



# Flying helpers

Average Drone Sdn Bhd and Futurise demonstrated a pilot meal delivery drone service within the drone testing zone in Cyberjaya. PICTURES BY HIZANI SHAMSUDIN



A visitor flying a drone during MyDroneX in Cyberjaya. PICTURE BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

**T**HE capabilities of drones have grown so exponentially over the past couple of years that what used to be merely a passion of aerial photographers has evolved into a potent enabler for businesses and industries.

The recent Malaysia Drone Expo, MyDroneX, showcased how these little flying machines have become so useful for industries as well as small businesses. The MyDroneX, which took place in Cyberjaya, focused on drone-related technologies, giving participants and visitors exposure to experiential and educational programmes on the drone tech industry. This inaugural event, organised by Futurise Centre and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), attracted not just industry players but also hobbyists, students and professionals from various industries who use, or aim to utilise, this technology.

**POTENT INFLUENCE**  
Comparing drone technology to the invention of wheels, Futurise's acting chief operating officer, Mahadhir Aziz, believes that drones are a disrupter in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. "In the early days of the First Industrial Revolution, the wheel was the one single invention that revolutionised every industry. Despite its obvious function in transportation, the wheel was a game-changer for just about every industry, including those that didn't exist at the time," he said during

New drone advancements offer far more advantages than just a beautiful view from above, writes Nur Zarina Othman

the expo. "Drones are parallel to the wheel in that they will have great influence in the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

Drones are so much more than just about photography. Multinational companies like Petronas, TNB and Sime Darby also weighed in on the newfound capabilities of drones in the agriculture, security, logistics, oil and gas sectors.

"We wish to elevate innovation and the development of cutting-edge technologies here in Malaysia, and urge all drone enthusiasts and entrepreneurs to be part of the ecosystem so we can collectively drive forward new regulations and provide holistic support to pave the way for the future of DroneTech in Malaysia," Mahadhir reiterated.

During the MyDroneX expo, several panel sessions by leading experts, workshops and demonstrations enlightened Malaysians on the future of the drone industry.

"The MyDroneX event is to enable the public to better understand the potential of drones along with firsthand demonstrations on what drones can do at present," added Mahadhir.

Supporting the role of Cyberjaya as an innovation ecosystem, Futurise welcomes all drone technology and innovations in

Malaysia. "Innovation success is measured by the impact on the environment, infrastructure, society and economy as a whole," as Mahadhir also emphasised that innovation provides opportunities for wealth.

New technologies remain limited in access and use if we do not have the applications of such technologies, but with proper applications, it will lead to something that can benefit the people, society, country and, ultimately, the entire world.

"I hope more ideas can be churned out during events such as MyDroneX and hence, provide opportunities on unlocking the potential of drones, which will then open paths for industry players and enthusiasts to work together and develop ideas for a more comprehensive use of drones, especially here in Malaysia."

**DELIVERIES VIA DRONES**  
One of the new capabilities of drones showcased at MyDroneX was food delivery. Average Drone Sdn Bhd demonstrated how this is possible and makes good business sense.

The company is now carrying out a three-month-long trial, aimed at delivering food right to the doorstep of customers using drones. "It would take 12 minutes



Farming cooperative of Malaysia also deploys drones. FILE PICTURE

for the food to be delivered once an order is placed," said Hamdee Hamdan, the company's chief executive officer. However, the trial and demonstration of the service was limited to a two-kilometre radius from the Futurise building, well within the drone testing zone.

The local company, which has been involved in the drone industry since 2014, has also developed a mobile app for the drone food delivery. Although still in the draft phase, the app is to facilitate engaging customers and their needs when ordering food.

"This is only a trial run and after three months, we will see how it all goes and we will add more offerings on the menu."

The process from the time the order is placed to the time the food reaches its destination should take no more than 12 minutes and cost about only RM2.50 per

trip," said Hamdee.

He said the service focuses more on how fast food can reach customers as it caters to those who require quick deliveries and do not mind paying a fee.

"Our drones have been specially developed to be weather-resistant," Hamdee explained.

The six-propeller drone model is called the Express Food (for now), and is able to carry food up to 800 grammes in weight.

"If we get good response and if the trial turns out to be a success, our next step is to enhance the drones to carry up to three kilograms," adds Hamdee.

**DRIVING DRONE TECH FORWARD**

The MyDroneX was also filled with tech talks. The talks featured panellists such as Susanne Schüdel, the Secretary General of Fédération Aéronautique



The launch of MyDroneX. PICTURE BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI



Marine Department of Malaysia crew on board Al Nilam using drones to record images of an oil spill along the coast of Tanjung Balau, Desaru in Kota Tinggi. PICTURE BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

Internationale (FAI), Junwei Yang from World Economic Forum's Project Lead of Drones and Tomorrow's Airspace, Kamarul A. Muhamad, founder and chief executive officer of Aerodyne Group, Milis Radovic of DroneU, Global Drone Insights, and Eddie Bennett of Omada.

Besides that, there was also a competition among universities to showcase their drone projects.

Seventeen teams from 10 public and private institutions of higher learning including Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU), New Era University College, Sunway University, Taylor's University, UCSI University, UniKL, Malaysian Institute of Aviation Technology (Miat) and University Teknologi Nasional (UNNTeN) took part.

Teams presented their DroneTech projects to a panel of expert judges who evaluated and selected the winning project that received a RM10,000 cash prize plus the opportunity to upscale and grow their University DroneTech Project commercially under guidance and support from Futurise itself.

**THE WINNER**

The Defense Eagle by the team from Univen emerged as champion for MyDroneX inaugural university competition.

It took the team of four talented undergraduates about two weeks to complete the Defense Eagle, a drone with autonomous surveillance capability and extended battery life for longer flight time.

Amir Haziq Saiful Rijal, 25, feels that the drone is one of the greatest adverts of



Some of the drones on display during MyDroneX. PICTURE BY SAIFULLIZAN TAMADI

technology to be produced. "It can enable players from various industries to carry out high risk work from a safe distance out in the field. Apart from peaking my interest, the wonderful feeling you get when you succeed in building an autonomous drone is one of the reasons why I'm into these machines."

The drone they built is not only able to cover a vast area, but is also equipped with night vision camera for night-time surveillance.

Mohamad Hafizul Amin Mohamad Fauad, 21, got involved by chance. He developed a keen interest in drone technology after joining a club that required him to get familiar with drones. He related, "When I joined the Electric Vehicle Association, I was tasked to help at an event, and I had to meet with representatives from a company that manufactures drones. It was then that I became fascinated, seeing the potential that such little machines had for the future. I was really excited and began to seek out more companies that produced drones," said Hafizul.

Faris Haikal Firdaus Razlan initially thought that drones weren't much different from the remote control helicopter that he had when he was younger. However, after visiting the DroneX exhibition and attending a talk by fellow helicopter remote control enthusiast, Anderson Joimus Sarnpil, he couldn't wait to do more work on the drone.

"There's a really bright future for drones and soon it will be accessible to many more people," Faris observed. Drones are very useful because of flexibility in application for various tasks, not just for the military. At MyDroneX we saw how they are used to deliver food, assist in monitoring of agricultural activities and much more. Who knows what else drones can be used for, only time will tell.

