



## India Bans Import of Foreign Drones

**For Prelims:** Drone Shakti Scheme, Drone Rules 2021.

**For Mains:** Ban on drone import and its significance.

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Directorate General of Foreign Trade \(DGFT\)](#) under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has **banned the import of foreign drones**.

- The move **comes after the [Union Budget 2022](#) proposed the Drone Shakti scheme** to facilitate application and use of 'drones as service' in the country.
- The **import of drone components, however, has not been banned** and will not require any approvals.
  - The **import of drones for defense and security purposes will also be allowed** subject to approval from the DGFT.
- The move aims **to promote made-in-India drones**.

### What is the Background?

- **Drone Rules:** In 2021, the Ministry notified [liberalized drone rules](#) with the aim to **encourage R&D and to make India a drone hub**.
  - It abolished several permissions and approvals. The number of forms that need to be filled was reduced from 25 to five and the types of fee brought down from 72 to 4.
  - No permission is required for operating drones in green zones and no remote pilot licence is necessary for non-commercial use of micro and nano drones.
  - Payloads up to 500kg have been allowed so the drones can be used as unmanned flying taxis.
  - Further, foreign ownership of companies operating drones has also been permitted.
- **PLI Scheme for Drones:** The government **also approved a [Production-Linked Incentive \(PLI\) scheme for Drones](#)** and their components with an allocation of Rs. 120 crore for three financial years.
  - The PLI Scheme for the drones and drone components industry addresses the strategic, tactical, and operational uses of this revolutionary technology.
- In September 2021, the **DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)** **launched an interactive [airspace map](#)** to help drone operators check for no-fly zones or where they need to undergo certain formalities before flying a drone.
- The Indian government has chosen drones to help achieve its ambition of creating a comprehensive e-property ledger under the [SVAMITVA \(Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas\)](#) scheme launched in April 2020.

### What is the Drone Shakti Scheme?

- The Union Budget **pushed for promotion of drones through startups and skilling at**

### Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

- Startups will be promoted to facilitate 'Drone Shakti' through varied applications and for **Drone-As-A-Service (DrAAS)**. Courses for skilling will also be started in selected ITIs across all States.
  - DrAAS allows enterprises to avail various services from drone companies, removing the need for them to invest in drone hardware or software, pilots, and training programmes.
  - Sectors where drones can be employed are endless. These include photography, agriculture, mining, telecom, insurance, telecom, oil & gas, construction, transport, disaster management, geo-spatial mapping, forest and wildlife, defence and law enforcement to name a few.
- Drones **will also be promoted for crop assessment, digitisation of land records, spraying of insecticides and nutrients (Kisan Drones)**.
- The drone services industry **is expected to grow to over Rs 30,000 crore in next three years and generate over five lakh jobs**.

### What is a Drone?

- It is a layman terminology for **Unmanned Aircraft (UA)**.
- Originally developed **for the military and aerospace industries, drones have found their way into the mainstream** because of the enhanced levels of safety and efficiency they bring.
- A drone's **autonomy level can range from remotely piloted (a human controls its movements) to advanced autonomy**, which means that it relies on a system of sensors and **LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) detectors** to calculate its movement.

### What are the various Applications of Drones?

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| <b>Agriculture:</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Drones have a plethora of applications in Agriculture, which <b>consists of carrying out</b> fields on an automated basis, monitoring traffic incidents, surveying hard-to-reach places.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Healthcare:</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Drones can make <b>medicine delivery more accessible and faster</b>, especially in difficult terrain.</li><li>▪ E.g. Telangana government's '<b>Medicine from the sky</b>' programme.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Inventory Management:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Drones are being used <b>to scan inventory at warehouses</b>.</li><li>▪ These machines, which are coupled with sensors, <b>can quickly monitor and transmit data</b> allowing them to manage warehouses efficiently.</li></ul>                         |
| <b>Security and Surveillance:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Drones can be used <b>for critical surveillance and intelligence gathering</b> as well, in various capacities.</li><li>▪ They can also be used to inspect and offer real-time footage at construction sites.</li></ul>                                 |
| <b>Disaster Management:</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ In the event of a <b>natural disaster, such as an earthquake or flood, authorities</b> can use drones to inspect affected areas.</li><li>▪ Drones can potentially be used as a social rescue device, detecting and directing trapped people.</li></ul> |

**Source: TH**