the marginalized section of the society.

The help was not only limited to humans but also to animals and birds. Assam police helped feed stray animals like dogs, monkeys as well as cows. They rescued injured animals, arranged for their treatment and transported them to shelter homes. In May 2020, the Assam Police headquarters also issued an order to all the SPs to take action against those people who are abandoning their pet animals over fear of infection to COVID-19. Actions were



Picture: Assam Police personnel feeding stray dogs



Picture: Assam Police personnel providing rations to the needy

also asked to be taken against pet shop owners who let animals suffer in their shops, which were shut because of the lockdown.

One more thing that needs to be mentioned here is that all these efforts by Assam Police has not only been done at the institutional level. Various police personnel helped the people in need in their personal capacity. They donated money from their own accounts, mobilized funds and provided essential items to the people in need. During the interviews conducted as part of this Study, the police personnel mentioned efforts made by them as well as their colleagues.

Mr. Durga Sarma, CI, Batadrawa, Nagaon, said “I provided money directly to the bank accounts of a few poor people. I sent Rs. 1,000 each to five persons, Rs. 2,000 to one and Rs. 3,000 to another. I did this after consulting the Headman of the village, as he knows the people who are in need of support. After collecting the details from him, I transferred the money from my account to the accounts of those needy persons.”⁴³

Mr. Mridul Hazarika, OC, Mikirbheta Police Station, Morigaon, said “We have collected money amongst ourselves in the police station and purchased food and supplies and distributed it among the needy. We are also in touch with several NGOs and we inform them if there is any need. We are in constant touch with the village headmen in case they need any help in the villages.”⁴⁴

These are just some examples. The newspapers and news channels in the state have been writing and showing many such exemplary acts of kindness of the Assam Police personnel. The relief measures undertaken by the police personnel in all the districts are also shared with the Assam Police Headquarters. The district police also upload these details, along with photos, in their official social media handles.

Assam Police has carried out numerous efforts in caring for the humans as well as animals during this pandemic. However, it is not possible to mention all of these in one Report. Some such exceptional efforts of the Assam Police are mentioned as Case Studies in Chapter 7 of this Report.

43 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Durga Sarma, CI, Batadrawa, Nagaon, held on 29 April 2020

44 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Mridul Hazarika, OC, Mikirbheta Police Station, Morigaon, held on 28 April 2020

3.7. Management of Inter-State Travel & Helping Stranded People

(a) Lockdown 1.0

When the nation-wide lockdown was announced, numerous people of Assam who were outside the state at that time, got stuck wherever they were. These included students, patients and their attendants, migrant labourers, people who have gone for their job-related works, etc. Similarly, people of other states too got stuck in Assam, as all modes of transportation were stopped.

It was clear from the very beginning that it would be a big challenge to bring all these people back to Assam and also help people from other states leave Assam. As mentioned earlier in this Report, Assam Police set up helpline numbers to sort this issue and they began getting numerous calls in these helpline numbers from people stranded outside the state.

Assam Police received more than 30,000 requests from people stranded outside the state and most of these requests were for inter-state travel in case of bereavement and urgent medical emergency or financial assistance⁴⁵. Initially, these were taken up on a case-to-case basis and were addressed on the basis of the merit of the requests.

(b) Lockdown 2.0

Gradually as the lockdown restrictions eased, Assam Police began to chalk out strategies to get the people back from other states. On 24 April 2020, as per the instructions of the State Government, an Assam Police team was sent to Kota in Rajasthan by a special flight to bring back hundreds of students who were stranded due to the lockdown⁴⁶. With active support

45 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Mr. A.P. Tiwari, IPS, MD, ASTC & Mission Director, ASDM, Received on 15 May 2020

46 “COVID-19 lockdown: Assam Police bringing back stranded students to State”, The Sentinel, 25 April 2020,

If you are stranded outside Assam & wish to return, please give a missed call on: 7428159966

You will receive a [link](#) in 48 hrs to fill the required form.

Those willing to return using their own transport, please send details on: assamtransportrelief@gmail.com

For further clarifications, you can contact us on our State-wise WhatsApp Helpline Numbers.

NUMBERS	STATES
6026900637	- Karnataka
6026900638	- Gujarat & Goa
6026900639	- Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan
6026900966	- Kerala
6026900967	- Tamil Nadu
6026900968	- Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
6026900969	- Maharashtra
6026900970	- Delhi & NCR
6026900971	- Haryana, Punjab, Himachal, J&K, Ladakh
6026900972	- Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh
6026900973	- West Bengal Odisha & Sikkim
6026900976	- All other States

WhatsApp helpline numbers will be functional from 8 am till 10 pm

Picture: Helpline Numbers and Email id shared by Assam Police for the people stranded outside Assam

of the Government, the police team brought back a total of 391 students from Assam in 18 special buses (See Case Study in Chapter 7 for more details).

Assam Police provided a phone number (7428159966) for the people stranded outside Assam and asked those people to give a missed call to this number if they wished to return. They were informed that once they give a missed call, they would receive a link within 48 hours and they would be required to fill up a form by opening that link. Assam Police also provided an email id (assamtransportrelief@gmail.com) for those people who wanted to return using their own means of transport. State-wise helpline numbers too were announced by the Assam Police for any clarification on the matter. These phone numbers and email id were shared with the public through the various social media handles of Assam Police.

<https://www.sentinelassam.com/guwahati-city/covid-19-lockdown-assam-police-bringing-back-stranded-students-to-state/>

The State Level Empowered Committee, Assam, on 30 April 2020, designated Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, as the Nodal Officer for the entire exercise of transporting people back to Assam. Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, was designated as alternate Nodal Officer. A Committee too was formed, headed by Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS. The other members included Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS,); Mr. A. P. Tiwari, IPS, MD, ASTC & MD, ASDM; Mr. A.S. Manivannan, IAS, CEO, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA); Dr. Laxmanan S, IAS, MD, National Health Mission (NHM), Assam; and Mr. Adil Khan, IAS, Commissioner, Transport Department, Assam. The Assam Police is now assisting the state government in facilitating and arranging the transport of stranded passengers from various parts of the country back to Assam. They are also coordinating with other state governments, so that these states can take their people back from Assam.

A Command and Control Centre was set up at the ASDM office in Gorchuk, Guwahati, to arrange and coordinate all transport operations regarding the movement of stranded passengers. It first started by managing the inter-district movement of people from



Picture: A view inside the Command and Control Centre at Garchuk, Guwahati, which has been managing the inter-state movement of people

the last week of April 2020. From May, it is looking after the entire inter-state movement of the stranded people. This Centre is, in fact, involved in data analysis, data mapping, planning and information dissemination to the concerned citizens. It is involved in coordinating the efforts across departments and agencies like the Railways, Police, Health, Transport, etc. Assam Police officers, led by Mr. Gaurav Upadhyay, IPS, AIG (Logistics) and Mr. Shwetank Mishra, IPS, SP (SB), are playing a crucial role in coordinating and managing these activities.

(c) Lockdown 3.0 onwards:

Travel by Road:

Detailed SOPs were prepared for the inter-state movement of people. In case of Inbound and Outbound movement of stranded people, SOP was issued by Assam Police Headquarters on 8 May 2020. This SOP was for Inbound and Outbound traffic

from Chagalia in Dhubri district and Srirampur in Kokrajhar district. The main points of the SOP are as follows (for detailed SOP, see Annexure):

For Inbound Vehicles:

(a) Inter-State Border Check points:

- **Goods Vehicles:** The movement of goods vehicles shall be allowed unhindered. The health screening of the driving crew shall be done at the Inter-State border check point for Inbound goods vehicles.
- **Ambulances:** All ambulances shall be referred to the Regional Health Screening Camp concerned. The patients would be further subjected to course of action as suggested by the health department.
- **Hearse Vans:** They shall be allowed to proceed to destination. However, information of the movement shall be communicated to the concerned District Deputy Commissioner,



Picture: Screening and Transportation of People via Road

Superintendent of Police and JDHS. On completion of cremation, the attendants shall be screened at the district screening facility and further action taken as decided by the health department.

- **Passenger vehicles** - The passenger vehicles of all kinds shall report at the Inter-state border. The passenger data shall be captured. The passenger details will be shared with the destination regional health screening camp.
- Persons arriving on foot shall be registered and transported to the Regional Health Screening Camps in the vehicles provided by the Transport department.

(b) Escorting of Inbound vehicles to Regional Health screening Camps:

- All the passenger vehicles would be set-in convoys of 10-15 vehicles. The convoy to be provided district border-to-border escort from the Inter-State border to the destination health screening camps.
- The registration documents of all the vehicles shall be collected and handed over to the escort commander and handed over to the next district commander at the district border.
- The vehicles shall be handed over the registration document at the destination health camp after disembarkation of the passengers.
- At every district border suitable point shall be earmarked for handing/taking over of the vehicles and documents. Each such place shall have a police camp of suitable strength to prevent any likely law and order situation.

(c) Police arrangements at Regional Health Screening Camps:

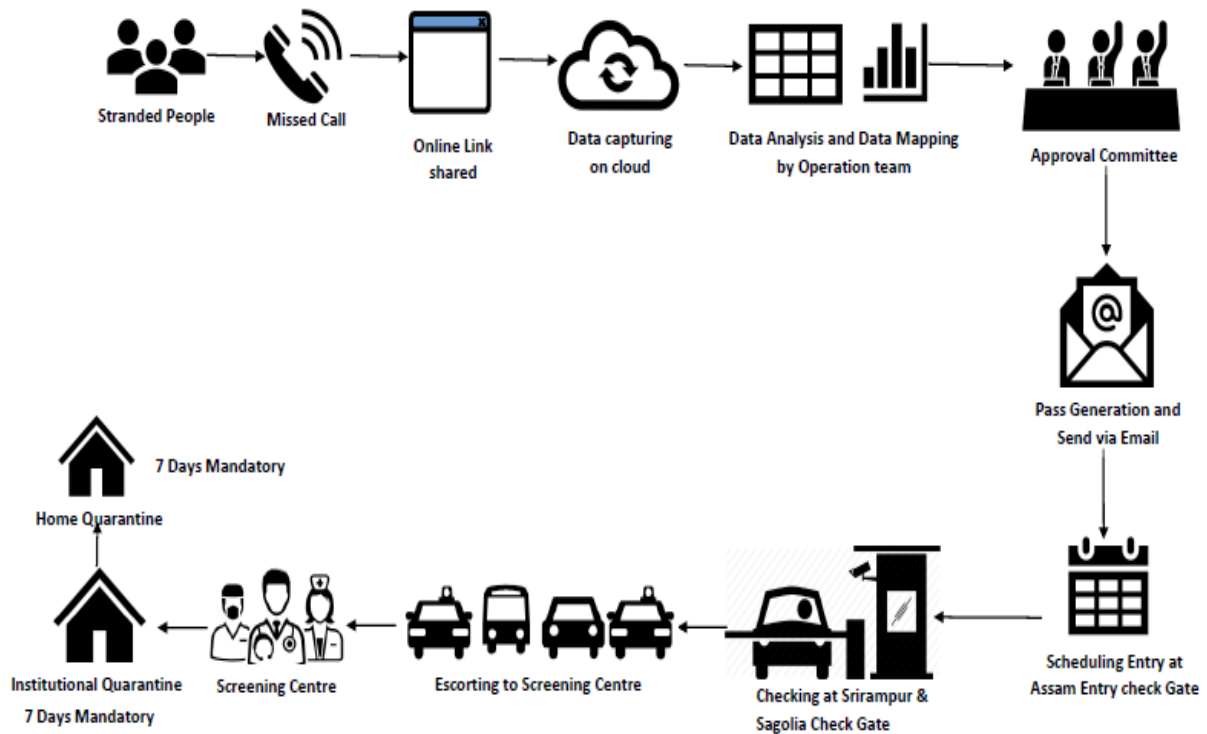
- The district SP shall prepare a detailed deployment plan in consultation with designated

SP Rank In-Charge officer and the same shall function under direct supervision of the CP/IG BTAD/Range DIG.

- The security team shall ensure that passengers from all vehicles reaching the Camp disembark and report to the health team.
- Those who are to be sent for Institutional Quarantine shall be suitably sent under proper escort to the quarantine facility.
- Those who are recommended home quarantine shall be allowed to leave only after verification with the health team.
- At such screening camps, health, hygiene, social distancing and use of face mask, sanitizers shall be ensured by the Police, health, municipality and administration teams jointly.

For Outbound Vehicles:

- The Outbound vehicles shall ordinarily not require escort. They may be guided on way out and coordination made with the West Bengal Police.
- The details of passengers boarding the Outbound vehicles shall be coordinated by the Transport department/ Local Police/ DC office.
- Such details shall be communicated to the destination and the en-route State Nodal Officers.
- The sanitization of the vehicles and the health check of the passengers shall be carried out by the local municipal authorities and the health department.
- The Originating district Police and transport officials shall ensure that number of passengers in each vehicle is in consonance with the Government of India norms. The health and hygiene principles shall also be ensured.
- No passenger shall be allowed to board any



Picture: DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta inspecting the Screening Centre at Assam-West Bengal inter-state border at Srirampur

outbound vehicle if Out travel pass has not been issued to such person by the competent authority. Wherever applicable, the consent of the destination state would also be mandatory before sending such outbound passengers.

The entire exercise of transportation of people by road can be summed up through the flowchart above.

First, the stranded people have to give a missed call and they would then be provided with an online link. Once they fill up the form given in this link, the data is captured on cloud, after which the operations team does the data analysis and data mapping. The list of passengers is then sent to the Committee led by Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS. This Committee then

finalizes the list of passengers, after which travel pass is generated and sent to the people via email. Once these passengers reach the inter-state check gate in Assam, their data is collected and they are escorted to the screening centre. After that they are sent for 7 days mandatory institutional quarantine, followed by 7 days mandatory home quarantine.

Tighter screening measures are being implemented at these inter-state borders in Assam. Senior government and police officials have been posted at the check posts so that they could manage the vehicular traffic, look after the health concerns, as well as ensure registration of all the vehicles passing through the gates. The names, destinations, phone numbers, and other relevant details of the people coming in via these gates are being thoroughly maintained.

Travel by Train:

Similarly like for road transport, SOPs were also prepared for travel via trains. Assam Police issued a SOP dated 12 May 2020 for passenger movement via

trains. The main points of this SOP are (for detailed SOP, see Annexure):

- All inward and outward train movements would be undertaken with the prior permission of the State Nodal Officer or those designated by him. The Nodal Officer would keep all the stakeholders informed of the Inbound and Outbound train movement.
- For this purpose, there would be two sets of trains – The Shramik Special Trains and the Special trains.
- The Shramik Special Trains are being run on point to point basis. The Nodal Officers of the originating State and the recipient state would liaise for fixing the originating station and destination station. In accordance with the current guidelines, these trains can have multiple points of origin and destination. These would be mutually decided by the originating state, recipient state and the Indian Railways.
- The Special Trains would be run on the basis of open bookings done through IRCTC portal on



Picture: Various facets of travel by train

payment basis. The Railways would provide the passenger manifest to State Nodal officer who would in turn share with the Health Department on the earliest opportunity.

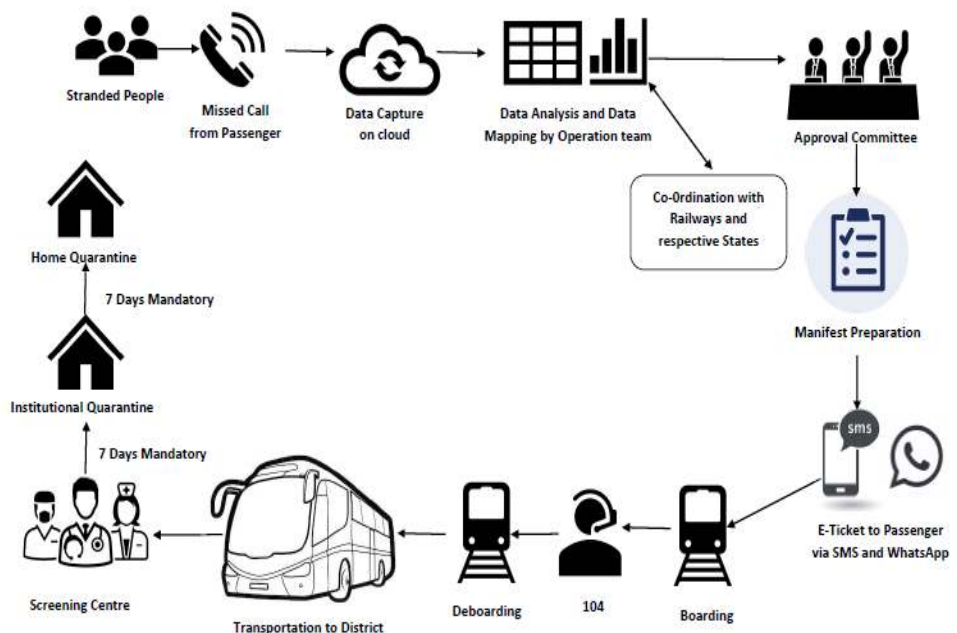
- The Deputy Commissioners shall arrange appropriate number of buses to transport the passengers from railway station to the health screening camp. Further action shall be taken by the appropriate authorities of the health camps. The arrangements for further transport to quarantine facilities, etc, shall also be made by the Deputy Commissioners.
- For all movements of train, only passengers with the names in travelling manifest or those with confirmed tickets for the particular train would be allowed entry at railway station.

Another SOP on the rail travel was issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Assam, on 14 May 2020. The main points of these SOP are (for detailed SOP, see Annexure):

- Assam Police authorities will provide passenger manifest after categorization of passengers by destination railway station wise to National Health Mission, Assam. The list will contain names and mobile numbers of the passengers.
- On receipt of the passenger list from NHM by destination district Deputy Commissioners, they will make arrangements for transportation from the de-boarding railway station lounge to the destination district HQ.

- Deputy Commissioner will make temporary lounge outside the station building with separate sections for different destination districts.
- All train passengers to Assam, irrespective of boarding station, will be first put in institutional quarantine.
- The passengers who are found to be symptomatic shall undergo detailed medical examination at the de-boarding station. If necessary, they will undergo isolated institutional quarantine at de-boarding station district. Otherwise, if allowed, they will proceed to the institutional quarantine facility arranged by the Deputy Commissioner of destination district.
- Home quarantine of passengers will imply that the entire residence is a containment zone, during the quarantine period. No person will be allowed to enter or exit the zone during the quarantine period.

The various phases of travel via train can be explained through the flowchart below. Just like road travel, the people have to give a missed call, after which their data is captured on the cloud. The operations team then carry out data analysis and data mapping.



It also coordinates with the Railways as well as the respective states where the people are stranded. Once this process is complete, the list of passengers is finalized by the approval committee, after which a passenger manifest is prepared. E-tickets are then sent to the passengers via SMS and WhatsApp. They are also provided details of where to board the vehicles to reach the railway station. Once they board the train, the passengers are further given a call to confirm their final destination in Assam. Accordingly, district-wise data is shared with the DCs, who make arrangements for their travel from the railway station to the screening centres. The passengers are required to spend 7 days mandatory institutional quarantine and 7 days mandatory home quarantine.

