

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare launches i-Drone, ICMR's drone-based vaccine delivery model

in First time in South Asia, a "Make in India' drone used to transport COVID-19 vaccines

“Drones can be used in delivering important life-saving medicines, collecting blood samples in critical situations and in tough geographical areas”: Shri Mansukh Mandaviya

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In a landmark event that epitomises the Government's commitment to 'Antyodaya' in health; making healthcare accessible to the last citizen of the country, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare launched ICMR's Drone Response and Outreach in North East (i-Drone). This is a delivery model to make sure that life-saving vaccines reach everyone.

Thanking the visionary leadership of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, the Union Health Minister said, “Under his leadership, the Nation is progressing at a great pace. Today is a historic day, which showed us how technology is making life easier and bringing social change.”



Congratulating the people of the country on this innovative step, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya said, “This is for the first time that a "Make in India' drone has been used in South Asia to transport COVID vaccine over an aerial distance of 15 kms in 12-15 mins from the Bishnupur district hospital

to Loktak lake, Karang island in Manipur for administration at the PHC. The actual road distance between these locations is 26 k.m. Today, 10 beneficiaries will receive the first dose and 8 will receive the second dose at the PHC.”



He further added, “India is a home to geographical diversities and drones can be used to deliver essentials to the last mile. We can use drones in delivering important life-saving medicines, collecting blood samples. This technology can also be used in critical situations. This technology may prove a game changer in addressing the challenges in health care delivery, particularly health supplies in difficult areas.”



Launching the initiative which would facilitate vaccine delivery to tough and hard-to-reach terrains of India, the Union Health Minister said, “Our immunization program for COVID-19 have already exceeded all expectations. I strongly believe that this initiative will further help us achieve the highest possible immunization coverage for COVID-19. Incorporating such drone technologies into the national programs would help deliver other vaccines and medical supplies as quickly as possible.”



Despite the effective and safe vaccine administration in the States and Union Territories, the vaccine delivery among tough and hard-to-reach terrains of India is still challenging. This i-Drone has been designed to overcome these challenges by deploying Unmanned Aerial vehicles (UAV) / drones to remote areas and hard to reach terrains. Currently, the drone based delivery project has been granted permission for implementation in Manipur and Nagaland, as well as union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Island.

ICMR conducted an initial study in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur to test the capacity of drones to carry and transfer vaccines safely. The study was conducted in Manipur, Nagaland and Andaman and Nicobar. These studies provided promising results on the basis of which the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other regulatory authorities have granted permission to fly drones beyond the Visual Line Of Sight.

Shri Mandaviya expressed his confidence in the initiative and noted that this initiative can be helpful in delivering not only the vaccines but also other medical supplies. This will help in overcoming the gaps in current vaccine delivery mechanisms. He thanked the Ministry of Civil Aviation, DGCA and Airport Authority of India for their support towards this endeavour and congratulated ICMR, health workers and all associated with this landmark initiative.

Shri. Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Balram Bhargava, Director General, ICMR and other senior officers of the Ministry, State Governments, ICMR etc were also present.

The event was webcast at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3UZpxLfbr8>

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**MV/AL**

**HFW/ HFM i-Drone launch/4<sup>th</sup> October 2021/4**

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