



Draft Drone Rules, 2021

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Why in News

The **Ministry of Civil Aviation** has unveiled the **Draft Drone Rules, 2021** based on “**trust, self-certification and non-intrusive monitoring**”.

The new rules would replace the existing **Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, notified in March, 2021**.

Key Points

- **Aim:**

To create a “**digital sky platform**” as a business-friendly single-window online system for procuring various approvals.

There will be minimal human interface on the digital sky platform and most permissions will be self-generated.

- **Provisions:**

- **Approvals:** Abolish the need for various approvals, including certificate of conformance, certificate of maintenance, import clearance, acceptance of existing drones, operator permit, authorisation of R&D organisation and student remote pilot licence.

Fee reduced to nominal levels. No linkage with the size of the drone.

- **Digital Sky Platform:** The government will be developing a digital sky platform that will have an interactive airspace map dividing the country into **green, yellow, and red zones.**

It will provide a **secure and a scalable platform** that supports drone technology frameworks, such as NPNT (no permission, no take-off), designed to enable flight permission digitally and manage unmanned aircraft operations and traffic efficiently.

- **Reduced Airport Perimeter:** The draft rules reduced the airport perimeter from 45 km to 12 km.

The rules state that **no flight permissions would be required to fly** upto 400 feet in green zones and upto 200 feet in the area between 8 and 12 km from the airport perimeter.

- **Pilot License: No pilot licence would be needed for micro drones** for non-commercial use, nano drones and for R&D organisations.

There would be **no restriction on drone operations by foreign-owned companies** registered in India.

- **Drone Corridor:** The Ministry will also facilitate development of drone corridors for cargo deliveries and a drone promotion council will be set up to facilitate a business-friendly regulatory regime.

- **Safety Features:** The draft rule also provides for safety features such as real-time tracking beacon, and geo-fencing, which are expected to be notified in future and a six-month lead time will be provided for compliance.

- **Increased Coverage of Drones:** The coverage has been **increased from 300 kg to 500 kg and will cover drone taxis**, while the Issuance of Certificate of Airworthiness has been delegated to Quality Council of India and certification entities authorized by it.

- **Analysis:**

- The decision to liberalize the drone policy even after the recent **drone incidents in Jammu** showcases the government's bold approach to **promote the use of the drone and focus on the development of counter-drone technology** to address the threat posed by rogue drones.
- The current draft is a welcome move and will go a long way in **facilitating investments** in drone technology in India.

- 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** (existing rules)-
 - 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.

Source: IE