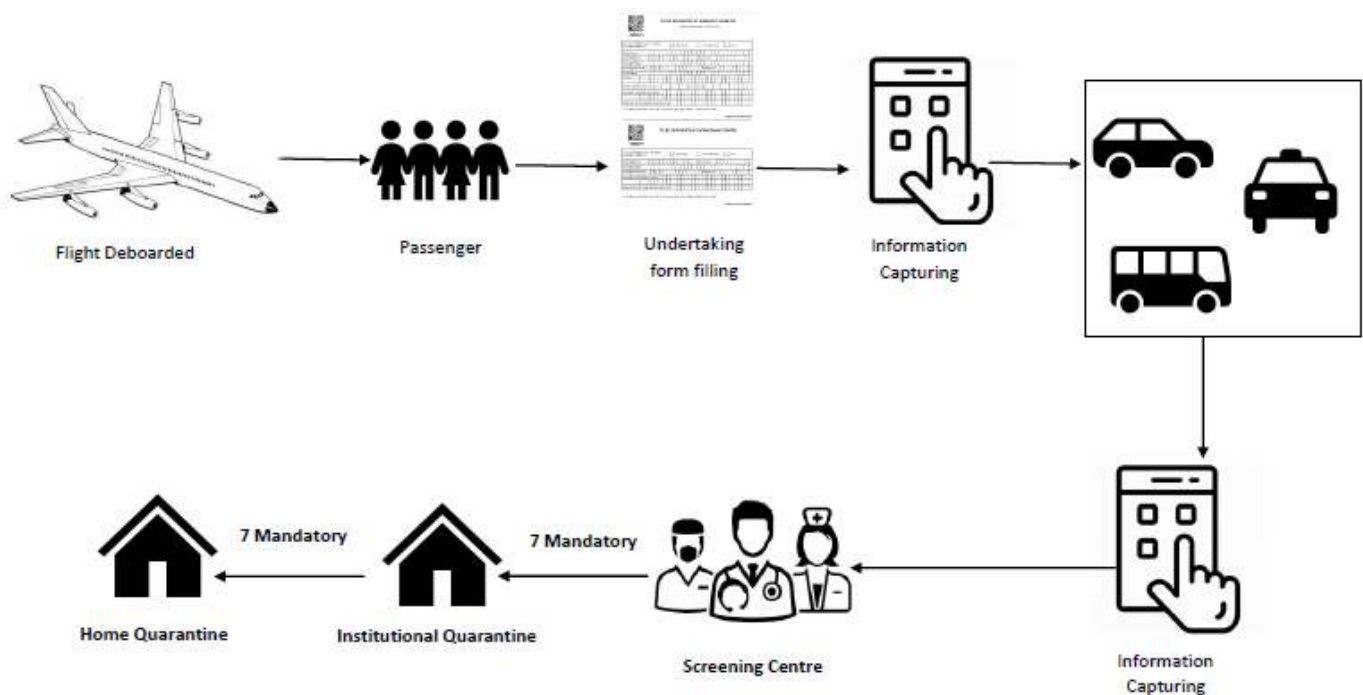
Travel by Air:

The Central Government decided to resume domestic flight services from 25 May 2020. A detailed SOP for the same too was issued by the Assam Government on 24 May. The main points of this SOP were (see Annexure for detailed SOP):

- Thermal screening booths manned by health staff would be set up at the Airports
- Assam Government would run bus services from Guwahati Airport to locations grouped such as Lower Assam districts, Upper Assam districts, North Assam districts, etc.
- Airlines to furnish the passenger manifest in the prescribed format to the Assam Government
- Any symptomatic passenger, having his/her



Picture: Various phases of air travel



destination within Assam, will be segregated and taken to nearest Zonal/District Screening Camp, etc

- Asymptomatic passengers will have to undergo combined institutional quarantine and home quarantine of at least 14 days.

The various phases of air travel can be explained through the flowchart above. Once the passengers deboard at the Airport, they would have to fill up undertaking forms, including providing details of their mode of transport if they use private vehicles or hire authorized taxis. The passengers will then be screened and they have to undergo combined institutional quarantine and home quarantine of at least 14 days.

Movement of Foreigners

The Special Branch of Assam Police facilitated the movement of 184 foreigners from the northeastern states, including Assam, to their native countries by alerting all district police chiefs and concerned agencies regarding their date and time of travel

for their safe passage. Out of these, 79 were from Bangladesh, 26 from Myanmar, 18 from USA, 10 from UK, 7 from Poland, 6 from Thailand, 5 from France, 4 each from Bhutan and South Korea, 3 each from Australia, Denmark and Spain, 2 each from Belgium, Gabon, Germany and Indonesia, 1 each from Argentina, Greece, Italy, Jordan and Switzerland and 3 persons with LPR (Lawful Permanent Resident) from India to the USA.

Transportation Summary

From 2 May to 1 June 2020, a total of 1,55,255 people returned to the state. Of these, 1,10,494 came by road; 33,913 came via train; while, 10,848 came via air. During this period, 26,606 people from other states left Assam; of which 20,156 went by road, while 5,450 went by train.

The tables below show the break-up of the inbound and outbound passengers during the period 2 May to 1 June, 2020.

Travel by Road			
Inbound		Outbound	
From NE States (except Sikkim)	59,447	Travel by Road	20,156
Through Srirampur Gate	31,183		
Through Chagolia Gate	19,864		
TOTAL	1,10,494	TOTAL	20,156

Travel by Train			
Inbound		Outbound	
02424 Rajdhani Express (20 trains)	5,313	02424 Rajdhani Express	4,918
Shramik Special Trains (77 trains)	28,787	Shramik Special Trains	252
02502 Agartala Rajdhani (3 trains)	13	02501 Agartala Rajdhani	280
TOTAL	33,913	TOTAL	5,450

Travel by Air		
Airport	No. of Flights	No. of Incoming Passengers
Guwahati	101	9516
Dibrugarh	8	902
Silchar	6	430
TOTAL	115	10,848

3.8. Management of Inter-District Travel

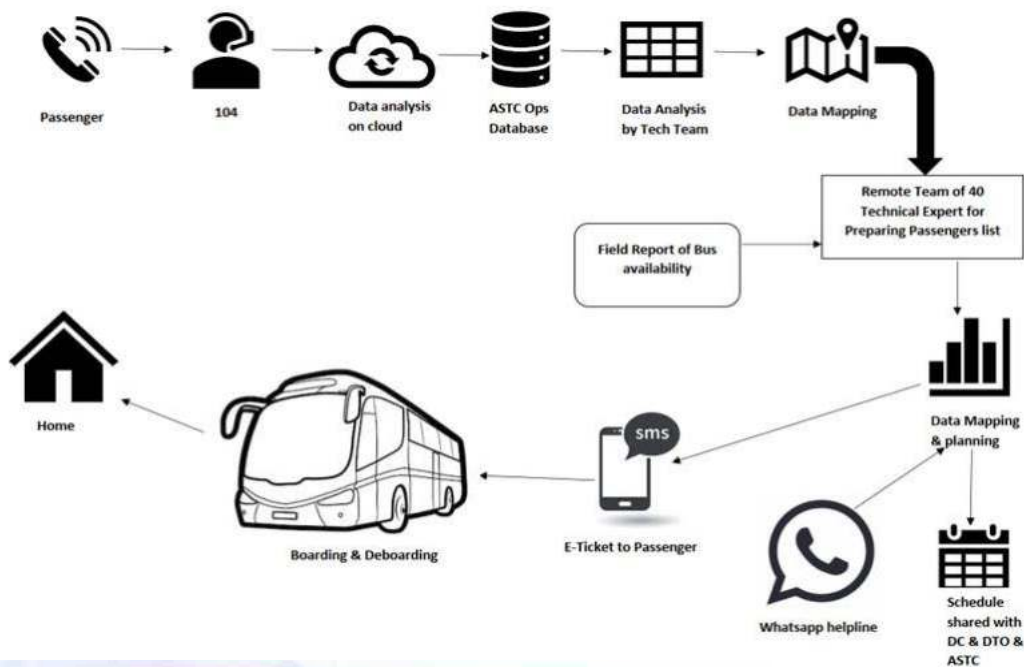
Along with the inter-state movement of people, the Assam Police has also been managing the intra-state travel during the various phases of the lockdown. In the first phase, only the vehicles engaged in essential services were allowed to ply by the police. Even these limited numbers of vehicles were thoroughly checked to ensure that social distancing was strictly complied with and there was no misuse in the name of emergency services. For medical and other emergencies, special permits were given for specific time period. Compliance of all necessary precautions for such travels was also ensured. For inter-district travel, all the details of the travellers were recorded and all the passengers were medically examined at the checking points/Health screening centres in the district borders.

In addition to manual application, Assam Police also created a Google form to submit applications by

general public for e-Pass for inter and intra-district travel. The link was widely circulated through its social media handles.

When the state government allowed inter-district travel for a limited time period during the lockdown, Assam Police provided full assistance to the government and its agencies like the ASTC. In fact, in many districts, the police station acted as boarding points for the people.

There were, however, certain challenges faced by the police while managing this intra-state movement, especially during the first phase of lockdown. It was difficult to know the genuineness of the issues. Though police tried to verify each case before issuing a pass, it was not possible to verify each and every request. Also, non-availability of public transportation hindered the movement of those people who had no private vehicles and sometimes police had to arrange transportation for them based on the situation.



Picture: People maintain social distancing as they wait to board a bus for inter-district travel⁴⁴

3.9. Supporting Healthcare Professionals

At the very onset of the pandemic and the subsequent medical emergency, Assam Police nominated Mr. Deepak Kumar Kedia, IPS, IGP (L&O) as the nodal officer to address all issues pertaining to the safety and security of healthcare professionals. Each and every police personnel were briefed about the services being rendered by the healthcare professionals as well as the sanitation workers during this pandemic. They were briefed to be extremely courteous and sensitive while dealing with them. Inter-Departmental co-ordination between the police and the health department was maintained through frequent meetings and one-

to-one communication. OCs of the police stations regularly visited hospitals and quarantine centres in their area with the healthcare workers.

Police personnel ensured the security and protection of the healthcare professionals when they were discharging their duties as well as when they were off-duty. They helped the healthcare workers in managing the Quarantine Centres and the isolation wards. Police assisted the healthcare workers to keep a tab on all those people who were put on home quarantine. The police also ensured the security of the workers when they went from village-to-village. They were provided special passes, and sometime, they were provided transportation by police vehicles as well. Police provided assistance in setting up

47 Photo Source: PTI



Picture: Darrang Police in coordination with District Health Department aiding in imparting Door-to-Door health assistance to senior citizens during the lockdown

and handling Mobile Examination centres and ensuring discipline at these centres. The movement of healthcare professionals, medicine and other essentials during the lockdown was also taken care of by Assam Police, in many cases using its own infrastructure. Police also briefed the VDPs and they too assisted the ASHA workers. In fact, Assam Police treated the healthcare professionals as brothers and sisters-in-arm during this entire process.

3.10. Managing Supply Chain of Essential Commodities

Assam Police nominated Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O) and Mr. M.P. Gupta, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Guwahati, to liaise with Central and State Governments to ensure smooth movement of essential commodities across the state. Detailed instructions were given to ensure that vehicles carrying essential items are allowed free passage and if required, assisted as well. However, it was ensured that proper guidelines were followed by the transporters.

The Assam Police also coordinated with various agencies and organizations like the Railways, Transport Authorities, freight carriers, transport operators, etc. At the major unloading ports like

Changsari, New Guwahati, Jagiroad, Jorhat, etc, local committee were formed which comprised of a member each from the police, civil administration, transport department and the Railways. These committees took the decisions at the local level.

During the lockdown period, a total of 635 railway rakes and 92,180 goods trucks entered Assam. A total of 74,458 trucks were mobilized to carry commodities to various parts of the state from the railway yards and a total of 66,596 labourers were engaged.

There were certain challenges too. There was a lack of labourers to unload the items at the unloading points. Police had to take help from Railways, freight carriers, transport operators, etc. to organize labourers for the purpose. Another challenge was that transport through Barak Valley passed through the state of Meghalaya, who had their own set of rules. So, Assam Police had to coordinate with the Meghalaya government regarding this. Also, in some cases, it was found that after the delivery of goods, the empty trucks tried to ferry people. Such trucks were seized; the driver and helper arrested, and the persons inside the truck were sent to quarantine centres.



Picture: Sanitization drives being carried out by Assam F&ES personnel

3.11. Coordination with Police & Civil Administration of Other States

Regular video conference with the Cabinet Secretary, Government of India, is attended by the DGP Assam, along with the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary. The stakeholders of all states and UTs attend this. So this becomes a kind of de-facto coordination mechanism. Apart from this formal channel, the senior officers of Assam Police have their batch-mates or friends in the civil administration and police of other states. These personal connections are leveraged to a large extent to coordinate various issues as well as address the needs of the people of Assam stranded in different states. The Command and Control Centre too is playing an important role in coordinating with the administration of the other states.

3.12. Fire & Emergency Services

During the current pandemic, the Fire & Emergency Services (F&ES), Assam, has been carrying out sanitization programme throughout the urban areas of the state in close coordination with the local Municipal authorities. They have been involved in sanitization of office premises, areas declared as containment zones, apartments with COVID-19

positive patients, etc. Over 2500 F&ES personnel and 150 vehicles are engaged in this work. This fact was stated by Ms. Jayshree Khersa, APS, Deputy Director, F&ES, Assam, during an interview conducted as part of this study⁴⁸.

There were challenges as well. Due to continuous use during the sanitization programme, a number of Fire Tenders developed defects in the pumps, due to the corrosive effect of Sodium Hypochlorite chemical, which is used for spraying. However, urgent repairs were carried out by the department mechanics to resolve the defects, which ensured that the sanitization work was not adversely affected.

The lockdown also hindered the observance of the Fire Safety Week (14-20 April 2020) as awareness campaigns, mock drills, inspections, demonstrations, etc. could not be carried out due to restrictions on public gathering. However, the F&ES department made efforts to create public awareness regarding fire safety through advertisements in the print and audio-visual media channels

⁴⁸ Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire, Received on 14 May 2020

3.13. Safety Measures for Police Personnel

Police forces themselves are facing the risk of being infected by the Coronavirus, with several police personnel around the world already succumbing to the disease. Being the first responders, the risk of exposure of police is quite high. In India, police are guarding containment zones, enforcing the lockdown and handled thousands of migrants hitting the roads in their attempts to go home. Police had also carried out high-risk evacuations in coronavirus clusters like Nizamuddin Markaz in Delhi.

Similar duties are being done by the police forces worldwide. At a press conference, held on 2 April 2020, Chicago Interim Police Superintendent Charlie Beck had said, “We have always been more at risk for violence because of our profession and now I think we are more at risk of the virus because of our profession”⁴⁹. In the same press conference, he had confirmed the first COVID-19-associated death among the Chicago Police Department’s ranks. The impact of the disease on the police can also be gauged from a tweet from CNN, which quoted the New York City Police Commissioner Dermot Shea saying, “More than 1,400 NYPD officers have tested positive for coronavirus and 17 per cent of the force is out sick”⁵⁰.

Police personnel have been infected with the coronavirus in India too. In Maharashtra, over 1000 police personnel have tested positive for COVID-19, with eight of them already dead (till 14 May)⁵¹. In



Picture: Assam Police personnel wearing PPE kits

Delhi, around 100 cops have been infected, with one constable dead from the disease (till 12 May)⁵². In Assam, the police administration in the state is taking strict protective measures to ensure its personnel stay safe.

When the outbreak began to spread its wings, Assam Police prepared and issued an advisory to all its field officers so that they can take care of the safety of the personnel under their command.

Some of the main points of the SOP prepared for this purpose, dated 24 March 2020, were:

- The field officers would ensure the safety of the men under their command. Police personnel and families should have enough hand wash/soap to wash hands every one hour. On mobile duties, the police personnel shall use hand sanitizer regularly.
- In the Police Reserves and Battalion campuses

49 “Police Departments, Sheriffs’ Offices Across the U.S. Grapple With COVID-19’s Impact on Public Safety—and Their Own”, TIME, 2 April, 2020, <https://time.com/5812833/coronavirus-police-departments/>

50 Tweet by CNN Newsroom, <https://twitter.com/CNNnewsroom/status/1245349586476175366s>

51 “Maharashtra Police: Over 1000 personnel test positive for COVID-19 with eight fatalities”, Mumbai Mirror, 14 May 2020, <https://mumbaiirror.indiatimes.com/coronavirus/news/maharashtra->

police-over-1000-personnel-test-positive-for-covid-19-with-eight-fatalities/articleshow/75732833.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

52 “Coronavirus: 140 Delhi Police personnel test positive so far; constable dies”, India Today, 12 May 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/coronavirus-delhi-police-personnel-test-positive-constable-dies-1677151-2020-05-12>



Picture: Assam Police personnel providing food while maintaining social distance

only authorized residents should be allowed and visitors should be discouraged.

- Wherever any resident is reported to be unwell, he/she should be placed in a separate barrack and quarantined for fourteen days.
- The spacing in the barracks to be extended to minimum of one metre. Wherever the space is not enough tents should be used to accommodate the personnel.
- The guarding of the armouries to be given highest priority especially in the districts having activities of insurgent groups. The Police stations/Outposts should also take care of the weapon holding at all times.
- The rotation of the police personnel should be so maintained that they have adequate rest.
- The leadership may take care of the family members of the police personnel under their command. Similarly, the families of police martyrs and police personnel who have died on duty to be also looked after.

- The police personnel deployed for hospital duties, escort/check of COVID suspect persons should wear similar protective gear that the accompanying doctors wear. Unnecessary movement outside respective and off-duty hours is to be avoided.
- The SPs/Commandants/OCs/ICs shall brief the personnel to maintain social distance and hand hygiene.

As the situation evolved, it was felt that there was need to further prepare as well as re-emphasis guidelines for protection of the force. Some of the key goals of these new guidelines were:

- Maintenance of the morale of the force
- Maintenance of the effectiveness of personnel
- Effectiveness of COVID-19 control duties
- Maintenance of high standards of law and order duties which could be impacted due to lack of quality and/or quantity of forces
- Potential surge in responsibilities owing to further easing of restrictions including inflow of

people from outside the state of Assam

With these goals in mind, a 9-point guideline was prepared for Assam Police personnel:

- a) *General Guidelines for Personnel & Family Protection*
- b) *Police Infrastructure Protection*
- c) *Work Force Division and Backup Force Creation*
- d) *Safety Protection Measures for Airport, Railway, Bus Bay and Border Screening*
- e) *Safety Precautions of Vehicle and Equipment Disinfection and Transportation*
- f) *Safety Precautions During Road Vehicle Checking and Home Visits*
- g) *Safety Precautions During Road Accidents and Patient Handling*
- h) *Safety Precautions During Arrests of Offenders, Lockup Cases and Transport of Accused*
- i) *Safety Precautions During Market Deployments and Crowd Control*

(a) General Guidelines for Personnel & Family Protection

- Frequent hand washing using soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer as supplied by Assam Police.
- Covering mouth and nose while sneezing/ coughing using a disposable tissue/handkerchief or coughing/sneezing in flexed elbow
- Physical distancing (at least 1 meter)
- Using appropriate protective gears such as face mask, face shield (if necessary) and gloves and their proper disposal as supplied by Assam Police.
- Enter house after taking off uniform outside the house and ensuring they are washed daily and separately. Maintain physical distancing from vulnerable members of the family.
- Ensure regular disinfection of family lines,

barracks etc using material and equipment supplied by Assam Police Headquarters (APHQ)

- Seek medical care if the personnel or any family member develop any symptoms
- Use the helplines established by APHQ for supporting the needs of Assam Police personnel and their families.
- Use the mental health helpline established as a joint venture between GMCH & APHQ if the personnel feel the need to.

(b) Police Infrastructure Protection

- All indoor areas such as entrance lobbies, corridors and staircases, office rooms, lockups etc and high contact surface areas like handrails, printers, telephones should be cleaned everyday using sodium hypochlorite supplied by APHQ.
- Watch and purse not to be used while on duty
- Articles like pens, belts, caps, weapons etc should either be disinfected daily using disinfecting sprays supplied by APHQ or kept in safe custody
- All furniture, door handles, floors are to be disinfected using sodium hypochlorite three-four times a day
- Lady personnel should not use jewelry during duty, especially bangles and rings
- Mobile phones should be kept in plastic covers during duty hours and should be cleaned with surgical spirit or sanitizer supplied by APHQ. Laptops, walkie-talkies should also be disinfected in similar manner daily
- Protective equipment and water should be carried in all vehicles to ensure safety of personnel and also avoid dehydration
- Tents and/or umbrellas should be installed to protect against natural forces and also to maintain sanitation of equipment
- Used masks and gloves should not be littered. They should be stored in designated places for further scientific disposal

- Separate visiting and waiting areas to be earmarked in offices and stations maintaining proper physical distancing norms. Visitors should not be allowed to enter any other part of the premise unless essential

(c) Force Division and Backup Force Creation

- Mutual contact between field duty personnel and office duty personnel should be avoided as much as possible.
- Personnel above the age of 55 or with co-morbidity should be allowed to take leave or posted in duties where contact with potential COVID-19 patients would be minimum.
- Existing force may be divided into 2 or 3 groups and ensure rotation of force every 10-15 days. While one group is deployed, the other may be kept on reserve in case of emergencies.
- Continue leveraging on VDPs, NCC and Home Guards as force multipliers.

