

Concerns on drone regulations

Click <u>here</u> to know more on the guidelines for drone operations.

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What is the issue?

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Lack of clarity on the recently published drone regulations might affect competitiveness on this nascent field.

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What are the concerns?

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- India's regulations separate drones into five categories nano, micro, small, medium and large.
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- There is very little regulation for flying a nano up to 50 metres height, except for not flying near airports, military sites or in segregated airspace. \n
- From the micro category, every drone must obtain a unique identification number (UIN) from the aviation regulator. \n
- It will be followed by a long list of documentation including security clearances from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in several cases. \n
- Once the UIN is obtained, drone operators have to apply for an Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) which includes more forms, more annexures and more submissions.
- Even for the micro drones that climb only up to a height of 200 feet, users have to intimate the local police station 24 hours prior to the flight. \n
- Manufacturers of drones, technologists and researchers making applications using drones have to test fly drones frequently, often several times a day. \n

• This makes the structure of these regulations paving the way for possibility of red tapism.

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- With so many government authorities involved in allowing permission, it is inevitable that operators could be slapped easily with real and perceived violations.
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- To avoid this, the regulation provides a list of identified areas for testing and demonstration so that flying drones in these areas comes with less paperwork.

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- However, the locations provided are far from technology and development hubs that further complicates practical testing of these drones. \n
- For example, in Karnataka, the identified areas are Chitradurga, Coorg and Ganimangala village, all of which are around 200 km from Bengaluru entailing nearly four hours of travel one way. n

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What is the case with other countries?

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- According to Global Market Insights, China's drone economy, including manufacturing and development, will be worth \$9 billion in 2020. \n
- \bullet The commercial drone market of US is also expected to be \$2.05 billion by 2023.

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- Switzerland has an enormous number of people interested in flying drones and developing drone-based applications. γn
- One of their drones helps analyse which plants are deficient in nitrogen, enabling farmers to add corrective fertilizer only where necessary. \n
- This has resulted in higher yield and significantly lower usage of fertilizers and herbicides, which attracts customers all around the world. \n

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What should be done?

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• The security and privacy risks of allowing drones to fly in an unregulated manner are high.

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- However, if India is to reach even the fraction of the \$1 trillion potential, it needs to figure out a more balanced manner of regulation. \n
- India made a good start by freeing all drones from their previous illegality. $\slash n$
- However, the real impact of drones will only be seen in the many applications they will be put to. \n
- They are likely to be used in agriculture, disaster prevention systems, rescue operation leaders, and even public transport providers in the distant future. \n
- This should not be affected by filing a series of applications in multiple copies and waiting for various government departments to respond. \n
- Hence any hectic regulations will create serious repercussions and affects India's future competitiveness in the field. \n

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Source: The Hindu

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