
2. Use Drones more Effectively, says Civil Aviation Ministry

Prelims Syllabus: Governance- Policies

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues Arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Why in News?

- In a nationwide programme to take the third eye to the sky, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has called for more effective utilisation of drone applications and urged the Ministry of Home Affairs to deploy unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance, situational Analysis, Crime Control, VVIP security, Disaster Management, etc.

What is a Drone?

- Drone is a layman terminology for Unmanned Aircraft (UA). There are three subsets of Unmanned Aircraft- Remotely Piloted Aircraft, Autonomous Aircraft and Model Aircraft.
- Remotely Piloted Aircraft consists of remote pilot station(s), the required command and control links and any other components, as specified in the type design.
- Besides combat use, drones are used for a range of purposes like package delivery, in agriculture (spraying pesticides etc), Monitoring Environmental changes, aerial Photography, and during search and relief Operations, among others.

Key Changes brought in the Drone Rules, 2021:

- Digital sky platform shall be developed as a business-friendly single-window online system.
- No flight permission required upto 400 feet in green zones and upto 200 feet in the area between 8 and 12 km from the airport perimeter.
- No pilot licence required for micro drones (for non-commercial use), nano drone and for R&D organisations.
- No restriction on drone operations by foreign-owned companies registered in India.
- Import of drones and drone components to be regulated by DGFT.
- No security clearance required before any registration or Licence Issuance.
- No requirement of certificate of Airworthiness, Unique Identification Number, Prior Permission and remote pilot licence for R&D entities.
- Coverage of drones under Drone Rules, 2021 increased from 300 kg to 500 kg. This will cover drone taxis also.

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- Issuance of Certificate of Airworthiness delegated to Quality Council of India and Certification entities Authorised by it.
 - Manufacturer may Generate their drone's unique identification number on the digital sky platform through the self-certification route.
 - Maximum penalty under Drone Rules, 2021 reduced to INR 1 lakh. This shall, however, not apply to penalties in respect of violation of other laws.
 - Drone corridors will be developed for cargo deliveries.
 - Drone promotion council to be set up to facilitate a business-friendly regulatory regime.

Need for Stricter Rules and Regulations:

- Recently, Drones were used for the first time to drop explosive devices, triggering blasts inside the Air Force Station's technical area in Jammu.
- Over the past two Years, drones have been deployed regularly by Pakistan-based outfits to Smuggle Arms, Ammunition and drugs into Indian territory.
- According to Government figures, 167 drone sightings were recorded along the border with Pakistan in 2019, and in 2020, there were 77 such sightings.
- With the rapid Proliferation of drone technology and exponential growth of its global market in recent years, the possibility of a drone attack cannot be ruled out even in the safest cities in the world.
- Drones are becoming Security threats particularly in conflict zones where non-state actors are active and have easy access to the Technology.