(d) Safety Protection Measures for Airport, Railway, Bus Bay and Border Screening

- Personnel coming in close proximity of passengers should use PPE kits as supplied by APHQ.
- During deployment in high risk areas, a staging base may be created where the majority of the deployed party be kept while a smaller party be in the frontline. Reinforcement may be sent from staging base if required
- Hand sanitation rules to be maintained at all times
- Use of megaphones/PA systems are preferred over one-to-one communication with masses

(e) Safety Precautions of Vehicle and Equipment Disinfection and Transportation

- Vehicles should be disinfected after each deployment with special care taken for steering wheel, gear shaft, radio equipment, hold bars etc

- Protective equipment and water should be carried in all vehicles to ensure safety of personnel and also avoid dehydration

(f) Safety Precautions During Road Vehicle Checking and Home Visits

- Maintain physical distancing norms and not to touch any paper or keys without wearing gloves
- Wearing of face masks mandatory while on duty
- Every contact should be treated as a contact with a potential COVID positive person
- Carrying of hand sanitizers mandatory. Hand sanitizers to be used after every contact
- Seized vehicles should be handled only after wearing PPE
- House visits should be done maintaining physical distancing and wearing of PPE (quarantine related) or mask & gloves (non quarantine related)

(g) Safety Precautions During Road Accidents and Patient Handling

- All accident victims to be considered as possible source of COVID
- Proper protection to be ensured during handling of people and vehicle

(h) Safety Precautions During Arrests of Offenders, Lockup Cases and Transport of Accused

- All offenders (civil/criminal) should be considered as possible sources of COVID
- Direct physical contact should be avoided as far as possible
- Use of mask/gloves/PPE mandatory depending on type of contact
- Any remanded offender should be properly sanitized
- Personal sanitation norms should be followed at all times
- Physical distancing of offenders to be maintained



Picture: Protective Equipments & Sanitising Material like Sodium Hypochlorite, Bleaching Powder and Spray Machines procured by Assam Police to distribute among the Districts and Battalions for protection of the Police personnel & their families

to prevent possible spread of virus among other offenders

- Proper disinfection of lockups to be maintained as per prescribed norms

(i) Safety Precautions During Market Deployments and Crowd Control

- With easing of restrictions, as crowding in market places and shops is rampant, Police should strictly enforce physical distancing and use of masks
- While on duty, use of masks, gloves and hand sanitizers by personnel mandatory
- Use of megaphones/PA systems recommended where possible
- Proactive awareness campaigns should be ramped up again especially with the inflow of people from outside the state

Thus, Assam Police made extra efforts to make sure that its personnel stay safe and protected from the disease. However, during this time, a big challenge that they faced initially was to make the police personnel understand the need of using protective items while policing. This was quite a new experience for the police. It was, in fact, a paradigm shift for police as now they had to wear protective kits for their safety. Assam Police headquarters, as part of their SOP, made it mandatory that every police personnel have to wear protective kits while on duty. The senior officers decided that they would be wearing protective items, like masks, so as to set an example for the other personnel. Gradually everyone followed the instructions.

Also, initially there was a shortage of protective items like masks and sanitizers. Assam Police contacted



Picture: DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, IPS, and ADGP Harmeet Singh, IPS, interacting with children during Webinar on Child Protection

the health department for such items and they were quite helpful. They provided as much they could. Assam Police Headquarters also contacted sanitizer companies, who provided police with sanitizers; some pro-bono, while some were purchased. While during the initial days, police personnel were using three layers masks, gloves and sanitizers, after around 10 days, they got the N95 masks and then by the 15th day of the lockdown, Assam Police procured PPE kits for their personnel.

Apart from that, sanitizing materials like Sodium Hypochlorite and Bleaching Powder were procured, along with Spray Machines. Several corporate houses also came out to support Assam Police and provided them with sanitizing materials and protective equipments. These materials were distributed among the police forces in all the districts and the battalions.

The Police stations are also regularly sanitized in order to ensure the safety of the police personnel and they are regularly briefed about the need for maintain cleanliness and hygiene. The Police colonies as well as the Police vehicles are being regularly sanitized.

Assam Police also set up quarantine centres for the

police personnel in all their battalions, which had a total combined capacity to accommodate around 850 personnel⁵³. Assam Police then made a list of all the doctors and nurses engaged in the battalions and they were provided detailed SOPs as to how to handle COVID-19 positive patients. They were briefed and kept ready to handle any medical emergency related to COVID-19. Around 30 doctors and 200 nurses have been kept exclusively for the police personnel.

3.14. Protection of Children from Cyber Criminals

The threat of children falling prey to cyber criminals has increased during the lockdown period. In order to protect the children of the state, Assam Police is reaching out to them through Webinars to educate them about the measures they need to take to protect themselves. On 8 May 2020, Assam Police organized a Webinar on “Addressing the issues of children during COVID-19”. It was jointly organized with UTAH (Universal Team for Social Action and Help), in collaboration with Childline Guwahati and State Child Protection Society, Assam. DGP

⁵³ Telephonic Interview with Mr. Deepak Kumar, IPS, ADGP (STF), held on 9 May 2020

Assam, Mr. Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, IPS, interacted with 105 children from Child Care Institutions, and Communities across Assam. Mr. Harmeet Singh, IPS, also participated in the webinar for technical feedback on Police services vis-a-vis Child Protection. On 27 May, Mr. Surendra Kumar, IPS, IGP (CID), also interacted with more than 100 children during a Webinar. On 15 June 2020, Harmeet Singh, IPS, interacted with 150 children and other participants including teachers from across the State.

During these interactions, the police officers requested the children not to interact with unknown persons through social media and not to share their personal details and photos. The children were also told that they should not tolerate any crime and they should immediately inform parents or teachers if they face any problem in the cyber world. The children also asked several questions during these Webinars, ranging from protection from violence at home, repatriation to home state, addressing education gaps, functioning of Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), essential supply provisions and prevention of illegal alcohol sale in the community.

3.15. Coordination with CAPFs

Assam Police has also been coordinating with various CAPFs deployed in Assam, like the CRPF, BSE, ITBP, CISE, etc. The senior officers of Assam Police, including the DGP, have been interacting with officers of these forces. The CAPFs have been assured all possible support by the Assam Police in liaison with the Assam Government to help fight and win the battle against the coronavirus. Issues like security measures for protection of CAPF personnel from the disease, quarantine facilities for the CAPF personnel, vigil in the border areas, psychological assistance to CAPF personnel and preparedness for the post-COVID situation have also been regularly discussed between the Assam Police and the CAPFs.

From the above discussion, it can be seen how Assam Police played its role as one of the frontline anti-COVID workers. With an increased workload, it managed to handle the pandemic in a very effective way and earned laurels for its efforts. While performing this new role, the police personnel learnt many new lessons as well as had experiences which they never had before. The next chapter of this Report carries a detailed account of such experiences and lessons learnt by the Assam Police personnel in their line of duty over the last few months.

Policing During the Pandemic: Perspectives from the Ground

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the workload of the police. As mentioned earlier in this report, they have been involved in enforcing lockdown to contact tracing of COVID-19 positive individuals, tracing missing COVID-19 vulnerable persons, embarking on humanitarian assignments, combating the spread of fake news, apart from carrying out its regular law and order duties. However, amidst all these, the Assam Police personnel have been able to carry out their duties in an organized and disciplined manner, even though their job role kept expanding. Long hours of duty did not deter these 'Corona Warriors', who have given their best to fight this pandemic and help the people of the state.

Being the ones working on the field from day one, we tried to analyze the situation from the perspective of these police personnel. This chapter deals with the various such aspects of policing which have been presented here from the view point of the police personnel working on the ground.

4.1. Support from the Public

During the lockdown period, the image of Assam Police has seen a tremendous positive makeover. They have been lauded by the citizens of the State for their efforts in controlling the spread of the disease and the way they have handled and enforced the lockdown with a largely humane face. They have been praised for their humanitarian works like distribution of

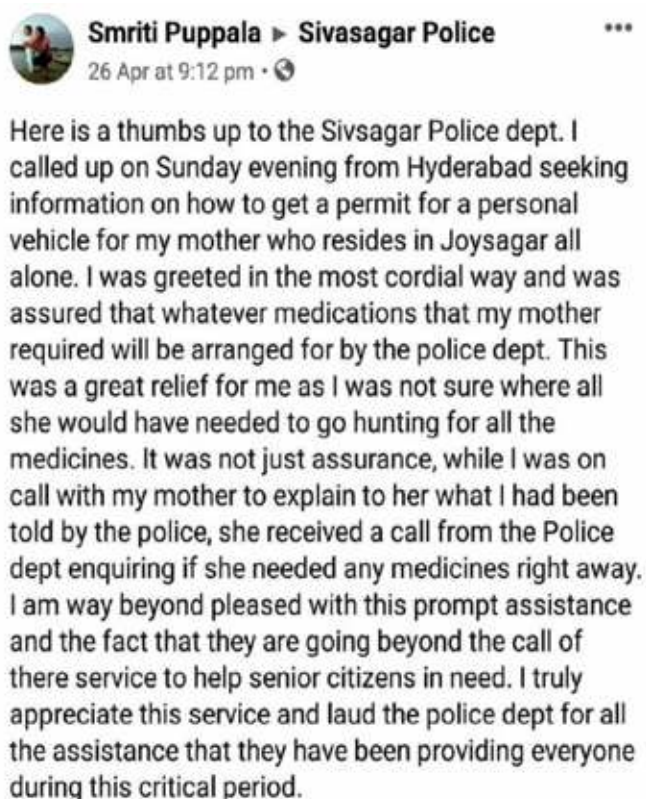
food and essential supplies among the poor, helping the underprivileged and the elderly, feeding and rescuing stray animals, among others. And, because of these efforts, a greater semblance of peace and order has been seen in the streets of Assam during the lockdown period, as compared to some other parts of the country.

Almost all the police personnel we had interacted with during this Study stated that they had received tremendous support from the public. There were a few instances where some people were uncooperative with the police, but largely the people of the state had assisted the force while doing their duties. People had called up to inform about gatherings in public places; they had assisted the police in providing food and relief to the needy section of the society, as well as informed them, whenever they had seen the need in their respective areas or beyond. People had also helped police maintain the home quarantine of the vulnerable individuals. Thus, the public had fully supported as well as supplemented the efforts of the police.

The police personnel also spoke about the mental satisfaction that they had received while helping the needy people. They said that the love they received from these people while undertaking relief measures was beyond comparison and it was something which they had never experienced before. This mental satisfaction made their work much more fulfilling.

The police personnel also said that whatever toll the long duty hours were having on them were overcome by the love and support they received from the people.

The police personnel also said how they were receiving congratulatory message from people thanking them for the service they were providing. People were sending them messages via SMS and WhatsApp and posting about the help they received from Assam Police in Facebook and Twitter. One such post from Facebook, shared with the CDPS study team by Mr. Amitava Sinha, APS, SP, Sivasagar⁵⁰, is shown below:



4.2. Reduction in Crime Rate

The current pandemic has impacted crime around the world. Be it robberies, burglaries, smuggling,

human and wildlife trafficking, street crime, all these have witnessed a decline. The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime has stated in a policy brief in March 2020 that the pandemic has caused a decrease in various organized crime activities around the world⁵¹. In USA, the city of Chicago saw an overall 10 per cent drop in crime rate, while Los Angeles saw a drop of 30 per cent; New York is also reported to have a double digit drop in crime rate⁵². In many Latin American countries, which have seen numerous violent incidents for many years now, crime has come down to levels unseen in decades. For example, El Salvador, which reported an average of 600 killings per day till a few years ago, reported two killings a day in March 2020⁵³. In Peru, crime levels fell 84 per cent that month. In South Africa, police reported a stunning decline during their first week of lockdown measures, with reported rapes down from 700 to 101 as compared to the same period in 2019. Also, serious assault cases plummeted from 2,673 to 456, and murders fell from 326 to 94.⁵⁴

The reduction in crime rate is also being reported across India. Delhi witnessed 42 per cent drop in crime rate during the lockdown⁵⁵. Between March 15 and March 31 in 2019, Delhi had registered a total of 3,416 cases of crime, which came down to

50 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Mr. Amitava Sinha, APS, SP, Sivasagar, Received on 9 May 2020

51 “Crime and Contagion: The impact of a pandemic on organized crime”, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Policy Brief, March 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/GI-TOC-Crime-and-Contagion-The-impact-of-a-pandemic-on-organized-crime.pdf>

52 “Crime drops around the world as COVID-19 keeps people inside”, Fox11 News, 11 April 2020, <https://fox11online.com/news/coronavirus/crime-drops-around-the-world-as-covid-19-keeps-people-inside>

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 “Lockdown: Delhi sees 42 % drop in crime rate”, The Indian Express, 4 April 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/lockdown-delhi-sees-42-drop-in-crime-rate-6346380/>

1,990 during the same period in 2020⁵⁶. The crimes included robbery, snatching, violence/hurt, accidents, vehicle thefts, burglaries etc. In Kerala, there was a 40 per cent decline in the number of murder cases in the period between March 25 and April 14 (which was the first phase of lockdown) as compared to the same period in 2019⁵⁷. During the same period, the number of accidents in Kerala came down to 105 from 1787 as compared to 2019, murders came down to 8 from 13, missing cases came down to 132 from 851, suicides came down to 192 from 445 and unnatural deaths came down to 630 from 1052⁵⁸. Telangana recorded an almost 60 per cent drop in crime rate⁵⁹; while in Kolkata, crime rate went down by 50 per cent during the lockdown⁶⁰.

The state of Assam too has witnessed an overall reduction in crime rate during the lockdown period. This fact was stated by DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta during a media interaction in Chirang on 24 April 2020.⁶¹ In fact, during the interviews held as a part of the study, all the police personnel said that they had observed that the crime rate had gone down in their respective areas. According to Mr. Kumar Sanjit Krishna, APS, SP, Karimganj, “There has been a major change in the crime rate in the district

during the lock down period. In normal time, an average of 10 to 11 cases are registered in a day, whereas, only 4 to 5 cases are being registered in a day during the lockdown period. It is also pertinent to mention here that the crime relating to Rape and Vehicle theft, kidnapping related to elopement cases have tremendously decreased during the lockdown period”⁶². Mr. Pushpraj Singh, IPS, SP, Golaghat stated that crime rate in the district had reduced to half during the lockdown period⁶³. Mr. Utpal Changmai, OC, Paltan Bazar Police Station, said that they used to get around 130 to 150 cases per month at their police station, but in April (till 27 April), they got only 30 cases. This indicates a drop of 75 to 80 per cent in crime reporting in the area⁶⁴. However, this trend of reduction in crime rate may change once the lockdown is lifted completely. (The next chapter of this report provides an analysis of this aspect)

4.3. Impact on Regular Duties

As the duties of the police personnel kept on expanding and they were given certain extra responsibilities, there was an obvious impact on their regular duties. This included both their law and order duties as well as on the ongoing investigation of cases.

While regular law and order duties like patrolling and checking were carried out by the police, there were added duties like conducting awareness campaigns about COVID-19 on foot as well as through vehicle rallies, maintaining order and social distancing in places like banks, etc. The duties also increased

56 Ibid.

57 “Lockdown upside: India records significant drop in deaths, crime, says report”, Financial Express, 30 April 2020, <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/lockdown-upside-india-records-significant-drop-in-deaths-crime-says-report/1944434/>

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 “Coronavirus Lockdown: Crime rate down by 50% in Kolkata compared to last year, says West Bengal police”, First Post, 30 March 2020, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/coronavirus-lockdown-crime-rate-down-by-50-in-kolkata-compared-to-last-year-says-west-bengal-police-8207221.html>

61 “Crime rate has gone down during lockdown period: DGP”, The Assam Tribune, 25 April 2020, <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/at.asp?id=apr2520/Page11>

62 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Mr. Kumar Sanjit Krishna, APS, SP, Karimganj, Received on 30 April 2020

63 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Mr. Pushpraj Singh, IPS, SP, Golaghat, Received on 5 May 2020

64 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Utpal Changmai, OC, Paltan Bazar Police Station, Guwahati, held on 28 April 2020

both in terms of hours as well as shifts so that the lockdown is effectively imposed. The Police was constantly pressed into maintaining the Lockdown which was a 24 hour assignment.

However, even though there was an impact on the regular duties of the police personnel, it did not have an impact on the overall law and order situation in the state as there were no untoward incidents in Assam during the lockdown. Also, whenever an offence was reported, FIRs were registered promptly and legal action was taken. In case of reporting of heinous crimes like murder, the police carried out their regular investigations including questioning the relevant persons while maintaining proper social distancing. The F&ES department too continued to attend emergency calls, while at the same time carrying out the sanitization programmes.

In terms of ongoing investigation cases, the lockdown surely hampered the pace of investigation. Investigation of most of the cases had to be kept pending during the lockdown. The Investigating Officers got involved in lockdown duties. Restriction imposed in movement hampered visits of the police personnel for investigations. There was difficulty in getting statements of witnesses, difficulty in getting Bail-bond; there was delayed in getting medical, forensic and other official reports. Also, sometimes police have to collect information from some offices as part of the investigation but they being closed due to the lockdown hampered the investigations.

However, amidst this lockdown one thing was clearly noticed. That is, though the lockdown impacted the regular duties of the police, the Assam Police personnel also showcased high level of dedication and professionalism. It has also made it clear that the Assam Police personnel can carry out their regular duties amidst the daily increasing work load.

4.4. Pandemic Management v/s Disaster Management

Police play a major role in disaster management. They are the first responder in any disaster situation and are trained to deal with both man-made as well as natural disasters. They know the terrain as well as the people of the area and possess well developed communication system. People also consider police to be the first responder in any crisis situation. However, when there is a pandemic, police have to combine both their domain experience as well as disaster management training.

The pandemic-related duties of the police which fall within their domain include crowd control, public order management and deterrence of law-breaking behaviours of the citizens. But, there are new aspects in these roles too. As DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said during his interview, “While there are certain similarities between disaster management and the current situation, especially when it comes to relief work, there are other reference points as well. Like we know very well how to enforce a curfew; however, what is unique now is to ensure that it is done in a positive manner and also over a sustained period of time. So while there are differences, there are also lessons one can refer to from certain elements of policing and bring them all together in a collage and address the current situation.”

Also some other aspects of pandemic management like enforcing lockdown, ensuring home quarantine, tracing contact history of COVID-19 positive individuals, are also somewhat related to the domain of police expertise.

But, unlike disaster management, pandemic of this scale is associated with a lot of confusion and uncertainty. For normal disaster management, the police have a set of well prepared guidelines, SOPs, infrastructure and skilled personnel. Mock drills

are conducted on regular basis. However in case of COVID-19, there was no such preparedness and initially no guidelines or SOP. The guidelines and SOPs had to be crafted and modified frequently as and when new things related to the disease were observed and verified.

Also, usually disaster management efforts are mostly confined within a small region. But the current pandemic has spread across the whole of the state, country as well as the world. This was something which could not be managed at the local level. Also, a disaster usually is a limited time event and the risk to those who respond to it is minimal. But, in case of COVID-19, it has been and also looks like to be a very long fight, where frontline responders like police are at risks of exposure. Pandemics are also difficult as it's a bigger draw on the resources than a disaster.

There was also very short period to assess the situation as well as prepare a response to this rapidly spreading infection. In the words of Mr. Pushpraj Singh, IPS, SP, Golaghat, "Police have never faced such a situation. The dynamics of the situation used to change very frequently. There was very little information about the pandemic and many misinformation were circulated through different medium. People were very susceptible to such rumours and as a result of which, a communally sensitive atmosphere was created. Police has to take some tough action initially to dispel the misinformation and to enforce lockdown. Every day pose new challenges and police had to mitigate those with limited resource and in inhospitable condition."⁶⁵

Thus, not only the Assam Police had to deal with enforcing lockdown, carry out humanitarian works,

65 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Mr. Pushpraj Singh, IPS, SP, Golaghat, Received on 5 May 2020

assist the healthcare situation, but they also had to ensure that there is no misinformation spread among the people and there is no untoward incident in the state.

The current pandemic also included an aspect which was never carried out by police on a large scale like they have done now. This aspect was providing assistance to the needy, including arranging food and shelter; supply of essential commodities and medicines, to the people; arranging transportation for people stranded outside the state, feeding as well as rescuing animals, and many other similar work. This was a facet which made this pandemic management different from other disaster management duties of the police.

4.5. Preparedness and Motivation

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the initial days of spread of the pandemic, there were no guidelines or SOPs or reference points to fall back to. It was all new. But, Assam Police rose to the occasion and gradually involved a strategy as well as detailed SOPs. The Assam Police Headquarters played a major role in guiding, sensitizing and equipping all the districts to face the challenge. The senior officers briefed the police personnel, from the SPs to the constables, very professionally during various phase of the lockdown. It helped the police personnel on the ground to understand the planning and preparation behind every step that the government and the police administration were taking.

DGP and other senior officers toured the entire state and met and interacted with the police personnel in all the districts. A few videos were made and circulated among the police personnel with messages from the DGP. These measures kept the police force motivated during this tough time.

Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security),



Picture: DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta interacting with police officers at Tezpur

during his interview⁶⁶ conducted as part of this study narrated a very interesting tale. He said, “I remember attending a conference and listening to a former SP of Bhopal narrate his experience about handling the Bhopal Gas Tragedy and how unprepared and clueless they were initially when the tragedy struck the city. Similarly, we were initially not sure how to respond to this pandemic”. He then added that this unpreparedness slowly began to disappear as the Assam Police headquarters was able to prepare a detailed action plan and move ahead with it.

The role played by the senior officers of Assam Police has been lauded by the force. During the interviews conducted as part of the study, all the police personnel said that they were very well guided by the Police headquarters and it kept them prepared and ready for every eventuality. As said by Mr. Durga Sarma, CI, Batadrawa, Nagaon, “Under the guidance of our DGP sir and SP sir, we were able to handle

the situation. We were provided detailed instructions. When we gave suggestions from our end, those too were discussed and acted upon”⁶⁷.

It was thus seen that all the police personnel of the state had risen to the occasion and contributed their best by displaying highest levels of motivation.

