Sarjapur to be testing ground for drone-based governance

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BENGALURU: The government is actively pushing for the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), popularly called drones, in governance and considering pilot projects in Sarjapur (Bengaluru), Badami municipality (Bagalkot district) and Tumakuru district, based on recommendations of the Karnataka Knowledge Commission.

Science and technology minister M R Seetharam said: "We want to be path-breakers in this field and efforts have been on to encourage the use of new technology, especially UAVs, in governance. We have gone through the Knowledge Commission report and will hold the first meeting this week."
On the agenda will be regulation for use of drones and police preparedness in implementation of the pilots in Sarjapur and Tumakuru. According to a report commissioned by the state government, "Every city has two important functions: property tax collection and planning ahead for the development. Both these require timely, precise and accurate, image and mapping information — presently, city authorities utilize traditional methods for these areas for which UAVs can be used."

The UAVs, the report recommends, can independently and autonomously be utilized to determine property tax of each building by imaging and mapping it, determining its height and then estimating floor area.

"This can be done without humans visiting each building and surveying it and can be scientific and free from errors and fudging..."
of data. The estimated floor areas and type of building can then be used to estimate Expected Property Tax - which will give a tremendous handle and efficiency to city authorities for proper property-tax collection," it added.

Also, every city needs to prepare its development master plan and be able to monitor it regularly. Preparing a plan requires timely and detailed information and maps and its regional resources.

Knowledge Commission chairperson K Kasturirangan told TOI: "We have detailed all these points in our report. Now, it's for the government to follow up."

While Sarjapur has been chosen for tax collection, Badami has been chosen for master plan operations. In Tumakuru, UAVs will be used to collect real-time information on standing crops and their spread and for spraying pesticides and fertilizers.

**TIMES VIEW**

Drone-based governance has a suitably futuristic flavour to the commonplace exercise of ensuring city administrators deliver on basic amenities. While deploying technological aids to assist city managers is welcome, we must not lose sight of the core of good governance. Officers at the helm of affairs and all the support staff should be goal-oriented and focused on ensuring that people don't have to run from pillar to post to take care of their day-to-day requirements and get problems sorted out. Using drones to improve property tax collection is laudable but let's not forget that it's people who finally make the difference.