

Health Minister launches ICMR's drone-based vaccine delivery model

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



Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, has launched ICMR's Drone Response and Outreach in North East (i-Drone).

The 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 the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Island.

Mandaviya said, "This is for the first time that a Make in India drone has been used in South Asia to transport COVID-19 vaccine over an aerial distance of 15 kilometres in 12-15 minutes 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 km. Today, 10 beneficiaries will receive the first dose and 8 will receive the second dose at the PHC."

He added, "This technology may prove a game-changer in addressing the challenges in health care delivery, particularly health supplies in difficult areas."

ICMR conducted an initial study in collaboration with the 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 based on which the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and other regulatory authorities have granted permission to fly drones.