4.6. Commonalities & Differences

Assam police personnel are having varied experiences while handling the current situation. And, while some of the experiences are same throughout the state, there have been some differences as well.

One common phenomenon throughout the state has been the reduction of crime rate. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, the police personnel around the state have agreed to this fact. The support and praise that the police received from the citizens too have been uniform throughout the state. Police personnel, irrespective of place or rank, have said that

66 Interview with Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security), held on 25 April 2020

67 Telephonic Interview with Mr. Durga Sarma, CI, Batadrawa, Nagaon, held on 29 April 2020

they have never seen such love and support towards the force like now.

Support provided to the police by civil society organizations, NGOs as well as private individuals in feeding the hungry and helping the needy has been a common phenomenon around the state. Another aspect that the police personnel realized during this pandemic was that they now know exactly how many people are in need of assistance in the areas under their jurisdiction.

Differences noticed by the police while enforcing the lockdown was mainly related to the degree of awareness displayed by the citizens. While people in the urban areas were aware of the guidelines issued by the government, people in many rural areas and especially the *char* areas, were unaware of such rules. Police personnel went from village-to-village announcing these as well as making people aware of the precautions to be taken to keep themselves safe.

Police in some districts like Kamrup (Metro) had to also arrange for accommodation for stranded passengers. Also, some districts had attendees of the *Tablighi Jamaat* and police personnel in these districts had to engage more in contact tracing work compared to those in other districts.

4.7. Lessons Learnt

Assam Police have done a praiseworthy job while managing the current COVID-19 pandemic. While handling this crisis situation, the police personnel, right from the DGP to the constables on the ground, found that they were learning something new almost every day. Each new day was teaching them something unique – something which they had not experienced before.

On being asked about the lessons he learnt being the head of the state police force during this situation, DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said, “This is an evolving

situation which needs our constant self appraisal and response. So drawing strategic lessons is something which is some time ahead of us. The assessment of this has to be multi-tiered at a global, national, state and local level. The lessons will be different at each level and I think there is a consensus at the national level for this kind of assessment. We on our part, we are initiating a study to understand the impact of the situation on crime rate in the state. While there is a general understanding around this, we need to really go deep on this issue from a policing perspective. However, one enduring re-learning during this is the need for compassion, empathy and cooperation among all of us as citizens of this country.”

Mr. G.P. Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O) said, “In Assam, the entire exercise of handling the COVID-19 pandemic was seamless from day one. The entire government machinery worked as one. The Chief Minister, Health Minister, Chief Secretary and DGP – all were together in every step. This was a major lesson learnt. We also learnt how the various other departments of the government ran. Earlier we did not know much about how the Railways functioned or the Food & Civil Supplies Department functioned, but this time we learnt the inner workings of these agencies and department.”

Below are some such lessons that the police have learnt over the last few months, and which they say would stay with them forever.

- The current pandemic management efforts showcased the importance of clear and transparent communication, delegation, cooperation and coordination in policing.
- In crisis situations, certain value system, such as dedication towards public service, professional integrity and compassion towards vulnerable sections, helps in policing effectively.



Picture: A meeting with VDPs and Village Heads in Jaraguri HS School in Kokrajhar, attended by the DGP and senior police officials of BTAD

- Timely and frequent information dissemination plays a very crucial and significant role in policing.
- Optimum use of technology can help improve policing. Use of video conferences, WhatsApp groups, social media, etc, made information flow very quick during the recent pandemic. It also ensured fast communication and better coordination between the various arms of the police and the administration.
- Another important lesson learnt by the police during this pandemic is that they have become skilled at using their limited resources, be it manpower or logistics, in an optimal way to provide a better service to the citizens.
- Social media greatly helped in spreading awareness as well as keep the people indoors during the lockdown, but at the same time it is important that the people get the correct information and are not influenced by fake news.
- The resolve shown by the people and the way they came together to not just help the police but also to help each other has been one of the most heartening experience for many of the police personnel.
- The Village Defence Party (VDP) can provide very good help to the police by ensuring that the lockdown guidelines, social distancing and home quarantine measures are followed in the villages. The VDPs also helped in spreading awareness in the villages. The co-operation received from the VDPs was acknowledged by many police personnel.

- Police have learnt as to how to be of true service to the community and also approach a problem methodically and scientifically as opposed to kneejerk reactions.
- Assam Police helped feed the underprivileged and vulnerable section of the society during the lockdown. However, during the initial days, the police had no idea how many such needy people there are. As the days progressed, they learnt how large a chunk of population was in need of food and essentials. Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security), who was in charge of the relief measures undertaken by the Assam Police, said during his interview, “We never knew of the number of needy people in the state. As the people kept calling at our helpline numbers as well as the calls I received in my personal number, we began to understand how many people are in need of food and assistance. Now, we know exactly where and how many such people are there in the state.”
- The relief measures undertaken by the police also made them realize that it would have been easy for the authorities to feed the destitute if there was a list of such persons and if they had been brought and sheltered at some specific places under single roof.
- The mental satisfaction that can be achieved by helping the needy people was a type of positive lesson learnt by the police personnel during this time of crisis.
- The police personnel also agree that current pandemic brought out the best within them. The policemen are now greater focussed on their duties. They are more alert and maintain greater level of personal hygiene.

New Dimensions: Policing in The Future

Law enforcement agencies around the world are playing a crucial role in contributing to the effort in fighting the COVID-19 disease, which has now ravaged more than 200 nations and territories and has been declared as a pandemic by the WHO. However, what this current pandemic has also done is that it has changed how the law enforcement agencies around the world operate, adding a new dimension to their functioning.

Australian Police put a temporary suspension on all non-essential policing activities as the disease spread across the country⁶⁸. In Italy, the military, which was originally deployed to ensure general security in the streets, were used later to enforce lockdown⁶⁹. South Africa deployed more than 70,000 military personnel to help enforce a lockdown⁷⁰. In France, police relocated women beaten by their partners into hotels, in response to a huge increase in domestic abuse during the coronavirus lockdown⁷¹. In India,

police are being deployed at places, such as banks, ATM kiosks, gas cylinder distribution points, etc, to maintain social distancing. There was no police deployment in these places earlier.

The law and order duties of the police too have been affected around the world. In the United States, the Chicago police department directed officers that certain low-level and nonviolent crimes can be handled via citation and misdemeanour summons as opposed to physical arrest⁷². In other US cities like Fort Worth, Denver and Philadelphia, police are reducing arrests for low-level crimes, such as burglaries and drug offenses. Instead, suspects are being released with a warrant ordering them to return for processing once the crisis is over⁷³. These are just examples of changing facet of policing around the world.

Changes in crime pattern also are being seen around the world. In April 2020, Interpol issued a global threat assessment on crime and policing to its 194 member countries⁷⁴. In this, they mentioned the

68 Police Federation of Australia, <https://www.afpa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PFA-Letter-to-Members.pdf>

69 “Italy calls in military to enforce coronavirus lockdown as 627 people die in 24 hours”, CNN, 20 March 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/20/europe/italy-military-coronavirus-intl/index.html>

70 “Coronavirus: South Africa deploys 70,000 troops to enforce lockdown”, BBC, 22 April 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52387962>

71 “France Is Putting Domestic Abuse Victims in Hotels During Coronavirus Lockdown”, VICE, 31 March 2020, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/y3mj4g/france-

[is-putting-domestic-abuse-victims-in-hotels-during-coronavirus-lockdown](#)

72 “Police responses to COVID-19”, Police One, 30 March 2020, <https://www.policeone.com/police-products/wmd-equipment/ppe/articles/police-responses-to-covid-19-foY4kQwNus6MQ8RS/>

73 Ibid.

74 “Preventing crime and protecting police: INTERPOL’s COVID-19 global threat assessment”, Interpol, 6 April 2020, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/Preventing-crime-and-protecting-police->

following changes in crime pattern:

- The number of burglaries has dropped as people are mostly at home now, but thieves are increasingly targeting factories or business premises which are standing empty.
- There has been a significant rise in domestic violence cases since lockdown and quarantine measures increased around the world, with reports showing women and children at greater risk of abuse.
- There is increased online activity by paedophiles seeking child sexual abuse material. With shortage of moderators, who identify and remove offensive material from the networks, the situation is turning worse.

The Interpol report also states that it is “monitoring and receiving information from member countries in relation to shifts in other crime areas such as people smuggling, human trafficking and environmental crime”.⁷⁵

Thus, due to this current pandemic, not only the duties and responsibilities of the police is changing, but there has also been changes in crime pattern too, which means that police would need to be ready for a new wave of crime once the lockdown is relaxed or lifted.

The Assam Police: What the Future May Look Like

The current situation around the world does not seem to be changing soon. On 13 May 2020, Dr Michael Ryan, Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, said in a press briefing that, “this virus (coronavirus) just may become another

endemic virus in our communities and this virus may never go away”⁷⁶. The Indian Health Ministry too has said that people would have to learn to live with the coronavirus⁷⁷. This would mean social distancing, quarantine, less human-to-human contact, may be the new normal for the next few years, or maybe even longer. In view of this, policing in the future too would have to adapt to the new changes in the society as well as in crime patterns. The Assam Police have to prepare itself for this new future and have to strategize in advance. Some such new facets of policing that Assam Police may have to handle in the future are mentioned below.

(a) Managing Crimes Post-Lockdown

The Assam Police has already begun to chalk out a strategy to check crimes which are likely to be on the rise after the lockdown ends. This was stated by DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta during a media interaction in Chirang on 24 April 2020, where he had said, “Crime rate has gone down in the State during the ongoing nationwide lockdown and the State police department is planning to chalk out a future strategy to tackle crimes which are likely to occur during the post-lockdown period.”⁷⁸

The lockdown has caused significant stress on financial position, employment and mental health of many people in the state. Many people working

76 “Coronavirus COVID-19 may never go away, could become just another virus, says WHO executive director Michael Ryan”, Zee News, 14 May 2020, <https://zeenews.india.com/world/coronavirus-covid-19-may-never-go-away-could-become-just-another-virus-says-who-executive-director-michael-ryan-2283351.html>

77 “Have to learn to live with Covid-19: Govt”, The Times of India, 9 May 2020, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/75638429.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

78 “Crime rate has gone down during lockdown period: DGP”, The Assam Tribune, 25 April 2020, <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/at.asp?id=apr2520/Page11>

INTERPOL-s-COVID-19-global-threat-assessment

75 Ibid.

outside the state have lost their jobs and have returned back to the state, including a large number of migrant workers. As mentioned earlier in chapter 3 of this Report, the state has witnessed an influx of more than 1 lakh people once the inter-state movement has begun. With these large numbers of people back in the state, several of whom would be without a source of income, there are chances of a spurt in the number of crime across Assam.

An analysis by CID Assam mentions certain types of crimes that may increase in the state. These are:

(i) Human Trafficking:

It is usually seen that number of human trafficking cases rise during a calamity. The current pandemic situation too may lead to increase in such cases in the near future. Large numbers of migrant workers have come back to Assam from states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and the South Indian states. Similarly, people engaged as domestic helps too have returned to the state from major cities like Delhi and Mumbai. This has created a sort of vacuum, which can be exploited by human traffickers to lure in vulnerable persons, especially women and children. Families facing financial hardships too may fall in the trap of human traffickers and send their children for work outside state.

(ii) Drug Trafficking:

The demand for drugs may increase after the lockdown is lifted, as the addicts were unable to procure drugs during the lockdown period. Similarly, the drug traffickers who were unable to transport their drug consignments during lockdown may now begin transporting these.

(iii) Crime against Property:

Incidents of theft, burglary, snatching, etc, may rise after the lockdown period. This may be done by people who are facing financial difficulties due to the

lockdown, people who now no longer have a source of income, or drug addicts who need money to buy drugs. Some of the released convicts or undertrial prisoners too may be involved in such cases. Many people who have returned to the state too may be without a source of income and they too might indulge in such activities. Habitual offenders too might try to make up for their lost time during the lockdown and get involved in crimes against property.

(iv) Communal Conflicts:

Communal tensions may flare up in certain pockets of the State because of the hate messages and communally insensitive posts in social media.

(v) Suicides:

With loss of employment and mental stress due to the pandemic, there may be a rise of suicide cases in the state. Facing uncertain future and lack of a source of income, may force many to end their life.

(vi) Cyber Crime:

With increasing use of digital platforms, there might be a spurt of cyber crimes in Assam. With more and more people using digital modes of payment, cyber criminals may try to gather their financial data. Also, with increased use of online platforms for meeting, conferences, etc, criminals may try to target these by exploiting the vulnerabilities. They may also try to dupe people by offering them jobs online, offer of relief from the government, providing online schemes for earning money, etc.

Thus, Assam Police have to come up with an action plan for handling such crime situations which may evolve post-lockdown.

(b) Tackling Bioterrorism

Apart from tackling the new wave of crime, the state police also have to be ready for another enemy, which is similar to the current pandemic. The enemy being

referred to here is Bioterrorism. The United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention defines bioterrorism as, “the intentional release of viruses, bacteria, or other germs that can sicken or kill people, livestock, or crops.”⁷⁹

In India, several nodal ministries have been earmarked for dealing with epidemics caused by bioterrorism. It includes the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which is one of the main ministries tasked with providing directions and technical support for capacity building, surveillance and early detection of an outbreak. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is responsible for the assessment of the threat, intelligence inputs and implementation of preventive mechanisms. There is also the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), which is a specialised force constituted under the MHA to deal with CBRN attacks (Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear). The NDRF⁸⁰ consists of 12 battalions, three each from the BSF and CRPF, and two each from CISF, ITBP and SSB. A national response mechanism to tackle bioterrorism is also being formulated under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The Defence Ministry too is a part of the management of matters and consequences related to bio-warfare as well as in clinical case management. The Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO) is also actively engaged in developing protective systems and equipment for troops for using during such attacks.

This shows that India has been taking steps to tackle newer types of threats. The Assam Police too is keeping itself updated in this regard. This was stated by DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta during the

interview done as part of this study. He said that, “In my previous posting as Director of Assam Fire and Emergency Services, I had several teams trained to fight CBRN attacks. We now have several units ready in the state to respond to such threat. I also procured state of the art equipments including HAZMAT vehicles, suits and drones to fight against such eventualities. So while the work was initiated by me, it needs to be taken forward by the current and subsequent leadership by drawing from the current experience.”

The Fire & Emergency Services (F&ES), Assam, is keeping itself ready for such threats. Seventeen personnel from F&ES, Assam, have undergone training at Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Unit, National Industrial Security Academy (NISA), Hyderabad and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Pune, in handling CBRN related emergencies. These trained personnel are presently posted at various F&ES stations across the state⁸¹.

(c) Police Training

The current situation also made it clear that there also has to be re-evaluation of police training in the future. Police training schools should now include in their syllabus how to handle medical emergencies in case of a pandemic and how police should respond to such situations. New equipments have to be procured and police have to be trained in the use and handling of PPE kits. This will ensure that the police are better prepared and know exactly how to handle and manage such types of disasters.

79 Bioterrorism, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, United States, <https://www.cdc.gov/anthrax/bioterrorism/index.html>

80 National Disaster Response Force, <http://www.ndrf.gov.in/about-us>

81 Emailed Response to Interview Questionnaire by Ms. Jayshree Khersa, APS, Deputy Director, F&ES, Assam, Received on 14 May 2020



Picture: A police personnel explaining how to maintain social distance

(d) Future Duties

The current situation has also brought forward a question - what changes in normal policing duties could we be seeing in the future? During the interviews and interactions that the CDPS team had during this Study, it was seen that many police personnel had this question. These police personnel had seen newer duties being assigned to them, like maintaining social distancing in places like banks, gas cylinder distribution points, accompanying healthcare professionals in villages, ensuring home quarantine of people, etc. These new role played by them may gradually become a part of their regular duties in the near future, adding a new dimension to policing.

(e) Use of Technology

Another new dimension in the future would be the widespread use of technology in policing. The current pandemic itself has shown how police can use technology effectively. Police are using drones for carrying out surveillance, sanitization and to reach out to people. In Gujarat, police is using 200 drones

to monitor people's movements across the state⁸². Delhi Police has deployed drones to ensure people follow social distancing in Azadpur Mandi, Asia's largest fruit and vegetable wholesale market. They are also using drones to monitor people's movements in Ghazipur Mandi, which witnesses a steady stream of buyers throughout the day⁸³. These are just some examples to show how more technology-reliant police will be on the future.

Similarly, with more and more people now preferring 'contact-less' shopping, the volume of online shopping would increase, which would also mean increase in cyber crimes to steal financial data of the shoppers. Thus, in order to fight such crimes, the capabilities of cyber crime cells of Assam Police have to be constantly upgraded and more police personnel

82 "How drones in India are taking the fight to coronavirus", The Economic Times, 15 April 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/how-drones-in-india-are-taking-the-fight-to-coronavirus/the-invincible-frontline-workers/slideshow/75154929.cms>

83 Ibid.

have to be trained to fight cyber crime.

Also, we might see an increase in filing of complaints online by the citizens. This will help reduce footfall in the police stations and also save time, both of the citizens as well as the police. Use of teleconferencing and video conferencing may see an increase and the Assam police personnel, who are now using both these modes during the current lockdown, may use these while interacting with the people who had filed cases. The Assam Police may also develop a system in which people may set up appointment for teleconferencing and video conferencing with a police officer to report a crime or other relevant matters.

Thus, in the future, we may see policing entering a new dimension, which is more technology-driven, more people-friendly, and better trained to handle emergencies as well as changes in crime pattern.

The DGP Speaks



Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, IPS, DGP Assam

(The following questions and answers are based on an Interview Questionnaire shared with the DGP Assam)

A. Strategy

Q.1) How do you define your core strategy for Assam Police as frontline anti-COVID workers?

■ Since the situation was an evolving one, the need to respond to it had to be dynamic as well. That meant, the entire force had to be brought on the same page for this. Meaning not just the officers but even the last constable, responding on ground needed to know what the strategy was and what were the Do's & Don't. Hence, a multi-pronged approach was needed. The strategic perspective was coined under some basic leadership principles; identifying the right man for the right job, delegation, decisive and clear-cut actions and orders and vigorous communication. All of this was done in a very

scientific manner and not as a knee-jerk reaction to the crisis. On these lines, I formed 6 different teams under the leadership of 6 very able senior officers. Each of them had very clear directives and areas of responsibility; Nodal Officer (IGP, L&O), Essential Services (ADG L&O), Police Welfare (ADG Admin), Civil Relief (DIG Security), Contact Tracing (ADG STF) and Contact-Center/Control-Room (DIG). This formed the backbone of the tactical response. My personal involvement and focus during this has been to provide for whatever these teams needed to deliver on their assigned tasks. In this, I continue to have the unwavering support the Hon Chief Minister and his entire Government. The idea here is to ensure that I am able to provide them with Policy Level

backing so they feel secure and do not have to look over their shoulders every time. That's my job, to be their rearguard so they can go on an all-out offensive against the crisis. I also made it a point to visit all the districts and interact with our men on the ground and ensure the morale of the force is high.

Q.2) How would you describe Assam Police's role for enforcing lockdown?

■ I had to ensure that I create an ecosystem where the force felt proud of its ethos and the service delivery attitude emanated from within the force and not imposed upon them. This led to Assam Police living by its motto, "Jana Heete, Jana Sewarthe". During the initial days of the lockdown, we took strict actions against offenders. We kept on our vigil and continue to do so. However, we do it not as a show of force but as a service to the people of our state. This is because, if we do not enforce the lockdown, we will be doing the gravest disservice to our people since we will not be able to protect them against this unseen enemy. However, while we have enforced the lockdown with all our might, we have also stood by our people in helping them in any way possible. The way even our rank and file voluntarily supported our masses makes me very proud and I feel privileged to be working with them in the same team.

Q.3) What kinds of challenges were faced by the Police while enforcing lockdown?

■ The biggest challenge was the fact that this was all very new. Not just for us but for the entire world. So there was hardly any reference point. Apart from that, a key challenge was the lack of awareness about the need and benefit of the lockdown among the general public. Initially, there was also a lack of awareness about the Do's & Don't as well as the entire lockdown process among our force. Also, given an active CI region. It is not possible to withdraw

forces from CI operations at this stage because though the threat elements have been contained to a great degree in recent times, the threat continues to exist. Finally, given the lack of infrastructure, reaching the nooks & corners of the state in a timely and adequate manner has been a challenge.

Q.4) What methodology did you use to brief the entire police machinery of the state?

■ My approach in any crisis situation is to ensure a few things right from the beginning. The first is choosing the right man for the right job. Once that is done, ensure clear and specific tasking of the man. Next and very importantly, delegation and empowerment so that the person can do his/her job effectively. I used this as the starting point and then ensured clear and specific instructions with proper and scientific SOPs are created and circulated through the rank and file. Also, multiple VCs were done with all SPs & DCs apart from personal field visits across Assam. My team also acted as a force multiplier in this. Apart from this, the usual modes of communications like phone and texts were leveraged as usual. I have also made it a point to speak directly to anyone in the team who would have performed some exemplary act, which would go beyond the call of his or her duty. Finally, I hold a daily meeting of the core team, which is now an alternate day affair as things have streamlined considerably.

