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# Himachal Pradesh: ICMR Explores Drone Use for Medical Supply Transport in Lahaul and Spiti districts (Watch Video)

ICMR's endeavour aims to streamline the distribution of essential medical provisions from regional hospitals in Keylong to more than eight primary health centres (PHCs) in the region, encompassing locations such as Sissu, Gondhal, Thiort, Tholang, Jahalma, Gemur, Darcha, and Shansha, among others.

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ICMR Explores Drone Use for Medical Supply Transport (Photo Credit: ICMR)

**Keylong, October 20:** As part of India's national initiative to promote the development of the drone ecosystem, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is currently undertaking a feasibility assessment in the Lahaul and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh. This initiative aims to explore the use of drones for transporting critical medical supplies such as medications, diagnostic blood samples, and sputum, according to an official release.

Drones are increasingly used in healthcare, particularly for swift deliveries of vaccines, medications, and supplies to remote areas in emergencies. ICMR's endeavour aims to streamline the distribution of essential medical provisions from regional hospitals in Keylong to more than eight primary health centres (PHCs) in the region, encompassing locations such as Sissu, Gondhal, Thiort, Tholang, Jahalma, Gemur, Darcha, and Shansha, among others. **ICMR, AYUSH Ministry Sign MoU for Collaboration on Health Research.** (https://www.latestly.com/agency-news/india-news-icmr-ayush-ministry-sign-mou-for-collaboration-on-health-research-5119659.html)

## ICMR Explores Drone Use for Medical Supply Transport

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(Source: ICMR)

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A dedicated team from ICMR headquarters in New Delhi and ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre-Gorakhpur (Field Station Keylong) is responsible for protocol development and execution. In its maiden flight, a drone successfully transported 100+ essential medications including antibiotics, antipyretics, and multivitamins, from the police grounds in Keylong to the Tholang PHC, covering 20 km in 26 minutes.

The flight took off from 11500 ft ASL (altitude above mean sea level) and went up to 14500 ft ASL, recording a temperature of -15 degrees Celsius at height. On its return journey, the drone carried TB sputum samples, blood samples, and various diagnostic specimens back to the Keylong Centre for thorough analysis. The round trip, which takes 2 hours by road and is often delayed due to snowfall, took around 26 minutes in total with the drone, the release said. **Indian Diet Rich in Iron, Zinc, Tea and Turmeric Lowered COVID-19 Severity and Deaths, Says ICMR Study.** (https://www.latestly.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/indian-diet-rich-in-iron-zinc-tea-and-turmeric-lowered-covid-19-severity-and-deaths-says-icmr-study-5070278.html)

ICMR, which has consistently led the way in delivering vital medical supplies via drones to challenging-to-access regions such as Manipur and Nagaland, will conduct more test flights to different PHCs in the upcoming days. To highlight the significance of the event, Dr Rajiv Bahl, Secretary DHR and Director-General, ICMR, quoted, "This 'i-DRONE' was first used during the COVID-19 pandemic by ICMR for distributing vaccines to unreachable areas. Earlier this year, we were able to successfully complete the



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trials for the delivery of blood and blood-related products, which are supposed to be kept at a low temperature. In the present study, we are aiming to deliver the medications and diagnostic samples at subzero-temperature areas and difficult regions with altitudes over 12,000 ft. This is an initiative towards making an impact in the lives of people residing in remote areas."

Anu Nagar, Joint Secretary, DHR, also highlighted the importance of drone-based delivery in the healthcare sector. She emphasised that these feasibility trials and projects will be game changers, lay the foundation for future activities, and strengthen the Indian healthcare sector.

Dr Ajay Thakur, Medical Officer, Lahaul and Spiti, stated, "This is one of the most important studies for the regions of Lahul and Spiti. Delivery of healthcare essentials via drone during emergency situations will be helpful in saving many human lives and can be used in various difficult geographical areas for both Indian civilian and military personnel".

Throughout the comprehensive testing period, scientists have identified numerous technical and operational hurdles that local communities encounter when trying to deliver essential medical items, particularly in remote and challenging geographical landscapes. The study's findings will provide valuable scientific insights and lay the foundation for further exploration of the utility of drones in these areas.

Additionally, the research will determine whether drones can serve as a support for conventional medical supplies in the difficult geographical conditions prevalent in these regions. The current research project was conducted with the help of state health authorities and Keylong administrative support. District administrative and health authorities, Mayank Chaudhary, Dr. Ajay Thakur, and Dr Kunal Rawat, supported the execution of this first successful trial.

This activity was technically supported by the TSAW drone company for trials in the Lahaul area. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination, and promotion of biomedical research. It is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world.


ICMR's research priorities align with national health priorities. These efforts are undertaken with a view to reducing the total burden of disease and promoting the health and well-being of the population. ICMR promotes biomedical research in the country through intramural as well as extramural research.

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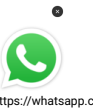
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