

UNAUTHORIZED DRONE USE TO INVITE PENALTY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

A permit will be needed to use a drone other than those in the nano category, weighing 250 gm or less

[Drones](#) weighing more than 250 grams (gm) can only be flown by a remote pilot with permission from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for every flight, as per new drone rules that came into force on Friday.

The rules, which were finalised after about ten months of consultations, however, do not allow using drones to deliver goods.

The Unmanned Aircraft System Rules, 2021 lays the terms of drone usage by individuals and businesses as well as terms of research, testing, production and import of these vehicles. The new rules set a regulatory framework aimed at encouraging the use of drones for various commercial and security purposes and outlines the 'dos and don'ts' for users.

A permit will be needed to use a drone other than those in the nano category, weighing 250gm or less. However, nano drones with a maximum speed of more than 15 metres per second in level flight or capable of flying more than 15 metres high and have a range exceeding 100 metres from the remote pilot will fall in the next category—micro drones for which permit and take-off permission are needed.

Micro drones are, in general, classified as those weighing more than 250gm but equal to or less than two kilograms.

The rules also prescribe penalties for any unauthorized import, buying, selling and leasing of drones. Such penalties will be more for heavier drones. These rules also apply to drones that are currently used in the country. Flying a drone by a person who is not a licensed remote pilot will also be a compoundable offence.

According to the new rules, drones will not be allowed to operate beyond visual line of sight or for delivery of goods, which would limit the use of these gadgets to surveys, photography, security and various information gathering purposes. Use of drones in commercial, safety, law and order, disaster management and surveillance operations reduce manpower requirement and costs.

The final rules come at a time when the pandemic has highlighted the role of technology in reducing human interface and costs. Drones offer low-cost, safe and quick aerial surveys for data collection and are useful for industries such as power, mining, realty and oil and gas exploration.

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