Q.5) In your entire career, were you ever prepared for playing such a role as you are playing now?

■ I think every experience in life is unique in itself. If you are willing to be humble and learn, your past experiences build and prepares you for future eventualities. So while there is no parallel to the current pandemic in all our lifetimes, one can definitely draw some lessons from one's past and use them as reference points. I have been fortunate

enough to work in some very difficult positions in the past and I have also had the good fortune to work within virtually every department of police. So all these helps prepare you in a way for eventualities.

Q.6) The police are prepared for disaster management. How different is dealing with a pandemic?

■ As I have mentioned earlier as well, this is a unique situation for the entire globe. So the response mechanism also needs to be unique. While there are certain similarities between disaster management and the current situation, especially when it comes to relief work, there are other reference points as well. Like we know very well how to enforce a curfew. However, what is unique now is to ensure that it is done in a positive manner and also over a sustained period of time. So while there are differences, there are also lessons one can refer to from certain elements of policing and bring them all together in a collage and address the current situation.

B. Roles & Responsibilities

Q.7) What kind of support was provided by Assam Police to the healthcare professionals during the lockdown period?

■ In order to ensure safety and security of healthcare professionals during the fight against COVID-19, Shri. Deepak Kr. Kedia, IPS has been appointed as the overall nodal officer to redress all issues pertaining to the safety of healthcare professionals. Assam Police stands shoulder to shoulder with our healthcare professionals. Be it deployments in quarantine facilities or ensuring home quarantine of individuals or protection of healthcare professionals when they were discharging their duties, Assam Police made sure all of these were carried out without any hitches. Also, ensuring movement of healthcare professionals, medicine and other essentials during the lockdown was taken

care of by Assam Police, in many cases using its own infrastructure. But most importantly, we treated them as brothers in arm during this entire process.

Q.8) How did the Assam Police help in managing the supply chain of essential items during the lockdown period?

■ Shri G.P. Singh, IPS and Shri M.P. Gupta, IPS has been nominated to liaise with State Government/ Central Government to ensure smooth movement of essential commodities across the state. Detailed instructions have been given to ensure that vehicles carrying essential items are allowed free passage and if required, assisted as well. However, there have been incidents when such vehicles tried to move people from other states or districts. In such cases, required action was taken by the police in larger public interest.

Q.9) What steps have been taken by Assam Police to assist people of Assam stranded outside the state and people of other states/countries stuck in Assam?

■ As soon as the lockdown was initiated, we realized the need of a two-way communication mechanism with the masses. With this objective, we set up a contact center under the command of Shri A. P. Tiwari, IPS. We have received 3,788 messages from within the state and 28,991 messages from outside the state. All valid requests have been addressed either through direct interventions (if within the state) or through networking with other state/central government and also leveraging on our personal networks in various states. Be it providing ration, medicine etc or in some exceptional cases, arranging for their transport to their native places. A key factor was to engage our VDPs and outposts to understand the requirement of people in the hinterlands of the state and then network with local NGOs to provide support to these people, often

using Assam Police infrastructure. I initiated this mechanism and was later ably coordinated by Shri Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS.

Q.10) How did the Assam Police manage inter and intra-state travel during the lockdown? What were the challenges faced?

■ During the initial phases of the Lockdown, in line with directives issued by the Government of India, we did not permit inter-state travel, except for exceptional cases which were dealt with on the merit of the request. For example, we ensured the travel of a boy's corpse from Chennai by coordinating with our batchmates and connections in the state. Similarly, I personally ensured the travel of a group from West Bengal to Assam by speaking to my batchmate in West Bengal. However, these were all exceptional cases. In case of intra-state travel, the entire coordination and logistics was managed by us through issue of passes for people in need. The execution of inter-district travel organized by the Government of Assam was taken care of by Shri A. P. Tiwari, IPS, who also is the MD of ASTC.

The biggest challenge in this has been to prioritize one case over the other. While almost all the requests were heart wrenching, we could address only a select few of them in order to ensure larger public safety. Our team displayed enormous sensitivity in this entire exercise.

With the ease in restrictions in movement of people both inter-state and intra-state, on 30 April, the State Level Empowered Committee, Assam, designated ADGP Shri G.P. Singh, IPS, as the Nodal Officer for the herculean task of transporting people back to Assam and at the same time ensure seamless movement of people to other states. ADGP Shri Harmeet Singh, IPS, was designated as the alternate Nodal Officer. In order to execute the operation, a committee was also formed under

the leadership of Shri G.P Singh. The committee had a representation from both civil and police administration. The members included Shri Harmeet Singh, Shri A.P Tiwari, Shri A.S Manivannan, CEO, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Dr. Laxmanan S, MD, National Health Mission (NHM), Shri Adil Khan, Commissioner, Transport Department, Shri Gaurav Upadhyay, AIG (Logistics), Shri Shwetank Mishra, SP (Special Branch). A Command and Control Centre was set up at the ASDM office at Gorchuk to coordinate transport operations regarding movement of stranded people. During the last week of April, inter-district movement of people was successfully executed. Since May, entire operation of inter-state movement is being carried out from ASDM office, Gorchuk.

As per available records, between 2 May and 28 June, approximately 360000 people stranded outside the state have returned to Assam via road, rail and air transport. At the same time, around 60000 people left the state using the available means of transport.

Q.11) How difficult/complicated was the process of Contact Tracing of COVID-19 positive individuals and the missing COVID-19 vulnerable individuals?

■ We have set up a separate team under Shri Deepak Kumar, IPS for Contact Tracing. The coordination effort on ground is under the charge of Shri G. P. Singh, IPS. We have leveraged on some existing technologies which we use in a very different context. So reorienting the focus of the team to use the same technologies for contact tracing had to be done. Also, contrary to popular belief, such technologies are not as evolved as one believes. So a lot of legwork by the forces is to be done which needs boots on the ground. We have also been experimenting with some new technologies to reduce the load on our forces, albeit with varying success.

Q.12) In what ways did the Assam Police coordinate with police and civil administration of other states?

■ I, along with the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Chief Secretary, attend a daily video conference with the Cabinet Secretary, Govt. of India every morning. The stakeholders of all states and UTs attend this. So this becomes a de facto coordination mechanism. However, apart from this formal channel, all of us, the senior officers, have our batch-mates or friends in the civil administration and police of other states. We leverage on this personal connections to a large extent to coordinate and address the needs of our people.

Q.13) How did the Assam Police manage inter and intra-state travel during the lockdown? What were the challenges faced?

■ In line with directives issued by the Govt. of India, we have not permitted inter state travel except for exceptional cases which were dealt with on the merit of the request. For example, we ensured the travel of a boy's corpse from Chennai recently by coordinating with our batchmates and connections in the state. Similarly, I personally ensure the travel of a group from West Bengal to Assam by speaking to my batchmate in West Bengal. However, these were all exceptional cases. In case of intra state travel, the entire coordination and logistics was managed by us through issue of passes for people in need and even now, the execution of inter district travel organized by the Govt of Assam is taken care of by Shri A. P. Tiwari, IPS who also is the MD of ASTC. The biggest challenge in this has been to prioritize one case over the other. While almost all the requests were heart wrenching, we could address only a select few of them in order to ensure larger public safety. Our team displayed enormous sensitivity in this entire exercise.

C. Social Media

Q.14) What steps were taken by the Assam Police to halt the spread of fake news about COVID-19 in the cyber world?

■ Our Social Media cell under the leadership of Shri Harmeet Singh, IPS has done a stellar job in terms of monitoring fake or provocative news in the social media. We detected 796 such posts out of which we have 87 lodged cases and arrested 46 individuals. We have also run various awareness campaigns both of social and traditional media in order to dissuade people from spreading fake news by letting them know the consequences of such actions.

Q.15) How did the Assam Police use social media to spread awareness about COVID-19?

■ As mentioned earlier, the lack of awareness among the masses was a major challenge for us. So the most effective way for us to reach out to them was social media. However, we went about it in very innovative way to capture the attention of the people. For example, I created a Bihu video where Assam Police personnel were shown to be performing Bihu dance to a song which was written to create awareness among the masses about COVID 19 and importance of lockdown and social distancing. This video got 2 million views in less than two days. Many similar campaigns were run to create awareness among the masses. Even our helplines were promoted using social media which became a great success. Lot of credit goes to Shri Harmeet Singh, IPS and his team and Shri A. P. Tiwari, IPS and his team as well.

D. Humanitarian Works

Q.16) Please mention the different types of humanitarian works carried out by Assam Police during the lockdown? How were these works coordinated?

■ As mentioned earlier, Assam Police stands by its motto of Jana Heete, Jana Sewarthe. So in

enacting this role, there are many many shining examples of Assam Police carrying out humanitarian works. One needs to understand these efforts were not done to earn any recognition or as a policing tool. It was done by the genuineness for the soul of our police force. In this regards, we have provided help and relief to over 85,000 families, 220,000 individuals and over 3,000 animals till date. We have provided over 500,000 KGs of food material to the people, which were sponsored by our men directly at times. Apart from this, we ensured required medicines were provided to everyone who requested for it.

E. Future Strategy

Q.17) What were the lessons learnt while managing this pandemic and how would you use these in case of an outbreak of similar nature?

■ Firstly, this is an evolving situation which needs our constant self appraisal and response. So drawing strategic lessons is something which is some time ahead of us. The assessment of this has to be multi-tiered at a global, national, state and local level. The lessons will be different at each level and I think there is a consensus at the national level for this kind of assessment. We on our part, we are initiating a study to understand the impact of the situation on crime rate in the state. While there is a general understanding around this, we need to really go deep on this issue from a policing perspective. However, one enduring re-learning during this is the need for compassion, empathy and cooperation among all of us as citizens of this country.

Q.18) Do you think the time has come for the state police to be ready for tackling bio-terrorism and use of biological weapons and is there is a need to set up a separate unit/cell for the purpose?

■ A national response to tackling such issues is being formed under National Disaster Management Authority. While we already have a response mechanism, it is being ratified with the learnings of the current situation and war-gaming worst case scenarios. In my previous posting as Director of Assam Fire and Emergency Services, I had several teams trained to fight CBRN attacks (Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear). We now have several units ready in the state to respond to such threat. I also procured state of the art equipments including HAZMAT vehicles, suits and drones to fight against such eventualities. So while the work was initiated by me, it needs to be taken forward by the current and subsequent leadership by drawing from the current experience.

* For other major interviews conducted during the Study, see the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/13pJ-pS1ox02QrQL-LVL8-zKP0CTNmFR8CdqHS0g6Gyw/edit?usp=sharing>

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Charaideo Police: Exemplary Service in times of Need

Charaideo Police, under the leadership of its SP, Anand Mishra, IPS, has been carrying out exemplary service to the needy during the lockdown. Since 2019, they were already running a project called ‘Project Good Samaritan’, which became very relevant during the lockdown. Through this project all miscellaneous calls for help were addressed, formally and informally. People were provided with free transportation, gas cylinders were delivered at homes, families counselled, some birthdays celebrated, awareness drives undertaken, masks and sanitizers were shared, family contacts were facilitated and few pregnant ladies were taken to hospitals.

Then they started three new programmes: **Food for All, Free Home Delivery of Life Saving Medicines, Free Dry Ration Distribution.**

(a) Food for All Programme: This targeted to serve the homeless, destitute or just anybody in need. Everyday a new menu with high nutritional value was offered. Even stray animals were taken care of under this programme. Under this scheme, the Charaideo Police started with one *Langar* (free eating outlet) at one Police Station compound. They made provision for *pandal*, tables, chairs, hand-wash station, packaged drinking water, disposable

plates and glasses. The programme was started with a voluntary pooled contribution from the police personnel. The *Langar* was run by the police station staff who were off-duty. The programme was an instant hit. Soon they were flooded with requests from individuals, NGOs, youth clubs, civil society organizations, and even government officials and departments to contribute/sponsor the programme for at least one day each. This gave a fillip to the programme and Charaideo Police extended the “Food for All” programme to all Police Stations in the district. The same model was copied in all Police Stations in the district and soon they were feeding thousands of people every day in the district. Some Police Stations took additional initiative to take around a ‘Food for All’ Van in their jurisdiction to cover any leftover needy persons. Individuals, groups and organizations from civil society became the backbone of the programme. Each food drive was sponsored by some persons or organization and Police facilitated the service delivery. They also maintained due records of the whole programme in the district.

Under this Food for All initiative, 18,287 hot meals were served to the destitute and daily wagers (till 4 May 2020). With the gradual relaxations in the restrictions and opening up of the economy, the Charaideo Police announced suspension of this

A CHARAIDEO DISTRICT POLICE INITIATIVE

FOOD FOR ALL

#Lockdown
#FightAgainstCorona



#GoodSamaritan
#WeCare

LANGAR FOR DESTITUTES AND DALIY WAGE EARNERS AT SONARI POLICE STATION COMPLEX



FOR FREE HOME DELIVERY OF EMERGENCY & LIFE-SAVING MEDICINES IN CHARAIDEO DISTRICT



PLEASE CALL POLICE CONTROL ROOM
24X7 AT YOUR SERVICE

9678921813

[/CharaideoPolice](#) [/CharaideoPolice](#) [/CharaideoPpl](#)



Picture: Various activities undertaken by Charaideo Police during the lockdown

programme from 4 May, but they still feed the needy if and when they get a call from the public.

(b) Free Home Delivery of Life Saving Medicines:

Most of the medicines that Charaideo Police handed over to the people under this programme were not only delivered for free but also given to them free of cost. The Police personnel of the district bore the expenses among themselves just to see a cheer and smile on the faces of needy persons in this time of crisis. Through their outreach with the community, especially the youth, the police got many dedicated volunteers with motor bikes. Police issued them with special passes only for this task. Volunteers included students, businessmen, pharmacists, paramedic staff and the police personnel themselves. The Police Control Room at the district doubled as a “Service Delivery Call Centre”. They popularized the availability of such service through social media. They were flooded with requests for fetching medicines from local as well as far flung areas, other districts and even from Guwahati. The Control Centre took down such requests and tasked the nearest volunteer with the job. The volunteer would fetch the medicine from the nearest pharmacy and deliver the same at the doorstep of the caller. In case of medicines required to be brought in from far flung areas/other districts/Guwahati, the case was flagged

with a responsible nodal Gazetted Officer who would coordinate with other districts and would get the medicine delivered through a chain delivery system, by use of Police Patrol vehicles from PS to PS and finally last mile delivery by the local Police Station staff. Under this programme, 180 individuals have received their medicines in the district (till 4 May). For 93 individuals among these 180, medicines were procured from outside the district.

(c) Free Dry Ration Distribution: People from other districts and states stranded in Charaideo, migrant workers, lone senior citizens as well as people in Home Quarantine were delivered free ration by the Charaideo Police. Some cases were referred to the police by members of the media; some were flagged on social media by certain individuals or the needy themselves. Some needy individuals and families got left out in the relief material distribution process carried by the civil administration; while some others got too little to have mattered for the long-drawn lockdown. Herein, Charaideo Police tried to bridge the gap by personal contributions and relief material pool created by sponsorships from individuals, NGOs and civil society organizations. Till 4 May, about 750 families of the district got groceries delivered by the police.

Case Study 2

Dibrugarh Police becomes Economic Facilitators

Twenty-year-old Janmoni Gogoi is a resident of Saphakati Ghogora Gaon of Bogibeel area in Dibrugarh. She completed her higher secondary education from Dibrugarh Government Girls' Higher Secondary School but was unable to pursue higher education due to financial constraints. Her father has been ailing for the last 8 years and is unable to contribute to the family's income. Her mother has been selling vegetables in the Borbaruah market to run the family. Janmoni too was helping her mother in selling the vegetables for the last two years. However, as the lockdown was announced, they were unable to go to Borbaruah to sell vegetables as the market was closed. As some of the restrictions got relaxed, Janmoni decided to sell vegetables door-to-door on a bicycle to support her family.

Soon the visuals of Janmoni selling vegetables on her bicycle began to be displayed by several media outlets. Seeing these and inspired by her grit and determination, the Assam Police swung into action. Under the guidance of DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who wants to see the police force transform into facilitators of the economy, Dibrugarh Police went to her home and gifted her a TVS Moped. Ms. Pallabi Majumdar, DSP (HQ), Dibrugarh, gifted her the Moped on behalf of the Assam Police. The moped will now surely help her for ferrying vegetables. At the same time, others have also come forward to support her studies. These positive developments, in which Assam Police played a very major role, can surely help Janmoni move towards a better future.



Picture: MS. Pallabi Majumdar, DSP (HQ), Dibrugarh, handing over a moped to Janmoni

Case Study 3

Nagaon Police Celebrates a Septuagenarian's Birthday

Seventy-eight-year old Mr Kamala Prasad Agarwal was living alone in his house in Nagaon. His wife and other family members were stranded in Bangalore and Delhi due to the lockdown. On 4 May 2020, he was surprised to find a police team come to his house. Initially worried, his apprehensions died down when he realized why the police team was at his house. It was his birthday and the police team was there to celebrate it with him. The team of eight police personnel informed him that they were there as they could not let him spend his birthday alone.

The police team sang 'Happy Birthday' for Mr. Agarwal and also brought placards where they had written 'I am your son' and 'I am your daughter'. The police could not get a cake as the shops were closed due to the lockdown, but they brought sweets for celebration. They also brought birthday hats. This celebration made Mr. Agarwal happy and he got quite emotional at this gesture of the Assam Police. Video of the moments shared by Assam Police and Nagaon Police on its social media handles soon became viral evoking positive reactions from the public.



Picture: Nagaon police personnel with festoons celebrating septuagenarian Mr K. P. Agarwal's birthday

Case Study 4

Assam Police Escorts Students from Kota amid Lockdown

Kota in Rajasthan is a well known destination for students who wish to undertake coaching to appear in competitive entrance examinations, especially for medical and engineering. There are several students from Assam who were staying in Kota when the lockdown was announced. Families of these students grew restless with concern for their wards' well-being as COVID-19 spread across the country. They requested the Government of Assam to evacuate them.

Following the requests and permission granted by the central government, on 23 April 2020, an Assam Police team went to Kota to expedite the evacuation of the students stranded there. Since domestic airlines

were not flying, the team was flown in to Jaipur via a chartered Learjet 45 double engine business jet aircraft so that they could accelerate the process and escort the students back by bus.

The police team brought back a total of 391 students to Assam in 18 special buses. The evacuation team and students took a 2000 km bus ride from Kota via Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They reached Guwahati in the wee hours of 27 April. The students were received at the Quarantine Centre set up at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium and Sports Complex at Sarusajai and immediately sent for mandatory 14-day quarantine. This was a commendable effort on part of the Assam Government as well as the Assam Police, who ensured that the students of Assam were not left stranded outside the state.



Picture: Assam Health Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma seen receiving students at the quarantine facility at Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium and Sports Complex at Sarusajai

Case Study 5

Barpeta Police runs Community Kitchen during Lockdown

Barpeta Police started a Community Kitchen from 31 March 2020. This Community Kitchen of Barpeta Police served cooked meals to people in need and also to inter-district passengers in different parts of the district.

Till 2 May 2020, Community Kitchen fed about 26700 people at the following different locations:

- Daily wage laborers, rickshaw pullers, medical attendants were fed adjacent to Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College & Hospital
- Barpeta Road Railway Station area, Sorbhog Police Station area, especially in village

Ghugubari for 3-4 days

- Truck drivers, handymen and other labourers were fed at 31 National Highway Points at Howly, Barpeta Road, Pathsala
- People entering from other districts were fed in the Inter-District bordering areas of Mazdia, Sarthebari, Patacharkuchi and Kalgachia

Barpeta police, with assistance from Assam Bell Metal Worker's Association and Sarthebari Municipal Board, also fed the out-of-job bell metal workers residing in Sarthebari. Police handed over bags containing rice, dal, potatoes, mustard oil, salt, pumpkin, hand sanitizers and face masks to people in the villages of Gomura, Karakuchi, Namshala and Amrikhowa.



Picture: A Photo Collage of various initiatives taken by Barpeta Police

Case Study 6

Assam Police Spearheads Feeding of Stray Dogs

Dogs are termed as man's best friend. While several people keep dogs as pets, there are also numerous dogs that are found straying the nooks and corners of streets. On a normal day, these dogs find enough food to scavenge, as there are restaurants and eateries abound. But the lockdown changed it all. Food

became scarce for these four-legged forcing them to saunter about in hunger. To end their distress, Assam Police took up the initiative to feed these dogs. The dogs were not only fed canine feed, biscuits or leftovers, but also with food items like *khichdi* and chicken especially made for them. Supported by several animal care foundations, Assam Police made an exemplary effort in feeding these canines.



