Drones from China still hover over Indian ones

Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Jul 18, 2018, 04.00 AM IST

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Karnataka not yet glob al UAS manufacturing hub as planned; foreign made devices sell more

Though the state government has come out with a comprehensive framework for the use unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in governance, it has not been very successful in fulfilling one of the main objectives of the framework which is to make Karnataka a global hub for manufacturing of the UAS. Experts say users still prefer foreign drones, especially those from China.

Last year, the government had decided to come up with a framework for the use of UAS or drones and the Karnataka Knowledge Commission in September 2017 had made recommendations towards this goal.

Two of the five major recommendations made in the report — UAS-Technologies, Applications and Policies: Strategy for Karnataka, submitted by the Commission, highlighted the need for making Karnataka a global hub for UAS and for supporting design and manufacturing the drones.

However, there has not been much success on this front as indigenous manufacturing of the UAS is yet to take off big time with a majority of users still preferring to procure foreign manufactured ones, especially Chinese drones.

“The framework on UAS has already been put out by the commission and there were two main focus areas - one was to come up with guidelines as to where these systems can be operated and other was how to support manufacturing of these systems in the state. As far as the second focus area is concerned, not much has been achieved as users prefer to use foreign manufactured ones, especially Chinese drones,” Gaurav Gupta, principal secretary, IT, BT and Science & Technology Department, said.

He added that it was difficult to kickstart manufacturing of these systems here in a full-fledged manner.

“The components of the UAS from abroad, especially China, are imported in a knocked down condition and they are assembled here by the agencies marketing them and the users. To get them to design and manufacture here, we need to provide financial grants to researchers and institutions working in the area of...
UAS,” he added.

Earlier this year, the previous government had announced that it would offer to fund local manufacturing of drones and had set aside Rs 20 crore and also promised free land for setting up units.

The Commission had also recommended that the government allocate funds to the tune of Rs 25 crores for the Challenge Fund and undertake the innovative activity of indigenous design and manufacturing of UAS and building a hub for UAS manufacturing in Karnataka.