Draft rules for drones

Why in news?

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The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has released a revised draft of proposed rules for drones.

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What are drones?

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- An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), commonly known as a drone, is an aircraft without a human pilot aboard.
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- UAVs are a component of an unmanned aircraft system (UAS).
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- An UAS includes a UAV, a ground-based controller, and a system of communications between the two.
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- The flight of UAVs may operate with varying degrees of autonomy, either under remote control by a human operator or autonomously by on board computers.
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- It aids surveillance in difficult terrain or crowded urban landscapes.
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- It is also used in disaster management for surveys and mapping.
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- Moreover, UAV ambulances have been successfully deployed in several countries.
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What are the proposals of the draft?

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- The draft invites public comments on operating civilian unmanned aerial

vehicles (UAVs) or drones.
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- It divides drones, according to weight, into five categories.
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- The lightest two categories - Nano (up to 250 grams) and Micro (up to 2 kgs of take-off weight).
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- These may be operated without the operator possessing an unmanned aircraft operator permit (UAOP) or UAVs requiring a unique identification number (UIN).
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- This is provided that they are operated within line-of-sight and not above 200 metres.
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- Larger vehicles will have to possess unique identification number and their operators will need a permit.
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- Flight plans will have to be filed and import licences for larger drones will be granted on merit, depending on the purpose.
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- Commercial use of drones for photography, doorstep delivery, and even passenger transport could be allowed.
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What is the significance?

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- An earlier draft in mid-2016 faced widespread criticism for proposing a very complicated and restrictive set of rules that was also difficult to enforce.
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- Some of those requirements have been relaxed in the new draft, which now appears more in line with the ground realities.
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- The draft proposals are with considerable relaxations, given that the earlier proposal suggested every flight would have to be cleared by the Home Ministry and the DGCA, as much as 80 days in advance.
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- Restrictions placed on areas where UAVs may not be operated have also been relaxed.
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What are the areas of concern?

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- Flights are not going to be permitted within 500 metres of designated sensitive installations, or within 50 km of borders, including the LoC and LAC, or for more than 500 metres out to sea.
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- This is still very restrictive and it will make commercial operations difficult, given the plethora of “sensitive installations” spread across the country.
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- The new regulations will be difficult to enforce as well, but given sensible regulations civilian use could proliferate.
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- Civilian use of drones for hobby and commercial purposes is already common and multiple types are available.
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- If permissions are too tedious, they may be ignored.
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Source: Business Standard

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