



Children gather around the drone that delivered vaccine. (ICMR Twitter)

i-Drone pilot project launched for vax delivery in Mokokchung

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To deliver COVID-19 vaccines to remote areas and strengthen the vaccine delivery system, the Indian Council of Medical Research's Drone Response and Outreach in North East (i-Drone) pilot project was launched for the two districts of Nagaland- Mokokchung and Tuensang- on Tuesday by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in collaboration with state health and family welfare (H&FW) department.

The pilot project was launched for studying the feasibility of drone technology in delivery of medical supplies to the remote places, where travel accessibilities was challenging in times of urgency. The demo flight, carrying covid-19 vaccines from the office of chief medical officer (CMO) Mokokchung to PHC Longsa village with an arial distance of 11.5km was accomplished in just 8 minutes.

By road, it normally takes more than one hour to cover a distance of almost 30 km from Mokokchung town to Longsa village.

The project was jointly flagged off by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mokokchung Limawabang Jamir and Superintendent of police (SP) Mokokchung Aotula Imchen.

Earlier, short speeches were delivered by DC Mokokchung, SP Mokokchung and deputy CMO Dr. Aonungdok Tushi Ao.

Vision and perspective of i-DRONE was shared by secretary DHR & DG, ICMR-Hq, New Delhi,

Prof. Balram Bhargava, through video conferencing. Prof. Bhargava also shared his pleasantries towards the initial achievements of the pilot project.

Despite the effective and safe vaccine administration in the States and Union Territories, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said vaccine delivery among tough and hard-to-reach terrains of India was still challenging.

It said 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.