

Asks all ministries to increase use of drones in their work

Arindam Majumder | New Delhi May 28, 2022 Last Updated at 00:22 IST



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flies a drone at the inauguration of the Bharat Drone Mahotsav in New Delhi. Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia and MoS for Civil Aviation General V K Singh also attended the event. Photo: PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged all ministries to increase the use of drones in their work, saying he wants drones to become ubiquitous like mobile phones.

The prime minister said he had asked all ministries to send their officers here to see how best drones could improve the quality of lives and improve ease of doing business.

"At a time when we are celebrating Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is my dream that everyone in India should have a smartphone in his or her hand, every farm should have a drone, and every house should have prosperity," Modi said, adding that India has the potential to become a hub for drones.

The prime minister was speaking at India's biggest Drone Festival — Bharat Drone Mahotsav. Modi also interacted with Kisan drone pilots, witnessed open-air drone demonstrations, and interacted with start-ups in the drone exhibition centre.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia said it was estimated that the drone industry would reach ~15,000 crore turnover by the year 2026. Today, there are 270 drone start-ups in India, he said.

The government has made multiple changes in rules regarding drones to encourage its use while dissuading import primarily from the Chinese market.

In September, the government had released a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for drone manufacturers in India. This scheme seeks to promote the growth of the drone manufacturing sector in India where eligible companies can get 20 per cent of their value addition as an incentive from the government.

Before that, it had relaxed rules on the use of drones to make it easier to acquire licences and allowed heavier payloads so the devices can potentially be used as unmanned flying taxis. India will offer ~120 crore (\$16 million) of incentives for drone makers.

For instance, a drone operator required 23 permissions from multiple government agencies with a requirement of several secondary permissions beyond the 23. "Even for testing a drone, permission was required from the police and Indian Air Force. Such provisions lead to administrative bottlenecks and a never-ending process of obtaining approvals," said an executive at a drone manufacturing firm.

"We truly believe a major change can be brought by drone delivery inducing faster deliveries, sustainability, efficiency, cost effectiveness, and making hard to reach areas by road or where there is no connectivity at all more accessible. Businesses across all verticals have started realising the upsides that are the cost efficiency, time saving, and technological advancements that drones can weave into a business," said Ankit Kumar, chief executive of Skye Air Mobility.