Picture: Sidli Police Station OC Ritu Jyoti Nath and his aides feeding street dogs



Picture: Sivasagar police feeding stray dogs at night



Picture: Assam Police personnel feeding stray dogs in Guwahati

Case Study 7

Assam Police Rescues Stranded Birds and Animals

Kamrup police on 16 April 2020 rescued a Greater Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*) from Dadara-Pachariya village in the district. The bird seemed to have strayed from its habitat. The endangered Greater Adjutant Stork, which was once well distributed in Southeast Asia, has witnessed a massive decline of its population and is currently known to breed only in Assam and Cambodia. It is estimated that around 1200 to 1500 of these birds are left in the wild and among these, there are about 800 in Assam. The

surviving population is under great threat because of destruction of feeding and breeding habitat. Amidst this threat, the act of the Assam Police in rescuing this endangered bird has been praised by environmentalists as well as the general public. In a similar effort, Assam Police, along with the PAWS Foundation rescued an injured dog from Odalbakra area in Guwahati city. They also rescued another dog from Dhirenpara in Guwahati and named it 'Quarantina'. These dogs were shifted to Animal Shelter for their proper care and treatment.



Picture: Kamrup Police personnel with the rescued Greater Adjutant Stork



Picture: Dogs rescued by Assam Police; the one in the lower picture was named 'Quarantina'

Case Study 8

Assam Police Hosts Activist Vikash Shinde throughout the Lockdown

Mr. Vikas Jagannath Shinde is a man with a mission who has been touring the country on his bike since 2015. A resident of a village in Satara in Maharashtra, Shinde works in the fields for nine months every year and for the next three months, he travels around the country on his 100cc Bajaj Platina. He goes from village-to-village campaigning on issues like global warming, non-violence, peace, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, conservation of natural sources and use of plastic.

While on his tour to the Northeast this year, Shinde got stuck in Morigaon, when the lockdown was announced. As he faced problems with food and accommodation, the Morigaon Police came forward for his help. He was offered accommodation at the Guest House of Morigaon Police, where he stayed for more than 50 days. Morigaon Police also celebrated his birthday on 6 May at the guest house. The help and love received from Morigaon police humbled Mr Shinde who extended his salute to the Assam Police and was appreciative of the fact that how the police cared for him with utmost respect.



Picture: A screen grab from an interview of Mr Vikas Jagannath Shinde, shared by Morigaon Police on its Facebook account

Case Study 9

Assam Police & PISA – Supporting the Needy

People in Serving Assam (PISA) is a registered public charitable Trust that works for the uplift of the less fortunate people in the state. The Trust has undertaken numerous outreach programmes to feed the hungry, destitute and homeless in various locations of the state. When lockdown was announced by the government, the members of PISA began to brainstorm ways to help the less privileged during this situation. They decided to feed the needy but as there were restrictions imposed, they had to find a way.

They then contacted DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who assured full support from the Assam Police in this endeavour. Mr. Hemanta Kr. Das, APS, DCP

(Admin), Guwahati, was among those put in charge for coordination of such initiatives initially. PISA founder Ms. Seema Hussain then tied up with the Fancy Bazar Gurudwara Committee and decided to start the food distribution drive in Guwahati. Aided by the Gurudwara Committee and Assam Police, PISA began the process of feeding the poor and the hungry. Also, while almost everyone was busy stocking up on food and grains the day before the lockdown started, many people were not able to do so. PISA helped them by distributing rice among such people. Soon, similar efforts were taken up by other civil society organizations and NGOs and currently many such organizations including PISA, aided by the Assam Police, are feeding the needy every single day.



Picture: PISA members and Assam Police personnel in a food distribution drive in Guwahati

Case Study 10

Lakhimpur Police reaches out to a Cancer patient

Ms Sangeeta Gogoi is a resident of North Lakhimpur. She is on a prescribed fruit diet as she has been suffering from Cancer. The lockdown made access to fruits almost next to impossible. This dampened her spirits as she knew it would impact her fragile health. Meanwhile coming to know of her plight, her friend Aroop Gohain Baruah, who is based in Jorhat, sprang into action. He immediately got in touch with Mr. Imdadul Hussain Bora, IPS, DIG (Security) to apprise him of the matter. He requested the DIG to inform Mr. Rajveer, IPS, SP, Lakhimpur, about it. On the other hand, through a

different channel, Mr. Divya Mishra, an IPS officer of Gujarat Police, got in touch with DIG Vivek Raj Singh Kukrele, an IPS officer of Assam Cadre on deputation in Madhya Pradesh, who in turn got in touch with the SP Lakhimpur. Responding to this emergency, on 28 March, SP Mr Rajveer along with Mr Aditya Prakash Deori, OC, North Lakhimpur Police Station, reached Ms Gogoi's house with a carton of fruits. Later, they also provided her with a carton of vegetables. This exemplary on-time service by Assam Police brought solace to the mind and body of Ms. Gogoi, who took to Facebook to thank each one of these police officials.



Picture: SP Lakhimpur, Mr Rajveer, and OC, North Lakhimpur Police Station, Mr Aditya Prakash Deori is seen with provisions for Ms Sangeeta Gogoi

[View Edit History](#)

Sangeeta Gogoi

I don't know how to thank the Superintendent of Police, IPS Rajveer ji, Lakhimpur and Officer-in-charge, Aditya ji, North Lakhimpur for carrying a box of fruits for me; what a surprise!

They didn't accept the cost that they bore and said, "Your vegetables are on the way!"

I don't know how to react; overwhelmed by their act of kindness and empathy.

[Ramshankar Mishra](#) ji's son, IPS Divya Mishra ji, SP Gujarat contacted his friend Vivek Raj Sing Kukrele ji, an IPS officer of Assam Cadre, on deputation as DIG in MP who contacted SP Rajveer ji of Nlp to extend this help. I remain indebted to all of you.

[Aroop Gohain Baruah](#) ji contacted IGP Imdadul Haque ji to reach out. Heartfelt thanks to you both.

And whoever might have also informed them, I remain grateful to all of you 🙏

Thank you, everyone for your prayers and good wishes 🙏❤️

May the fruits of all the deeds you do selflessly for others come back to each one of you manifold.

In few minutes, the vegetables also arrived! Again they didn't accept the price. Now I don't know if I should feel happy or sad!

Once again, heartfelt thanks to all. Thank you, Universe 🙏

Picture: Ms Sangeeta Gogoi's Facebook post praising the police personnel for their help

Case Study 11

Charaideo Police arranges Medicine for Accident Victim

Mr. Sandipon Gogoi is a resident of Sonari in Charaideo district. He broke his right leg in a road accident in February 2020. He had to undergo a major operation after the accident and since then, he has been confined to his bed. He had been prescribed medicines by the doctor and while he was regularly having them, his medicine stock ran out during the

lockdown. He found that his prescribed medicines were not available in the pharmacies in Sonari.

Finding no other way to arrange the medicines, he contacted the Sub-divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Sonari, Mr. Tridip Kumbang, APS. The SDPO acted on his request and immediately arranged for his medicines. The medicines were delivered to Mr. Gogoi, who expressed his gratitude to the SDPO and the Charaideo Police. He also shared his experience through his Facebook account.



Picture: A delighted Sandipon Gogoi expressing his gratitude to Charaideo Police via Facebook

Case Study 12

Karbi Anglong Police Ensuring Honourable Cremation of a COVID-19 Victim

On 7 June 2020, a 58 year old man from Sunbora village in Karbi Anglong district died from the COVID-19 disease. However, the people from his village opposed the cremation of his body in the village fearing spread of the disease. His body was kept in the morgue of the Diphu Medical College and Hospital, situated at Diphu, the district headquarters of Karbi Anglong. The door of the morgue was locked and the health workers stayed away from the body and the morgue out of fear and concerns for their health.

At this point, Mr. Debojit Deuri, APS, SP, Karbi Anglong, swung into action. Going beyond his call of duty, he decided to take the responsibility of cremating the body himself. On 9 June, two days after the death of the person, SP Debojit Deuri went to the morgue, along with his team. Ms. Nahid Karishma, APS, DSP (HQ), Karbi Anglong, went ahead and broke the lock of the morgue. However, the personnel at the Hospital refused to lift the body and shift it to a van. It was then that the SP decided

to take the matter into his own hands. He, along with his security personnel, donned PPE suits and carried the body to the van.

However, more problems cropped up when they prepared to cremate the body. The local people refused to let the SP cremate the body at the public crematorium in Diphu. Also, while the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) had identified a plot on the outskirts of the town for COVID-19 casualties, the locals refused to let the body cremated there too. The KAAC authorities were finally able to convince the locals to allow for the last rites to be conducted in the village. The cremation was then done at the man's village in the presence of his son-in-law and a few neighbours following all the necessary health protocols.

By ensuring that the man got a dignified farewell, the SP and his team have set a positive example. This humane gesture of Karbi Anglong Police is an illustration of how the Assam Police have come forward to work beyond their call of duty during these testing times.



Picture: Mr. Debojit Deuri, SP, Karbi Anglong, and his team in PPE suits, preparing to transport the dead body for cremation

Case Study 13

Jammu to Assam: Assam Police Ensuring Transportation of Stranded

Many persons from Assam had migrated to other states for search of employment opportunities. Out of these thousands of workers, there were five persons from Assam, who had gone to Jammu and were working at a plywood factory there. Of these five, three were from Baksa district; one was from Udalguri district; and, one was from Athgaon in Guwahati. When the nation-wide lockdown was announced, the factory was closed down. These five boys from Assam till then were living in accommodation provided by the factory owner but soon they were asked to vacate it. These boys then decided to go back to Assam. As there was no public transportation because of the lockdown, they purchased five cycles. Finally, eleven days after the lockdown started, they began their trip to Assam on cycle.

After cycling for five days, they reached Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. By then, they were facing difficulty in procuring food as well as were running short of cash. They contacted some of their friends in their native village, who then informed media

persons about their plight. Through media reports, these boys were able to provide a bank account number in which they requested the people of Assam to deposit money for their help.

During this time, this news came to the attention of Assam Police officials. Mr. A.P. Tiwari, IPS, contacted these boys on their mobile. Initially they feared that they may be arrested for breaking the lockdown guidelines but after they were made to understand that they would not be arrested, they agreed to listen to the instructions. The boys were asked to go to the nearest Police Station and accordingly the boys reached the Sidki Police Chowki under Nagal Police Station in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. During this time, Assam Police had already informed their counterparts in Uttar Pradesh about the situation. Uttar Pradesh Police shifted these boys to M.L.D. Public School, Nagal, and began to look for vehicles to transport them to Assam. After around three hours, they were able to arrange a vehicle for these boys. They soon began their journey and after three days, these boys finally reached Assam. This incident is an example of how the Assam Police have taken steps to ensure that the citizens of the State are relieved of their hardships.



Picture: The five boys on their way back to Assam

ANNEXURE

**ASSAM POLICE HEADQUARTERS
ULUBARI, GUWAHATI**

Dated Guwahati, the 8th May, 2020

Subject: Standard Operating Procedure(SOP)

In view of the opening of the Inbound and Outbound movement of stranded people, guidelines were issued vide Memo No C.28/2020/Misc/368 dated May 4th, 2020. Further, SOP for the following is being issued in accordance with the Health & Family welfare department Order No 111/2020/40 dated May 7th, 2020. This SOP is for Inbound and Outbound traffic from Chagalia [Dhubri] and Srirampur [Kokrajhar]-

1. Inter-State Border Police check points;
2. Escorting of Inbound vehicles to Regional health screening Camps; and
3. Police arrangements at Regional Health Screening Camps.

INBOUND VEHICLES:

1. Inter-State Border Check points:

There are two Inter-State Border check points at Chagalia [Dhubri] and Srirampur [Kokrajhar] for entry of traffic from all States of country except North Eastern States.

The traffic would largely consist of goods vehicles, ambulances, hearse vehicles, passenger vehicles and persons on foot.

- 1.1 **Goods Vehicles** - The movement of goods vehicles shall be allowed unhindered. The health screening of the driving crew shall be done at the Inter-State border check point for Inbound goods vehicles. Wherever the driving crew is found asymptomatic, they shall be allowed to proceed. For driving crew members who are symptomatic, the health team shall decide the future course of action. The In-charge of Police Team shall ensure action as decided by the health team.
- 1.2 **Ambulances** - All ambulances shall be referred to the Regional Health Screening Camp concerned. The patients would be further subjected to course of action as suggested by the health department. The driving crew with vehicle shall be allowed to return back if asymptomatic. For driving crew members who are symptomatic, the health team shall decide the future course of action.
- 1.3 **Hearse Vans** - They shall be allowed to proceed to destination. However, information of the movement shall be communicated to the concerned District Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police and JDHS. On completion of cremation, the attendants shall be screened at the district screening facility and further action taken as decided by the health department. The driving crew with vehicle shall be allowed to return back if asymptomatic. For driving crew members who are symptomatic, the health team shall decide the future course of action.
- 1.4 **Passenger vehicles** - The passenger vehicles of all kinds shall report at the Inter-state border.
 - 1.4.1 The passenger data shall be captured by the dedicated team as mentioned in the health department Order mentioned above.
 - 1.4.2 The vehicles would-be set-in convoy of 10-15 vehicles depending on the quantum of flow. Each such convoy shall be escorted by the dedicated team. The ambulances and Hearse Vans would not be apart of such convoys. However, reporting procedure would be the same for even the ambulances and the hearse Vans.

- 1.4.3 The registration documents of each of these vehicles shall be collected and handed over to the In-Charge of the escort.
 - 1.4.4 The passenger details shall be shared with the destination Regional health Screening camp.
 - 1.4.5 Each such vehicle shall be pasted a poster on windscreen indicating the destination health screening camp.
 - 1.4.6 The details of vehicle movement shall be communicated by the Shift In-charge of the Police Team at Sagalla/Srirampur to the enroute districts' officials, destination district officials, Nodal officer of the NHM.
 - 1.4.7 The Police team shall also ensure that the passengers are seated in the vehicles in accordance with the health and sanitisation norms.
 - 1.4.8 The officials at APHq and the Principal Secretary and commissioner of Health & Family Welfare department would be kept informed of all major developments.
- 1.5 Persons arriving on foot shall be registered and transported to the Regional Health Screening Camps in the vehicles provided by the Transport department.

The SsP of Dhubri and Kokrajhar would prepare detailed deployment plan, including the shift duty arrangements in consultation with the SP In-Charge of the Camps. They would function under overall direction and supervision of the IGP(BTAD), Kokrajhar and DIGP(WR), Assam.

2. Escorting of Inbound vehicles to Regional Health screening Camps:

- 2.1 All the passenger vehicles would be set in convoys of 10-15 vehicles.
- 2.2 The convoy be provided district border to border escort from the Inter-State border to the destination health screening camps.
- 2.3 The registration documents of all the vehicles shall be collected and handed over to the escort commander and handed over to the next district commander at the district border. This is being done to ensure that all vehicles reach the destination health screening camps.
- 2.4 The vehicles shall be handed over the registration document at the destination health camp after disembarkation of the passengers.
- 2.5 At every district border suitable point shall be ear marked for handing/taking over of the vehicles and documents. Each such place shall have a police camp of suitable strength to prevent any likely law & order situation.
- 2.6 All vehicles shall move in convoy at all times, without fail.
- 2.7 The vehicles going to Tezpur, Jorhat and Silchar would tear off from the convoy at pre-designated points in Kamrup and Guwahati City. The CP Guwahati City and SP Kamrup would ensure that no vehicle breaks off without escort for destination.
- 2.8 The vehicles bound for Barak Valley and transiting through Meghalaya shall be escorted only upto State border both sides. Information of their movement shall be communicated to the Meghalaya Police well ahead in time.
- 2.9 All vehicles shall remain escorted at all times.
- 2.10 The district SsP and DCsP shall draw up detailed deployment plan for implementation of this SOP. The Range DIsG shall ensure supervision in all districts except Guwahati City where CP shall supervise the arrangements.

3. Police arrangements at Regional Health Screening Camps:

- 3.1 The police arrangements at the Regional health screening Camp at Kokrajhar, Sarusajai-Guwahati, Tezpur, Jorhat and Silchar would be headed by the officer detailed vide APHq Order No. C.28/2020/Misc/366 dated 03.05.2020
- 3.2 The district SP shall prepare a detailed deployment plan in consultation with designated SP Rank In-Charge officer and the same shall function under direct supervision of the CP/IG BTAD/Range DIG.

- 3.3 The security team shall enter that passengers from all vehicles reaching the Camp disembark and report to the health team. No One is allowed to leave the camp without authorization of the health team.
- 3.4 AT the time of exit, proper seal, stamp, documentation shall be seen and verified with the health team before any person is allowed to leave.
- 3.5 Those who are to be sent for Institutional Quarantine shall be suitably sent under proper escort to the quarantine facility.
- 3.6 Those who are recommended home quarantine shall be allowed to leave only after verification with the health team.
- 3.7 The In-bound vehicles shall be parked at designated parking facility. They shall be sanitized by the local municipality and the health department. The SP shall communicate this requirement accordingly.
- 3.8 In case, the vehicles are being used to ferry Out-bound passengers, the same shall be coordinated by the district SP. No out-bound passenger shall be allowed to board the vehicles without mandatory health check and travel pass from CO/DC/SP.
- 3.9 At such screening camps, health, hygiene, social distancing and use of face mask, sanitizers shall be ensured by the Police, health, municipality and administration teams jointly.

OUTBOUND VEHICLES:

1. The Outbound vehicles shall ordinarily not require escort. They may be guided on way out and coordination made with the West Bengal Police.
2. The details of passengers boarding the Outbound vehicles shall be coordinated by the Transport department/ Local Police/ DC office.
3. Such details shall be communicated to the destination and the en-route State Nodal Officers.
4. The sanitization of the vehicles and the health check of the passengers shall be carried out by the local municipal authorities and the health department.
5. The Originating district Police and transport officials shall ensure that number of passengers in each vehicle is in consonance with the Government of India norms. The health and hygiene principles shall also be ensured.
6. No passenger shall be allowed to board any outbound vehicle if Out travel pass has not been issued to such person by the competent authority. Wherever applicable, the consent of the destination state would also be mandatory before sending such outbound passengers.

All Team Commanders and District SsP shall ensure that the deployed teams are provided with the appropriate health and sanitization material including face masks, sanitisers and PPE[only where required]. Since, most of the people reaching face a humanitarian crisis situation, the handling of people should be humane. However, wherever there is a violation of the law of the land, appropriate lawful action shall be taken.

The District SsP and the Camp Commanders shall bear the responsibility of the implementation of the SOP in letter and spirit.



(G. P. Singh, IPS)
Addl. Director General of Police (L & O), Assam
&
State Nodal Officer
Inter-State Transit :: Assam

Copy forwarded to:

1. The Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Guwahati, Dispur for favour of kind information.
2. The Addl. Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Department of Home, Guwahati, Dispur for favour of kind information.
3. Shri Harmeet Singh, IPS, Addl. Director General of Police, (A, S & ML), Assam and alternate State Nodal Officer for kind information.
4. The Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam, Department of Health, Guwahati, Dispur for favour of kind information.
5. Shri M. S. Manivannan, IAS, CEO, ASDMA, Dispur for information and necessary action.
6. Shri A. P. Tiwari, IPS, MD, ASTC for information and necessary action.
7. Shri Adil Khan, IAS, Commissioner, Transport, Assam, Guwahati for information and necessary action.
8. Dr. Laxmanan S., IAS, Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam, Guwahati for information and necessary action.
9. The Director, Directorate of Health Services, Assam, Hengerabari, Dispur for favour of kind information.
10. The Commissioner of Police, Guwahati for information and necessary action.
11. The Inspector General of Police, (L/O), Assam, Ulubari for information.
12. The IGP, (BTAD), Kokrajhar/ DIGP _____ (**all Ranges**) for information and necessary action.
13. The Deputy Commissioner, _____ (**All Districts**) for information and necessary action.
14. The Superintendent of Police, _____ (**All Districts**) for information and necessary action.
15. The Staff Officer to the Director General of Police, Assam for information.



(G. P. Singh, IPS)
Addl. Director General of Police (L & O), Assam
&
State Nodal Officer
Inter-State Transit :: Assam

ASSAM POLICE HEADQUARTERS ULUBARI, GUWAHATI

Dated Guwahati, the 12th May, 2020

Subject: Standard Operating Procedure(SOP)

INTRODUCTION

In view of COVID pandemic, Government of India has enforced complete lock down throughout India. A huge number of people belonging to Assam state are stranded in various states and cities of India as all modes of transportation are temporarily closed all over India for mass movement.

In this scenario, Ministry of Railways, Government of India has come up with fresh orders dated 1st May 2020 (Annexure I) and PIB release dated 11th May 2020 [Annexure II] for facilitating such movement of stranded people to their home states in a planned manner. This SOP is being issued in continuation of SOP dated 4th May 2020 issued by the Health and Family welfare Department, Government of Assam.

