



Aircraft Amendment Bill, 2020

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Why in News

Recently, the Lok Sabha has passed the **Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020** which seeks to amend the **Aircraft Act, 1934**.

The **Act regulates** the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of civil aircrafts and licensing of aerodromes.

Key Features

- The Bill will provide **statutory status to regulatory institutions** like the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation** (DGCA), the **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security** (BCAS) and the **Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau** (AAIB).
 - **DGCA** will carry out oversight and regulatory functions with respect to matters under the Bill.
 - **BCAS** carries out regulatory oversight functions related to civil aviation security.
 - **AAIB** carries out investigations related to aircraft accidents and incidents.
 - The statutory status to these regulatory institutions would **improve India's aviation safety ranking** as suggested by the **International Civil Aviation Organization** (ICAO).
- The Bill proposes to **increase the fine amount for violations of rules** from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore for aviation industry players.

Under the Bill, the central government may cancel the licences, certificates or approvals granted to a person under the Act if the person contravenes any provision of the Act.
- The **Act exempted aircrafts** belonging to the **naval, military, or air forces** of the Union.

The Bill **expands this exemption** to include aircrafts belonging to any **other armed forces other than these three**.

Challenges

- The civil aviation sector had been **deregulated** with little role for the government to set air fare.
- There has been a **drop in demand** and airline companies are under stress due to the **COVID-19** outbreak.
- Air India is having huge losses (₹26 crore daily) due to its **disinvestment** and it is likely to get worse in the wake of the **pandemic**.
- The aviation sector faces the **shortage of Air-Traffic Controllers** (ATCs).
- The cases of “**near miss**” in the skies have **increased**.

Note:

A near miss is when two aircraft come so close that their safety is compromised. The safe distance between two planes flying in opposite directions is 40 seconds depending on their speed. Similarly, the vertical distance of 1,000 feet is considered safe.

Way Forward

- Airfares need to remain **affordable** and airlines also need to remain **viable**.
- The **strength of ATCs needs to be increased** to avoid any possibility of mid-air collisions.

India has 3,500 ATCs and 250 more will be hired next year.

Source: TH