

Alibaba's drones deliver packages to islands

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Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba today said that it has used drones to deliver packages over water for the first time.

Three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) carrying six boxes of passionfruit with a combined weight of around 12 kilograms flew from Putian in China's eastern Fujian Province to nearby Meizhou Island on October 31, the company said in a statement.

Each drone can carry up to seven kilograms, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing the statement. The drones were jointly developed by Alibaba's delivery arm Cainiao Network, the company's rural shopping platform Rural Taobao, and a domestic technology firm.

Zeng Jinmei, an online store owner based on the island, said the drone delivery service will cut the transportation time by half and save logistic costs.

Alibaba has prepared extra drones ahead of the upcoming November 11 "Singles' Day" shopping festival.

The day, which can be compared to Black Friday in the US, became a shopping festival in China after Alibaba launched a major promotional campaign in 2009.

Alibaba plans to use drones to deliver high value-added products such as fresh food and medical supplies over water in the future.

Using drones to deliver packages has increased in recent years.

(The Economic Times)