The SOP thereby prepared for persons returning by trains is as follows:

1. All inward and outward train movements would be undertaken with the prior permission of the State Nodal Officer or those designated by him. The Nodal Officer would keep all the stakeholders informed of the Inbound and Outbound train movement.
2. For this purpose, there would be two sets of trains – The Shramik Special Trains and the Special trains.

3. SHRAMIK SPECIAL TRAINS :

3.1 These trains are being run on point to point basis. The Nodal Officers of the originating State and the recipient state would liaise for fixing the originating station and destination station. In accordance with the current guidelines, these trains can have multiple points of origin and destination. These would be mutually decided by the originating state, recipient state and the Indian Railways.

3.2 The expenditure of the train would be borne by the Government of the originating state or the recipient state as mutually agreed to in accordance with the orders of the Ministry of Railways and the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

3.3 The State Nodal Officer shall send a list of the passengers with a reserve passenger list to the State Nodal Officer of the originating state in accordance with the priority set put in the SOP dated 4th May 2020 and shared with the Indian Railways. Modifications may be made on mutual basis considering the situation/logistics at the originating and/or the destination state. The Originating State Nodal Officer and the Indian Railways shall send the final passenger manifest of those boarding the train, which on receipt shall be shared with the Health Department.

3.4 The indent for the train shall be placed with the Nodal Officer of the Indian Railways and the Nodal officer of the originating state who shall in turn liaise with the Indian Railways to set the ball in motion.

3.5 The State Nodal Officer shall work out modalities of informing the passengers and their movement from place of stay to the Railway Station.

3.6 Wherever, there are Representatives of the Government of Assam located, they would provide assistance to the State Nodal Officer in liaison with the appropriate authorities of originating state for finalisation of the travelling passengers, movement of Passengers to the Railway Station, health screening of the passengers and boarding at Railway Stations.

3.7 The passenger manifest shall be shared by the State Nodal Officer Assam at the earliest possible opportunity with the health Department.

3.7 It has been decided to have the halt for these trains at Kokrajhar, Guwahati, Mariani, Dibrugarh and Badarpur depending on the route being taken by the train. In coordination with railways, State Nodal Officer may change, increase or decrease the boarding/deboarding station in Assam.

4. Special Trains :

4.1. The Special trains are being run by the Indian railways in accordance with the order dated 11th May 2020.

4.2. At present, two sets of trains would move to Assam on a daily basis. One set being Delhi-Dibrugarh-Delhi and the other being Delhi-Agartala-Delhi

4.3. For the Delhi-Dibrugarh-Delhi set, the disembarkation and boarding stations shall be Kokrajhar, Guwahati, Lumding, Mariani and Dibrugarh and vice-versa during the return journey. In coordination with railways, State Nodal Officer may change, increase or decrease the boarding/deboarding station in Assam.

4.4. For the Delhi-Agartala-Delhi set, the disembarkation and boarding stations shall be Kokrajhar, Guwahati and Badarpur in Assam.

4.5. These trains would be run on the basis of the open bookings done through IRCTC portal on payment basis. The Railways would provide the passenger manifest to State Nodal officer who would in turn share with the Health Department on the earliest opportunity.

4.6. There is a likelihood of more trains being run by the Indian Railways in the days to come. The general principles shall remain the same. However, need based addendum may be issued at a later stage.

5. Arrangements at the Railway Stations for disembarking passengers:

5.1. The passengers may include those travelling to other North Eastern States. Advance liaison would be

made with the concerned States to finalise the travel arrangements from nearest railway station to the concerned State.

5.2. Such states would provide vehicles for carrying the passengers to the respective states. As far as possible, the vehicles carrying such passengers would not make any halt in Assam. However, if the halt is necessary, the same shall be in consultation with the State Nodal officer or the concerned deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police.

5.3. Wherever possible, the liaison officers from the concerned state located in Assam would coordinate the movement.

5.4. For persons of Assam, the same set of norms as for road journey would be followed and passengers would be transported from Railway station to the District Health Screening camp and quarantine centres set-up by the Deputy Commissioners.

5.5. The Deputy Commissioners shall arrange appropriate number of buses to transport the passengers from railway station to the health screening camp. Further action shall be taken by the appropriate authorities of the health camps. The arrangements for further transport to quarantine facilities etc shall also be made by the Deputy Commissioners.

5.6. In addition to the existing Regional health Screening Camps at Kokrajhar, Guwahati, Jorhat, Tezpur and Silchar, **there would be a need to set up an additional district health screening camp at various districts** to cater for the passengers disembarking.

5.7. The GRP and RPF shall make arrangements for orderly line up of the passengers at the time of disembarking, line up for boarding the transportation vehicles.

6. Arrangements at the Railway Stations for boarding passengers:

6.1. The passengers shall board the Special Trains moving out of Assam only at the Stations mentioned above and as mentioned in the tickets.

6.2. The health screening of the boarding passengers shall be done by the Health department staff alongwith the dedicated health teams that may be provided by the Railways from their set-up at the boarding stations.

6.3. The GRP and RPF shall make arrangements for orderly line up of the passengers at the time of disembarking at parking lots, line up for the health screening, and boarding the trains.

6.4. Adequate publicity shall be given to enable people travelling in the train to wear face cover/masks.

6.5. The district administration would treat the confirmed railway tickets as valid passes for travel in case the train movement is at such time that travel becomes necessary after 6 PM.

6.6. The Health department shall decide and issue instructions about movement out of containment zone and Red/Orange districts and widely publicise the same.

7. Arrangements at the Railway Stations for transit through trains:

7.1. The Shramik Special trains moving point to point to other states may make technical halts at railway stations in Assam. These stations would generally be New Bongaingaon, Guwahati, Lumding and Badarpur.

7.2. The Indian Railways and RPF would be requested to intimate such through movements and technical halts well in time.

7.3. There is no likelihood of any passenger disembarking during such halts. However, contingency police deployment shall be made by district police, GRP and the RPF.

7.4. Such Police deployment would also ensure that no one boards these through trains at technical halts.

8. For all movements of train, only passengers with the names in travelling manifest or those with confirmed tickets for the particular train would be allowed entry at railway station. All passengers should report at least four hours before departure time of train to allow sufficient time for health screening.

9. The State Nodal Officer would coordinate with The NF Railway authorities and ascertain feasibility of running trains to transport passengers from main deboarding stations to other stations within Assam. The two suggested routes would be Guwahati-Lakhimpur/Dhemaji on North Bank of Assam and Lumding-Silchar/Badarpur.

10. For all incoming passengers, effort would be made by utilising the 104 set-up and the Assam Skill Centre team to ascertain the destination district of each of the passenger. Such information may be provided to the Nodal officer of the NHM and the District deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police.

11. The SOP is dynamic in nature and would continue to be modified as and when required.

(G. P. Singh, IPS)
Addl. Director General of Police
(L & O), Assam
&
State Nodal Officer
Inter-State Transit::Assam

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3. The Genral Manager, NF Railways, Maligaon, Guwahati Assam
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6. The Resident Commisioner, Assam Bhavan, New Delhi.
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(G. P. Singh, IPS)
Addl. Director General of Police
(L & O), Assam
&
State Nodal Officer
Inter-State Transit :: Assam

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
DISPUR::: GUWAHATI**

No.HLB. 109/2020/Pt/24

Dated, Dispur the 14th May, 2020

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
FOR
RETURN OF RESIDENTS OF ASSAM FROM OTHER PARTS OF INDIA BY TRAINS**

1. Background

1.1.Ministry of Railways (MoR) has decided that train services on Indian Railways shall be partially restored w.e.f. from 12th May 2020 in a graded manner.

2. Passenger Data

2.1.Assam Police authorities will provide passenger manifest after categorisation of passengers by destination railway station wise to National Health Mission, Assam. The list will contain names & mobile numbers of the passengers

2.2.On receipt of the passenger list, the passengers will be contacted by 104 services of NHM to obtain the residential districts/ addresses, and destination districts lists will be generated.

2.3.104 services will also ask passengers to download Arogya Setu app on their mobile devices and submit forms of undertaking, as directed by Government of India.

2.4.The district-wise lists will be communicated to the Deputy Commissioners for advance planning/ action.

3. Transportation arrangements from de-boarding stations:

3.1. On receipt of the passenger list from NHM by destination district Deputy Commissioners, they will make arrangements for transportation from the de-boarding railway station lounge to the destination district HQ. Responsible officer will take over the passengers from the de-boarding station district authorities.

4. Arrangements at de-boarding stations

4.1. Deputy Commissioner will make temporary lounge outside the station building with separate sections for different destination districts. A

special space will be earmarked for all symptomatic passengers. Refreshments, toilets etc. will be provided at the lounge area.

4.2. Medical teams will be deployed for screening passengers.

4.3. Deputy Commissioner will arrange medical screening of passengers, and segregate as follows:-

4.3.1. Symptomatic passengers: The passengers who are found to be symptomatic shall undergo detailed medical examination at the de-boarding station. If necessary, they will undergo isolated institutional quarantine at de-boarding station district. Otherwise, if allowed, they will proceed to the institutional quarantine facility arranged by the Deputy Commissioner of destination district.

4.3.1.1. As an exception, the following passengers will be allowed to go for home quarantine in the destination district subject to being medically allowed, and provided they are non-symptomatic.

- a. Pregnant women
- b. Elderly person, over 75 years and requiring assistance.
- c. Person due to attend funeral and rituals associated with death.
- d. Children below 10 years of age
- e. Divyang

4.3.2. Asymptomatic passengers: They will be guided to lounge area. They will be handed over to representative of destination districts for onward journey in officially provided vehicles to the district HQ and then onwards to the institutional quarantine facilities arranged by the destination district administration.

5. Quarantine of passengers

5.1. All train passengers to Assam, irrespective of boarding station, will be **first put in institutional quarantine.**

5.2. Institutional Quarantine

5.2.1. The returnee passengers shall be kept under the institutional quarantine and then **tested at the earliest and positively within the first seven days.** If they test negative, they will be allowed to go for **home quarantine**, after stamping on both hands. Total quarantine period including periods of **both institutional & home quarantine of a passenger should not be less than 14 days.**

5.2.2. Each passenger has to be accommodated in a single room with attached toilet.

- 5.2.3.**Couples and families may be accommodated in the same room.
- 5.2.4.**District Collectors should, wherever necessary, requisition hotels/ lodges/ forest guest house and similar facilities owned by private persons for accommodating returnees.
- 5.2.5.** Room rent/ rental charge of the institutional quarantine facilities will be assessed by DCs and borne by the Government.
- 5.2.6.**Once hotels/ lodges are exhausted, quarantine facilities can be set up in various institutions viz. marriage halls/ prominent educational institutes/ other establishments where single toilet can be provided to one individual or to a group who have travelled together, as deemed suitable by Deputy Commissioner.
- 5.2.7.**As far as possible, Institutional facility should be identified in proximity to the residence of the returnees. Deputy Commissioners would be at liberty to add more facilities to this list, provided that these facilities have separate rooms with attached toilets.
- 5.2.8.** If the number of passenger to be kept in institutional quarantine is beyond the capacity at district/ sub-divisional headquarters, then institutional quarantine facilities will be created in the constituency to which the passenger belongs. For this purpose, **Constituency Wise Quarantine Management Committee** will be notified soon.
- 5.2.9.** Constituency Wise Quarantine Management Committee will inter-alia, (a) prepare institutional quarantine centres in the constituency area which may be spread in various blocks/ villages and (b) management of food supplies, hygiene, security, medical arrangements etc. in facility quarantine centres
- 5.2.10.** Similar food will be provided to all passengers under institutional quarantine facility of any type across the district according to per person/ per day norms, to be circulated separately.
- 5.2.11.** Medical teams will conduct periodic checks in the quarantine facility to detect infection, if any in the facility.
- 5.2.12.**A separate clinical guideline will be issued for swab collection/ management of symptomatic cases/ release from institutional quarantine/ district level discharge board/ treatment protocol.

5.3.Home Quarantine

- 5.3.1.**Home quarantine of passengers will imply that the entire residence is a containment zone, during the quarantine period. No person will be allowed to enter or exit the zone during the quarantine period.

5.3.2.In rural areas, **Village Level Home Quarantine Management Committee** will be notified soon.

5.3.3.Village Level Home Quarantine Management Committee will **decide in case of each passenger recommended for Home Quarantine whether the person will be quarantined in his/ her residence or the local community centre**, keeping in mind that in case the person stays at his residence, the same will become a containment zone for all residents of that house.

5.3.4.Food for the quarantine period will be provided by district administration/ BDOs directly to the quarantine families or through the committee, if necessary.

6. Mobilisation of volunteers

6.1.1. If required, the district administration will mobilise volunteers from organisations like NCC/ NSS/ NYK / other social organisations and utilise their services for community involvement in the entire exercise.

This SOP comes into immediate effect and will be updated, as per need of the dynamic circumstances.


(Samir K Sinha, IAS)

Principal Secretary to Government of Assam
Health & Family Welfare Department

Memo No.HLB. 109/2020/Pt/24-A

Dated Dispur the 14th May, 2020

Copy to:

1. Chief Secretary, Assam.
2. Director General of Police, Assam.
3. Additional Chief Secretary, Home & Political and Social Welfare Departments.
4. Shri G P Singh, IPS, ADGP (L&O)
5. Shri Harmeet Singh, IPS, ADGP (S)
6. Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam.
7. Principal Secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development Department.
8. Commissioner & Secretary, Transport Department, Dispur.
9. Commissioner & Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department.
10. Commissioner of Transport, Assam
11. Managing Director, ASTC.
12. Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam.

13. All Deputy Commissioners / Sub-Divisional Officers (Civil).
14. All Superintendents of Police
15. DME/ DHS, Assam.
16. All Principals/ Superintendents, Medical College Hospital.
17. All Joint Directors of Health Services, Assam.
18. P.S. to Hon'ble Minister, Health & F.W. Department
19. P.S. to Hon'ble Ministers of State, Health & F.W. Department
20. Any other concerned

h. Danta 14/5/20

Principal Secretary to Govt. of Assam
Health & Family Welfare Department

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
DISPUR: GUWAHATI**

No.HLB. 111/2020/229

Dated, Dispur the 24th May, 2020

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)
FOR
AIR PASSENGERS**

1. Background

1.1. The Government of India has decided to resume domestic air travel of passengers with effect from 25th May 2020. In order to ensure safety of the passengers during prevailing circumstances due to COVID-19 pandemic, health protocols are hereby prescribed for compliance in respect of air passengers on arrival and departure within the State of Assam which will be implemented in conjunction with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

2. Arrangements at airports by district administration

2.1. Facility for planned exit of passengers

2.2. Deputy Commissioner will set up thermal scanning booths manned by medical staff.

2.3. Deputy Commissioner will set up booths outside the airport building to collect undertakings etc. from passengers who are not required to undergo institutional quarantine immediately after arrival.

2.4. Deputy Commissioner will ensure that social distancing/ hygiene is maintained outside the airport by Airport Authority of India.

3. Transportation arrangements/ options:

3.1. State Government will run bus services four times a day from Guwahati airport to locations grouped such as (a) Lower Assam districts (b) Upper Assam Districts (c) North Assam districts etc. Passengers may avail these services on payment basis.

3.2. Passengers can hire authorised taxis. Details of such taxis/ driver must be given in the undertakings to be submitted by the passengers to the district administration.

3.3. Passengers can use private vehicles. Details of such vehicle/ driver must be given in the undertakings to be submitted by the passengers to district administration.

3.4. Government sector visitors may use Government allotted vehicles.

3.5. All social distancing/ hygiene norms must be complied with during travel.

4. Arrivals

4.1. Passenger Manifest

4.1.1. Airlines are mandated to furnish the passengers manifest in the prescribed format to the State Governments as per requirement. A proforma which can be integrated with existing data capture system, shall accordingly be provided to all airlines by Deputy Commissioner such that required passenger identification and contact details will be provided. Such a manifest shall be provided in advance of the arrival of a flight.

4.1.2. Local Deputy Commissioners will communicate the manifest to National Health Mission which will segregate the data into district-wise lists and forward the same to the concerned Deputy Commissioners and other agencies for advance planning/ action.

4.2. General Quarantine norms for passengers:

4.2.1. Pilots, Air crew and maintenance staff, whether of passenger or cargo aircraft, will not be quarantined in view of their already being subjected to strict health protocols mandated by Ministry of Civil Aviation.

4.2.2. All passengers will mandatorily be temperature scanned on arrival. Disembarked Passengers must be made to walk to the health desks in a group of 20-25 maintaining social distancing of 1 metre each.

4.2.3. Any symptomatic passenger having his/ her destination within Assam, will be segregated and taken to nearest Zonal/ District Screening Camp etc.

4.2.4. Asymptomatic passengers, other than the exempted categories, will have to undergo combined institutional quarantine and home quarantine of at least 14 days. The period of institutional quarantine of a passenger will be 7 days or till his/ her RT-PCR COVID-19 test results are declared, whichever is earlier, followed by home quarantine for remaining period of quarantine after due hand stamping.

4.2.4.1. Asymptomatic passengers of Kamrup (Metro), Darrang, Morigaon, Hojai will travel to one of the two nearby Screening Centres set up by Kamrup (Metro) district administration at Sarusajai and Kiranshree Grand, where swab sample will be taken for RT-PCR COVID-19 test prior to being taken for institutional quarantine arranged by Kamrup (Metro) district administration.

4.2.4.2. Asymptomatic passengers of districts other those mentioned in Para 4.2.4.1 will travel to their respective district's designated screening camp, where swab will be taken for COVID-19 test prior to being sent for institutional quarantine arranged by local district administration. Such asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to travel

only after furnishing undertaking to district administration officials at airport as per indicative format at Annexure-II.

4.2.5.Exemptions to stipulation under **Para 4.2.4** falling in one of the following categories shall be allowed to go for **home quarantine for 14 days**, after hand stamping subject to the condition that the passengers are **asymptomatic**. In such a situation, the entire residence will become a containment zone during the quarantine period.

4.2.5.1. Pregnant women.

4.2.5.2.Elderly person, over 75 years and requiring assistance.

4.2.5.3.Person due to attend funeral and rituals associated with death of an immediate relative.

4.2.5.4.Children below 10 years of age along with their parents & siblings

4.2.5.5. Divyang.

4.2.5.6.Immediate relative of hospitalised patient.

4.2.5.7.Patients who have recently undergone cardiac, kidney, cancer treatment/surgery/ transplant.

4.2.6.Exemptions to stipulation under **Para 4.2.4** falling in one of the following categories shall be allowed to go for **home quarantine for 10 days**, after hand stamping subject to the condition that the passengers are **asymptomatic**. In such a situation, the entire residence will become a containment zone during the quarantine period. They are duty bound to report development of any symptom to 104 helpline number.

4.2.6.1.Completed mandated quarantine period of 14 days within the previous two weeks of arrival and had tested negative for RT-PCR COVID-19 within the previous 7 days, prior to arrival.

4.2.6.2. Tested negative for RT-PCR COVID-19 test within the previous 3 days prior to arrival.

4.2.7.Exempted category passengers under para 4.2.5 & 4.2.6 will submit **undertaking** as per indicative format at Annexure-I at air passenger screening centre.

4.2.8.Option of undergoing Institutional Quarantine in either Government funded facility/ hotels or self-paid hotels will be provided to air passengers who are advised institutional quarantine. Deputy Commissioner will allow option of self-paid hotel only obtaining an **undertaking** from the person that all expenditure for such stay (inclusive of food) will be made by the individual and that he/ she is fully willing to be quarantined in the hotel for a duration of minimum 14 days, if required by district administration.

4.3. Exemption from Quarantine for short – duration visitors

4.3.1. Following categories of passengers will be exempted from the general quarantine norms, **provided they are asymptomatic**:

4.3.1.1. Any **passenger on a day long visit** i.e. he/ she arrives and departs on the same day from Assam **without night halt**. This is however subject to the person strictly complying with all hygiene and social distancing norms during the period of stay in Assam and violation of such norms will make him liable to undergo quarantine for the specified period before departing. **Undertaking** will be submitted by the passenger to the district administration officials **at airport** as per **indicative format at Annexure-II**

4.3.2. **Government of India/ State Governments officials** on official duty with prior intimation to Government of Assam and having **night halt** in suitable **isolated accommodation arranged by Government of Assam/ Government of India or associated organisations**, will be allowed to return without undergoing quarantine, subject to the person strictly complying with all hygiene and social distancing norms during the period of stay. **Undertaking** will be submitted by the official to the district administration officials **at air passenger screening centre**, as per **indicative format at Annexure-I**

5. Military & Paramilitary passengers

5.1. All passengers travelling in capacity of military or para-military personnel on official duty will be allowed to directly travel to their respective cantonment/ camp where they will be quarantined.

5.2. **Prior intimation** of arrivals will have to be given to District Magistrate of disembarking airport district by an authorised senior officer of the military wing/ para-military force, which will include identification details of all arriving personnel along with a declaration that (a) all arriving personnel are asymptomatic and (b) all State Government instructions for quarantine, testing etc. will be complied with. State Government will arrange collection of swab samples for COVID-19 testing.

