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AICTE/VCM-OFC-CORRES/2018

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To,
Principal/Director-AICTE approved Institutions
Vice Chancellors of Universities

Dear Sir/Madam,

Sub: INDIAN AIR FORCE ANNOUNCES 100 CRORES SWARM DRONE COMPETITION

The Indian Air Force has launched a unique contest whose winners could bag a defence contract for swarm drones worth upto Rs 100 crore. The Mehar Baba Swarm Drone Competition, open to Indian individuals, colleges and entities, was launched on Air Force Day on 08 October 2018 and named after the legendary World War II maverick air force pilot, Late Air Commodore Mehar Singh DSO, MVC.

For the first time ever, the Indian Air Force intends to reimburse upto Rs.10 crores on R&D funds, award the winner/s a prize of Rs.10 Lakhs and follow it up with an initial co-production order with the IAF's Base Repair Depot of upto Rs.100 crores.

Drone swarms are masses of tiny drones flying like a flock of birds that can perform coordinated tasks because they are controlled by an operator. The IAF is initially looking at peaceful applications of the swarm, to deliver relief supplies in disaster-hit regions, especially in remote and far-flung areas. It wants a single operator in a portable ground control unit to be able to control up to 50 drones that can fly 100 kilometres, carry a payload of one kilogram spend upto an hour on the target. A swarm of such drones could, for instance, take relief supplies to flood-affected areas like those seen recently in Kerala in critical times, which could save hundreds of lives.

The Mehar Baba Prize competition, for which entries have to be submitted by 28 November 2018, has three phases. In phase 1, presentations will be decided by 16 December 2018. During phase 2, 10 drones will have to fly 10 km, at an altitude of 3,300 ft with GPS. In phase 3, 50 drones will have to fly as a swarm for 50 km to and fro, with and without GPS. Developers will get their development cost reimbursed up to Rs 25 lakh for phase 1 and Rs 10 crore for phase 2. Up to three winners will get Rs 10 lakh as prize, followed by a co-production opportunity with a Base Repair Depot (BRD).

The winners will be announced on Kargil Vijay Diwas on 26 July 2019.

This is also the first time the armed forces will directly place a significant defence order on an external agency after an open contest. This model, if successful, has the potential to upend the traditional model of acquiring high technology from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and defence public sector undertakings a process frequently marked by long procurement and development cycles.

Further details can be obtained by registering on the IAF website www.indianairforce.nic.in and downloading the competition details. Any further clarifications and answers to queries can be sought from Wg Cdr Sarang Vashisht, Officer-in-charge Swarm Drone Competition on +91-9680905129 or Wg Cdr G Adityakiran, Joint Director, Air War Strategy Cell on 011-23013748 (Office) from Monday to Friday or on +91-9717343433 (Mob).

Thanking You,

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