

**Northeast to get India's first ever 'Air Dispensary': Dr Jitendra Singh****Northeast to get India's first ever 'Air Dispensary': Dr Jitendra Singh**

Northeast is all set to get India's first-ever "Air Dispensary" based in a helicopter and the Union Ministry of Development of Northeast (DONER) has already contributed Rs. 25 crore as part of the initial funding for this initiative.

Disclosing this here yesterday after a meeting with the representatives of Aviation Sector and helicopter service/Pawan Hans, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh said, for quite a few months, the DoNER Ministry had been exploring the idea of introducing a helicopter based Dispensary/OPD service in such far flung and remote areas, where no doctor or medical facility was available and the patient, in need, also did not have any access to any medical care. The proposal put forward by the Ministry of DoNER, he said, has been accepted and is in the final stages of process in the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The Union Ministry of Northeast/DoNER, Dr Jitendra Singh said, is keenly pursuing the proposal so that by the beginning of 2018, this could be the Union Government's gift to the people of Northeast.

Dr Jitendra Singh disclosed that even today, nearly 1/3rd of India's population did not have access to proper hospital bed care, as a result of which, poor patients living in remote areas remained deprived of crucial medical care. The experiment being introduced in the Northeast, at the behest of the Ministry of Northeast/DoNER, can also be emulated in other hill states having difficult topography like Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, he added.

As per the envisaged plan, Dr Jitendra Singh said, to begin with, helicopter will be based at two locations, namely Imphal in Manipur and Meghalaya in Shillong. Both of these cities have premier postgraduate medical institutes from where specialist doctors, along with the necessary equipment and paramedical staff, would be able to move into the helicopter and hold a dispensary/OPD in different locations across the eight States of North Eastern Region. On its way back, he said, the same helicopter can also transport a sick patient, requiring admission, to a city hospital. Giving an account of other new helicopter service plans for Northeast, Dr Jitendra Singh said, three twin-engine

helicopters are planned to be placed for initial operation on six routes in the region around Imphal, Guwahati and Dibrugarh.

KSD/PK/SB

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