6. Transit Passengers

6.1. All transit passengers travelling to other North Eastern States will be **allowed to depart for their respective destination State directly from the airport** provided they **do not have any stoppages in Assam**. **Undertaking** will be submitted by the transit passengers to the district administration officials **at airport** as per **indicative format at Annexure-II**.

7. Dignitaries/ VVIPs

7.1. Visiting Dignitaries/ VVIPs including Hon'ble Governors, Members of Council of Ministers of Government of India/ State Governments (other than State of Assam), Hon'ble Judges etc. will be exempted from General Quarantine norms, subject to accommodation being arranged in State Bhawans/ exclusive guest houses etc., while complying with all social distancing and hygiene norms during the period of stay in Assam.

8. Departures


8.1. All departing passengers will be scanned by the medical staff outside airport.

8.2. The body temperature of each passenger will be taken. Ministry of Civil Aviation norms prescribes that symptomatic passengers should not be allowed to enter the airport. Such symptomatic passengers will then be made to comply with standard health protocols.

9. Penal provisions

9.1. Any person violating the instructions contained herein will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of the Assam COVID-19 Regulations, 2020, Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Sec. 188 of the IPC, and other legal provisions as applicable.

This SOP comes into force with immediate effect.



(Samir K Sinha, IAS)

Principal Secretary to Government of Assam
Health & Family Welfare Department

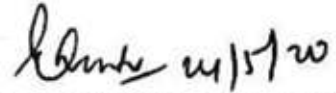
Memo No.HLB. 111/2020/229.-A

Dated Dispur the 24th May, 2020

Copy to:

1. Chief Secretary, Assam.
2. Additional Chief Secretary, Home & Political Department.
3. Director General of Police, Assam.
4. Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam.
5. ADGP (L&O)
6. ADGP (S)
7. Commissioner & Secretary, Transport Department, Dispur.
8. Commissioner & Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department.
9. Special Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department..
10. Chief Executive Officer, Assam State Disaster Management Authority.
11. Commissioner of Transport, Assam/ Managing Director, ASTC.
12. Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam.
13. All Deputy Commissioners for necessary action.
14. All Superintendents of Police for necessary action.
15. DME/ DHS, Assam.
16. All Joint Directors of Health Services, Assam.

17. All Principals cum Chief Superintendents, Medical College Hospitals.
18. P.S. to Hon'ble Minister, Health & F.W. Department, Government of Assam
19. P.S. to Hon'ble Minister (All), Government of Assam.
20. P.S. to Hon'ble Minister of State, Health & F.W. Department
21. P.S. to Hon'ble Minister of State (Ind.)/ Minister of State (All),
22. P.S. to Hon'ble MLA (All).
23. Any other concerned



Principal Secretary to Govt. of Assam
Health & Family Welfare Department

Assam Police Headquarters
Government of Assam
Guwahati::Assam

ADGP[L&O]/Covid/001 dated 24.03.2020

In view of the orders of the Government reproduced below, the role of Assam Police is significantly important. The Field Officers are required to ensure the orders fully. They are supposed to lead their force from the front and ensure that there is no laxity on part of any officer or men.

For Police Officers –

1. The field officers would ensure that the safety of the men under their command. Police personnel and families should have enough hand wash/soap to wash hands every one hour. On mobile duties, the police personnel shall use hand sanitiser regularly.
2. In the Police Reserves and Battalion campuses only authorised residents should be allowed till April 5th 2020. Visitors should be discouraged.
3. Wherever any resident is reported to be unwell, he/she should be placed in a separate barrack and quarantined for fourteen days.
4. The spacing in the barracks also need to be extended to minimum of one metre. Wherever the space is not enough tents should be used to accommodate the personnel.
5. The Doctors, wherever available shall be utilised for the purpose of regular screening and checks. The doctors and paramedic staff should be provided with the personal protective gear e.g. masks, gloves, sanitiser and hand wash for personal usage.
6. The Reserves should have adequate ration available for the force for next fifteen days.
7. The guarding of the armouries has to be given highest priority especially in the districts having activities of Insurgent groups. The Police stations/Outposts should also take care of the weapon holding at all times.
8. The rotation of the police personnel should be so maintained that they have adequate rest.
9. The leadership may take care of the family members of the police personnel under their command. Similarly, we should look after the families of police martyrs and police personnel who have dies on duty. Wherever the families reside in a district/place away from place of posting of the police personnel, the SsP/Commandants should liaise with the SP of the concerned district and ensure that police families are well looked after. Even without information, the SsP/OsC/IsC must look after the police families residing in their respective jurisdiction.
10. The police personnel deployed for hospital duties, escort/check of Covid suspect persons should wear similar protective gear that the accompanying doctors wear. SsP should ensure that.
11. Unnecessary movement outside respective and off-duty hours is to be avoided.
12. The SsP/Commandants/OsC/IsC shall brief the personnel to maintain social distance and hand hygiene.

Handling of the Government Orders regarding Covid-19 –

1. The orders have to be implemented fully. The orders need to be implemented ruthlessly till March 31st 2020. **Police should not allow more than two persons moving together. The Police along with deployed Magistrates should disperse any assembly of people without due reason.**
2. The Police teams should be well prepared with public address systems for crowd dispersal. They should also have adequate anti-riot equipment.
3. **All kinds of vehicular movement except the vehicles belonging to the exempted category should be stopped. No vehicle should be allowed for grocery shopping etc. All such shopping should be allowed on foot in area of vicinity of the residents.**
4. The SsP/OsC/IsC would ensure that every police personnel has hard/soft copy of the government order. The Police parties should be accompanied by Magistrates wherever possible. The SsP need to coordinate with District Magistrates for detailing the Magistrates.
5. In case of any doubt, the senior officers should be consulted.
6. The Police personnel have to ensure that there is no scarcity of essential commodities because of stoppage of persons/vehicles associated with these commodities.
7. Be polite. It's one of the rare occasion where we are implementing prohibitory orders for a societal cause.
8. It would be an evolving situation. Wherever the field officers have suggestions, they should send to the senior officers so that adequate changes may be made.
9. We should be polite to people making movement to and from hospitals. In such cases, hospital slips should be seen to allow movement of patients and or the attendants of patients admitted in hospitals.
10. The basic idea remains social distancing. It has to be implemented with that in mind.
11. The Water tankers to various locations should be allowed, while ensuring that not more than two persons are in the tanker.
12. The trucks carrying essential goods should also be moving around only with essential staff.
13. There may be certain business establishments where employees are staying despite closure. We should allow such people to stay within the complex and have health checks carried out.
14. Regular checks to be made on people who have been given directions for home quarantine.
15. The SsP should prepare detailed Law & Order plan for the entire district upto the Police Station and Outpost level.



GP Singh
ADGP[L&O]
Assam

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT
ASSAM, DISPUR, GUWAHATI

NO. HLA 248/2020/35

Dated Dispur the 23rd March, 2020

ORDERS BY THE GOVERNOR OF ASSAM
NOTIFICATION

Whereas the Government of Assam has been taking up all necessary measures for combating the spread of COVID 19, and it is imperative to adopt social distancing and isolation measures in the State of Assam;

Whereas, the Government of Assam has issued the Assam COVID-19 Regulations, 2020 under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 for prevention and containment of COVID-19;

Now, therefore, the Government of Assam in exercise of the aforesaid powers hereby notifies "Complete Safety Restrictions" in the whole of territorial jurisdiction of State of Assam wef. 1800 hrs on 24/03/2020 to 2400 hrs on 31/03/2020, stipulating the following restrictions:-

1. No transport services including operation of Taxis, auto-rickshaws will be permitted. The exception will include transport of all kinds to and from hospitals, airports, railway station, bus stands / terminals and goods carriers carrying food and essential commodities.
2. All shops, commercial establishments, offices and factories, workshops, go-downs etc. shall close their operations.
3. All foreign returnees and other such persons so required by the health personnel are directed to remain under strict home quarantine for a period as decided by the local health authorities.
4. People are required to stay at home and come out only for basic services while strictly following social distancing guidelines issued earlier.
5. Only limited religious rituals shall be performed at temples, mosques etc. by maximum of three priests/ imams etc. at a time, without any community participation.
6. The following establishments/services including those in the private sector providing essential services shall be excluded from the above restrictions:
 - a. Law and Order, Courts and Correctional Services
 - b. Health Services and persons involved with logistic support of healthcare services
 - c. Police, Armed forces and para-military forces
 - d. Electricity, Water and Municipal / Conservancy services
 - e. Fire, Civil Defense and Emergency Services
 - f. DIPR, Assam

- g. Essential IOC & ONGC Operations**
 - h. Telecom, Internet, IT & ITES and postal services**
 - i. Banks and ATMs**
 - j. Government Treasuries with limited staff**
 - k. Officials in Government offices involved with clearing of treasury bills but with limited staff.**
 - l. Offices ordered to be opened by Finance Department. Such offices shall be closed after financial transactions are completed.**
 - m. Airports with restricted flights**
 - n. Vehicles/ Cabs owned or contracted by exempted categories for transportation of staff to workplace and back.**
 - o. Vehicles given permit for emergency use by authorized officials.**
 - p. Essential food items Food including PDS, grocery shops (with limited staff), storage and their transportation/ goods vehicles.**
 - q. Petrol Pumps, oil agencies, LPG agencies, their go-downs and transportation.**
 - r. Pharmacies, pharmaceutical / surgical manufacturing and their transportation / any other type of medical / surgical supplies eg. oxygen required for hospital use.**
 - s. Production and Manufacturing units requiring continuous process may continue to function after obtaining necessary approval from the District Magistrate, with limited staff.**
 - t. Print and electronic media.**
 - u. Manufacturing units engaged in production of essential commodities / hospital supplies / industrial units engaged in manufacturing of products of public safety & hygiene.**
 - v. Any other essential services/ establishment that may be exempted by the Government.**
- 7. If there is any doubt whether any establishment/ service is essential or not, the District Magistrate shall be the competent authority to decide.**
- 8. Any congregation of more than 5 persons shall be prohibited in public places.**
- 9. State borders to be effectively sealed for all passenger vehicles including commercial & privately owned vehicles.**
- 10. The following officials are authorized to issue permits for allowing public passenger vehicles in case of emergency for limited use- District Magistrate/ ADC / SDO (C) / Circle Officer / RTO / DTO, Commissioner Police / DCP/ACP and Additional**

Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department. The control room numbers for the same (from District to Circle level) should be informed to the public, district wise, through wide publicity immediately.

11. All District Magistrates, Commissioner of Police, Municipal Commissioner, SPs, ADMs, Joint Director of Health Services, SDOs, BDOs and Executive Magistrates are hereby authorized to take all necessary measures for enforcement and implementation of the aforesaid instructions. All local police authorities shall extend necessary assistance as and when requisitioned by the aforesaid officers.
12. Any person found violating these instructions shall be deemed to have committed an offence punishable under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) and other applicable legal provisions.
13. The other instructions issued earlier will continue to be in force.
14. In case of doubt, the State Government will issue necessary directions/clarifications.

Sd/-
(Kumar Sanjay Krishna)
Chief Secretary, Assam

Memo No. HLA 248/2020/35-A

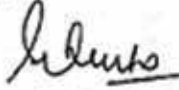
Dated Dispur the 23rd March, 2020

Copy to:

1. The Chairman, Assam Administrative Tribunal.
2. The Chairman, Board of Revenue.
3. All Additional Chief Secretaries/ Principal Secretaries/ Commissioner & Secretaries/ Secretaries to the Government of Assam.
4. The Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam.
5. The Principal Secretary, Assam Legislative Assembly, Dispur.
6. The Accountant General, Assam, Guwahati-29.
7. The Commissioner & Secretary, Health & Family Welfare Department.
8. The Resident Commissioner, Government of Assam, Assam House, New Delhi.
9. All Commissioner of Divisions, Assam.
10. The Commissioner & Secretary to H.E., the Governor of Assam, Guwahati.
11. The Commissioner & Secretary, Legislative Department, Dispur
12. The Commissioner & Secretary, Judicial Department and Legal Remembrancer, Assam.
13. All Principal Secretaries of the Autonomous Councils, Assam.
14. All Heads of Department.
15. All Deputy Commissioners/ Sub-Divisional Officers (Civil) for necessary action.
16. All Superintendents of Police.
17. The Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam.
18. The Director of Medical Education, Assam for necessary action.

19. The Director of Health Services, Assam for necessary action.
20. The Director of Health Services (Family Welfare), Assam for necessary action.
21. The Director of AYUSH, Assam for necessary action.
22. The Project Director, Assam State Aids Control Society.
23. The P.S. to Hon'ble Minister, Health & Family Welfare, Assam.
24. The P.S. to Hon'ble Ministers/Ministers of State, Assam.
25. The P.S. to Chief Secretary, Assam.
26. The P.S. to Director General of Police, Assam
27. All Joint Director of Health Services, Assam for necessary action.
28. Managing Directors/ Directors/ Medical Superintendents/ Hospital (I/C) etc. of all Hospitals (including private) in the State of Assam.
29. The Deputy Director, Printing & Stationery Department, Assam Govt. Press, Bamunimaidam, Guwahati – 21. He is requested to publish this Notification in Extraordinary Assam Gazette and forward 500 copies of Notification to this department for distribution.
30. Any other concerned.

By order etc.,


(Samir K. Sinha) 23/3/2020

Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam
Health & Family Welfare Department

Assam Police Headquarters
Government of Assam
Guwahati::Assam

Introduction

The entire world is fighting an invisible enemy, the COVID 19 pandemic. A disease that has already infected 5.21 Million people and claimed the life of close to 339,000. The count in India has been rising too with 125,000 infected and 3,720 deaths. Assam however has been an oasis of hope for the entire country and the world. With a total of 203 cases and 4 tragic deaths, the Assam model in fighting this pandemic has been a real success. This low incident rate, break of transmission and low mortality could be achieved due to the strict enforcement of Govt. of India Guidelines, proactive communication and community engagement. The role played by the Assam Administration, Healthcare Professionals and Assam Police as the frontline defense in this fight is exemplary. The round-the-clock service delivered by Assam Police in this fight from enforcing lockdown to contact tracing to enforcement of institutional/home quarantine over and above its regular Law & Order as well as counter insurgency mandate is a success model for all police forces.

Risk Stratification of Police

With Lockdown 4.0 and increased relaxation of restrictions to normal activities coupled with the inflow of potential COVID-19 positive individuals coming from outside the state of Assam, there is a increased possibility of community spread of the virus.

This new development has increased the chance of Police personnel getting infected by the virus owing to their deployment in not just COVID-19 prevention duties but also during regular L & O duties owing to asymptomatic cases.

Safety Guidelines for Force Protection

In view of the above stated situation, there is a need to prepare and/or re-emphasis guidelines for the protection of the Police force. Some of the key goals of these guidelines are:

- Maintenance of the morale of the force
- Maintenance of the effectiveness of personnel
- Effectiveness of COVID-19 control duties
- Maintenance of the high standards of L&O duties which could be impacted due to lack of quality and/or quantity of forces.
- Potential surge in responsibilities owing to further easing of restrictions including inflow of people from outside the state of Assam

With these goals in mind, a 9-point guideline has been prepared for Assam Police personnel:

- 1) **General Guidelines for Personnel & Family Protection**
- 2) **Police Infrastructure Protection**

- 3) **Work Force Division and Backup Force Creation**
- 4) **Safety Protection Measures for Airport, Railway, Bus Bay and Border Screening**
- 5) **Safety Precautions of Vehicle and Equipment Disinfection and Transportation**
- 6) **Safety Precautions During Road Vehicle Checking and Home Visits**
- 7) **Safety Precautions During Road Accidents and Patient Handling**
- 8) **Safety Precautions During Arrests of Offenders, Lockup Cases and Transport of Accused**
- 9) **Safety Precautions During Market Deployments and Crowd Control**

General Guidelines for Personnel & Family Protection

- Frequent hand washing using soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer as supplied by Assam Police.
- Covering mouth and nose while sneezing/coughing using a disposable tissue/handkerchief or coughing/sneezing in flexed elbow
- Physical distancing (at least 1 meter)
- Using appropriate protective gears such as face mask, face shield(if necessary) and gloves and their proper disposal as supplied by Assam Police.
- Enter house after taking off uniform outside the house and ensuring they are washed daily and separately. Maintain physical distancing from vulnerable members of the family.
- Ensure regular disinfection of family lines, barracks etc using material and equipment supplied by APHQ.
- Seek medical care if you or your family members develop any symptoms
- Use the helplines established by APHQ for supporting the needs of Assam Police personnel and their families.
- Use the mental health helpline established as a joint venture between GMCH & APHQ if you feel the need to.

Police Infrastructure Protection

- All indoor areas such as entrance lobbies, corridors and staircases, office rooms, lockups etc and high contact surface areas like handrails, printers, telephones should be cleaned everyday using sodium hypochlorite supplied by APHQ.
- Do not use watch and purse while on duty
- Articles like pens, belts, caps, weapons etc should either be disinfected daily using disinfecting sprays supplied by APHQ or kept in safe custody
- All furniture, door handles, floors are to be disinfected using sodium hypochlorite 3-4 times a day
- Lady personnel should not use jewelry during duty especially bangles and rings
- Mobile phones should be kept in plastic covers during duty hours and should be cleaned with surgical spirit or sanitizer supplied by APHQ. Laptops, walkie-talkies should also be disinfected in similar manner daily
- Protective equipment and water should be carried in all vehicles to ensure safety of personnel and also avoid dehydration

- Tents and/or umbrellas should be installed to protect against natural forces and also to maintain sanitation of equipment
- Used masks and gloves should not be littered. They should be stored in designated places for further scientific disposal
- Separate visiting and waiting areas to be earmarked in offices and stations maintaining proper physical distancing norms. Visitors should not be allowed to enter any other part of the premise unless essential

Force Division and Backup Force Creation

- Mutual contact between field duty personnel and office duty personnel should be avoided as much as possible.
- Personnel above the age of 55 or with co-morbidity should be allowed to take leave or posted in duties where contact with potential COVID-19 patients would be minimum.
- Existing force may be divided into 2 or 3 groups and ensure rotation of force every 10-15 days. While one group is deployed, the other may be kept on reserve in case of emergencies.
- Continue leveraging on VDPs, NCC and Home Guards as force multipliers.

Safety Protection Measures for Airport, Railway, Bus Bay and Border Screening

- Personnel coming in close proximity of passengers should use PPE kits as supplied by APHQ.
- During deployment in high risk areas, a staging base may be created where the majority of the deployed party be kept while a smaller party be in the frontline. Reinforcement may be sent from staging base if required
- Hand sanitation rules to be maintained at all times
- Use of megaphones/PA systems are preferred over one-to-one communication with masses

Safety Precautions of Vehicle and Equipment Disinfection and Transportation

- Vehicles should be disinfected after each deployment with special care taken for steering wheel, gear shaft, radio equipment, hold bars etc
- Protective equipment and water should be carried in all vehicles to ensure safety of personnel and also avoid dehydration

Safety Precautions During Road Vehicle Checking and Home Visits

- Maintain physical distancing norms and do not touch any paper or keys without wearing gloves
- Wearing of face masks is mandatory while on duty
- Every contact should be treated as a contact with a potential COVID positive person
- Carrying of hand sanitizers is mandatory. Hand sanitizers to be used after every contact
- Seized vehicles should be handled only after wearing PPE
- House visits should be done maintaining physical distancing and wearing of PPE (quarantine related) or mask & gloves (non quarantine related)

Safety Precautions During Road Accidents and Patient Handling

- Consider all accident victims as possible source of COVID
- Use proper protection during handling of people and vehicle as detailed earlier

Safety Precautions During Arrests of Offenders, Lockup Cases and Transport of Accused

- All offenders (civil/criminal) should be considered as possible sources of COVID
- Direct physical contact should be avoided as far as possible
- Use of mask/gloves/PPE is mandatory depending on type of contact
- Any remanded offender should be properly sanitized
- Personal sanitation norms should be followed at all times
- Physical distancing of offenders to be maintained to prevent possible spread of virus among other offenders
- Proper disinfection of lockups to be maintained as per prescribed norms

Safety Precautions During Market Deployments and Crowd Control

- With easing of restrictions, crowding in market places and shops is rampant as seen recently across the state. Police should strictly enforce physical distancing and use of masks
- While on duty, use of masks, gloves and hand sanitizers by personnel is mandatory
- Use of megaphones/PA systems are recommended where possible
- Proactive awareness campaigns should be ramped up again especially with the inflow of people from outside the state

Conclusion

Assam Police has been playing a pivotal role in the containment of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. The healthcare fraternity and the civil administration has been the backbone in terms of treatment and care of infected individuals. However, while the restrictions and norms are being relaxed, the vigil of the force cannot be relaxed. In fact, now is a time to recalibrate our efforts and coordinate our force in a scientific manner in the service of our society.

Study by



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