

Pragati Maidan to host mega drone event in December

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New Delhi: Next month, Pragati Maidan will be hosting India's biggest-ever drone event. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is learnt to have directed the aviation ministry to upscale a programme on unmanned aircraft system (UAS) scheduled on November 13. A source said now a two-day mega event would be organised and the public would be allowed inside on the second day to witness the wide variety of uses for drones in India.

Modi plans to make India a global drone hub before the end of this decade. He got the aviation ministry to junk an archaic policy enacted earlier this year that tied down UAS in a plethora of red tape and clearances. Following adverse industry reaction, the policy was junked and replaced with a simple set of rules.

"Drones have an immense potential for being used in all imaginable walks of life. The PM reviewed the upcoming Drone Festival of India, 2021 with top officials and directed that the event be held on a much grander scale at Pragati Maidan within 30 days of the programme planned on November 13," said the source.

Now, there will be over 2,000 participants and more than 100 exhibitors. "We plan to invite people from all walks of life, like students, self-help groups and farmers on the second day to showcase the wide variety of uses of drones. This is just the beginning. Our aim is to bring about transformation in peoples' lives with drones," said an official.

Currently, drones are being used for transporting vaccines, spraying pesticides, fighting locusts and inspecting assets like oil pipelines and transmission lines. They would soon be used for e-commerce.

The aviation ministry recently allowed domestic flyers to take small to medium-size drones. Drones (without battery) would mostly need to be in check-in bags and batteries (of up to certain wattage) only in cabin bags. For international trips, rules of destination countries would apply.

The drone fest would be organised at Pragati Maidan after November 27, when the annual trade fair ends.