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Draft Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2020

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Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has notified the **draft Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2020**.

- The draft rules have been issued at a time when the use of **drones has increased due to a coronavirus lockdown**, for purposes like surveillance, disinfection and videography.
- Earlier, the government had issued **drone regulations 1.0 and the drone regulations 2.0**. The government has also finalized **National Counter Rogue Drone Guidelines for handling the threats from Unmanned Aircraft Systems**.

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.
- Remotely piloted aircraft have been divided into **five** categories based on their weight-
 - **Nano** : Less than or equal to 250 grams.
 - **Micro** : From 250 grams to 2kg.
 - **Small** : From 2 kg to 25kg.
 - **Medium** : From 25kg to 150kg.
 - **Large** : Greater than 150kg.

Key Points

- **Aims:**
 - A set of rules notified by the government aims to **regulate** the production, import, trade, ownership, establishment of the drone ports (airports for drones) and operation of unmanned aircraft systems.
 - It also seeks to create a **framework for drones use by businesses.**
- **Draft Rules:**
 - **Approval by DGCA:**
 - An authorised manufacturer or importer of drones can sell its devices **only to an individual or entity approved by** the aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (**DGCA**).
 - **Only Nano class drones** will be allowed to operate in India **in general** and **only a qualified remote pilot will be permitted to operate heavier drones.**
 - The DGCA will have the powers to **inspect a UAS manufacturing or maintenance** facility before granting any authorisation under these rules.
 - **Third Party Insurance:**

No UAS shall operate in India unless there is in existence a **valid third party insurance policy** to cover the liability that may arise on account of a mishap involving such UAS.
 - **Carrying Payload:**
 - **No UAS** should carry any **payload except** as permitted by the DGCA.
 - No person **shall drop or project or permit to be dropped from a UAS in motion any object** except when specified.
 - **Ownership:**
 - For owning and using a drone, one has to be at **least 18 years old.**
 - In the **case of companies**, the requirement is that their **main place of business has to be in India** and the chairman and at least two thirds of directors have to be Indian citizens.
 - Also, businesses operating drones have to be substantially **owned and effectively controlled by Indian nationals.**
- **Future Prospects:**
 - Currently, the DGCA has **permitted food startups to conduct trials** for drones Beyond the Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS).
 - Unlike Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) flights, which are operated within the pilot's line of sight, BVLOS flights are flown beyond the visual range. These are mainly performed for **monitoring large areas.**
 - It enables service providers to conduct **complex drone operations** and facilitate drones to fly **without any human interference.**
 - DGCA is also expected to issue a **separate set of rules** to enable use of drones for **e-commerce or delivering medical supplies.**

Way Forward

- Drones offer low-cost, safe and quick aerial surveys for data collection and are useful for industries such as power, mining, realty, oil and gas exploration, railways and highways. They are also effective in relief and rescue work and in policing.
- But drones can also be misused such as **Saudi-Aramco Drone Attack** and thus regulated usage of drones is necessary in today's world.

Source:TH