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ICMR-TSAW Drones team up to pick up diagnostic & biopsy samples

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Six-month study to cover three locations, including one to scale new altitudes

BY PT JYOTHI DATTA

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Diagnostic and biopsy samples will be drone-lifted by TSAW Drones, as part of a project with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to understand how these samples are impacted by this unconventional transportation.

In their first project with ICMR, Arpit Sharma, Associate Vice President at TSAW Drones, told *businessline*, the study was to understand if the quality of blood and other samples would be impacted by the vibrations of the drones, for example. The ICMR has looked at this for shorter durations of a day or so, but this would be a six month study, starting this month, he said, adding that preliminary work of coordinating with local hospitals had begun.

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TSAW Drones is a healthcare drone logistics start-up and its service order from ICMR is across three locations - Telangana, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh.



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Outlining details of the study, he said, the service to the Yaddari district (Telangana) involved transporting tuberculosis medicines and bringing back TB test samples from this tribal area; biopsy samples would be transported in Manipal district (Karnataka), and in Lahul (Himachal Pradesh), it would be a test of taking medicines upto 12,000 ft - a first of sorts. While there have been deliveries upto 8,000 feet, the highest altitude attempted globally, he said, was about 10,000 feet.

While drone services would cut the time taken by road, the drones have adjustments made, given the sensitivity of the samples it would be carrying, he said. They involved temperature control and a system to ensure reduced vibrations. There are emergency protocols that will kick-in, he said, in case of a problem and the drone has a safe compartment to ensure the sample is not affected, he added. Presently the price of the test samples is being picked up by ICMR, he said.

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Leveraging the drone technology, did not just open doors, but also tear down barriers to healthcare access in the remotest of regions in the country, said Dr Sumit Aggarwal, ICMR Scientist D and Program Officer.

Kishan Tiwari, Founder and CEO of TSAW Drones, pointed out that "overcoming difficult terrains and reaching unprecedented altitudes to serve underserved communities and also to achieve this height (12,000 feet) will definitely be a challenge but we are fully prepared to ensure timely and reliable access to medical resources and look forward to achieving this successfully."

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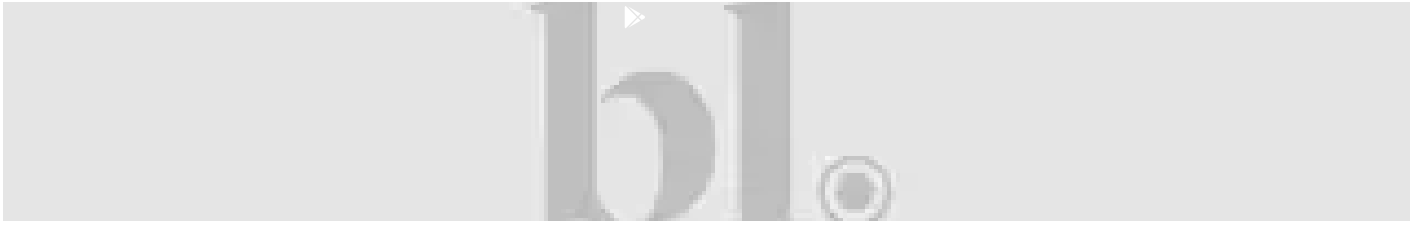
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