

# SingPost partners Airbus Helicopters for drone trials

✔ **LESTER HIO, THE STRAITS TIMES**

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 conduct 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.

SingPost previously explored the use of drones in delivering

packages and letters in September 2015.

Mr Lim said: “The next stage is to work with a name like Airbus – well known for safety – to develop a commercial prototype.”

Under this latest agreement, Airbus will develop the drone hardware for the trial while SingPost will provide logistical support. Such drones 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 packages, after which customers will receive a message on their mobile phones to collect their parcels.

Mr Jean-Brice Dumont, Airbus Helicopters executive vice-president of engineering and chief technical officer said: “If the drone doesn’t meet safety requirements, we will decide it won’t work. Safety is a non-negotiable requirement of the project.”

[lesterh@sph.com.sg](mailto:lesterh@sph.com.sg)