



A SingPost drone during a successful delivery trial in September 2015, when it delivered a letter and T-shirt from Lorong Halus to Pulau Ubin. In the planned live test at NUS early next year, autonomous drones will fly on pre-defined routes to drop off packages weighing less than 4kg at parcel lockers across the Kent Ridge campus. ST FILE PHOTO

Drone deliveries to take off at NUS

Kent Ridge campus to be site of trial led by SingPost and Airbus Helicopters next year

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Students at the National University of Singapore (NUS) might have to get used to the buzz of drones overhead at the Kent Ridge campus early next year, when a drone delivery trial led by Singapore Post and Airbus Helicopters gets under way.

Both SingPost and Airbus Helicopters signed a memorandum of understanding at the Rotorcraft Asia trade show yesterday to con-

duct research and trials on using unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, to drop off packages and parcels.

Part of this trial includes a live test at NUS early next year, which will see autonomous drones flying on pre-defined routes to drop off packages weighing less than 4kg at parcel lockers across the campus.

“The project... is designed to address real-world challenges such as safety and accurate flight in high-rise cities while meeting the needs of customers,” said SingPost

covering group CEO Mervyn Lim.

The agreement makes SingPost a partner under Airbus Helicopters’ Skyways parcel delivery project, which aims to develop the safe use of drones for package delivery in urban environments.

SingPost previously explored the use of drones in delivering packages and letters. In September 2015, SingPost delivered a letter and T-shirt from Lorong Halus to Pulau Ubin using an off-the-shelf drone system customised by engineers from SingPost and the then Infocomm Development Authority Labs, now known as Pixel Labs.

Said Mr Lim: “The next stage is to work with a name like Airbus – well

known for safety – to develop a commercial prototype. So this is the gradual phase-to-phase development as we see this to be the future of urban logistics.”

Under this latest agreement, Airbus will develop the drone hardware for the trial, while SingPost will provide logistical support.

Such drones will come with eight rotors – a safety measure that ensures that they can continue flying in case of motor failure. They will weigh less than 25kg, following international guidelines.

For safety reasons, the delivery drones will fly only on fixed, specified air routes.

They will land only at designated

landing pads at parcel stations to unload their packages, after which customers will receive a message on their mobile phones to collect their parcels.

Airbus Helicopters executive vice-president of engineering and chief technical officer Jean-Brice Dumont said the most important features of using a drone delivery system are safety, reliability and security.

He said: “We cannot compromise on safety. If the drone doesn’t meet safety requirements, we will decide it won’t work. Safety is a non-negotiable requirement of the project.”

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