

DRONE-BASED VACCINE DELIVERY MODEL LAUNCHED

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

Zooming in: The unmanned aerial vehicle used to make vaccine deliveries on Monday. [Twitter/@mansukhmandviya](https://twitter.com/mansukhmandviya)

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya launched the ICMR's drone response and outreach in the 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 minutes 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 km. Today, 10 beneficiaries will receive the first dose and eight will receive the second dose at the primary health centre," said the Minister.

"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."

Tough terrain

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 programmes would help deliver other vaccines and medical supplies too as quickly as possible.

The delivery model would serve 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 Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

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, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and other regulatory authorities have granted permission to fly drones beyond the visual line of sight.

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