

NATIONAL

ICMR's drone-based vaccine delivery model launched

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**Technology may prove a game changer in addressing challenges in health care:
Health Minister**

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya launched ICMR's Drone Response and Outreach in North East (i-Drone) here on Monday. The delivery model is aimed at ensuring that life-saving vaccines reach everyone.

“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 km in 12-15 mins from the Bishnupur district hospital to Loktak lake, Karang island in Manipur for administration at the primary health centre. 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,” said the Minister.

Geographical diversities

“India is 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. It 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, the Health Minister said incorporating such technologies into the national programs would help deliver other vaccines and medical supplies too as quickly as possible.

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 Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Promising results

The **ICMR conducted an initial study in collaboration with the IIT Kanpur** to test the capacity of the drones to carry and transfer vaccines safely.

The study was conducted in Manipur, Nagaland and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These studies provided promising results on the basis of which the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other regulatory authorities have granted permission to fly drones beyond the Visual Line Of Sight.

Last month, Telangana launched Beyond **Visual Line of Sight (BVLoS) flights** to deliver a payload comprising vaccines. The Medicine from the Sky project – a collaboration of the Telangana government, World Economic Forum, HealthNet Global and NITI Aayog – seeks to deliver medicines, vaccination, and units of blood to remote, rural areas by means of drones, is a..

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