

Amazon unveils drone traffic control system at NASA centre

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Washington: While the world is looking to deploy drones for delivering groceries to hot piping pizzas, several giants like Amazon and Google are busy developing a drone traffic control system to tackle a scenario when these unmanned aerial vehicles will swarm the skies.

On July 28, in the presence of drone-makers, regulators, engineers and others, Amazon unveiled a plan that includes a high-speed lane for robot delivery drones in the skies, San Jose Mercury News reported.

The captivated participants at the NASA Ames Research Center at Moffett Field in Mountain View, California, watched a drone flight path simulation on the big screen at a first-of-its-kind event.

“Maybe in 10 years, every home will have a drone and every home will act as an airport,” convention organiser Parimal Kopardekar from the NASA Ames Research Centre was quoted as saying.

The vision is to divide low altitudes into separate drone corridors so that the aerial machines can have a smooth movement in the sky.

While the recreational drones will be relegated to the lowest elevations, the advanced, internet-connected and self-piloted drones that Amazon is planning will fly higher in the sky.

These will be equipped with vehicle-to-vehicle communications technology and sensors that allow them to avoid fellow drones and other objects.

The drones will stay below a buffer zone to ensure they do not hit planes and helicopters.

“We need to have a system in place before the volume builds,” Kopardekar added.

Amazon is not the only one in the race. Google has built and tested autonomous aerial vehicles which, it believes, could be used for goods deliveries.

The project is being developed at Google X, the company's technology research arm, which is also developing the self-driving car, media reported last year.

In February this year, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said it will govern small commercial drone flights.

Citing more than two dozen recent near-collisions, US Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced a bill in June this year that would regulate recreational unmanned aircraft, the report added.

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