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## **Driver-less trucks to debut on Jurong Island from Sept**

SINGAPORE — Driver-less trucks will make their debut in Singapore on Jurong Island from September, under a collaboration between the Singapore Management University (SMU) and Dutch-based firm VDL Groep.

Belgium-based chemicals logistics company Katoen Natie will pilot the use of the first a dozen trucks under a three-month trial. If successful, 11 more trucks will be added.

The trial consists of three phases. In the first stage, the trucks - which will be guided by transponders installed on the driveways - will operate in an enclosed area of a petrochemical plant.

The second phase will see the trucks deployed on Jurong Island, with GPRS (General Packet Radio System) replacing the transponders. The trucks will go on to public roads in the final phase.

SMU Lee Kong Chian School of Business' Associate Dean of MBA Programmes, Associate Professor Lieven Demeester, told TODAY that the first phase would involve the driverless trucks taking over the transport of the final product from the plant to a storage area in an open yard adjacent to the plant.

Speaking at a forum last week involving Belgian start-ups which were here in Singapore for a trading mission, Mr Koen Cardon, who is the chief executive officer of Katoen Natie Singapore, said autonomous trucks have the potential to address the challenge of finding truck drivers in Singapore, and offer substantial savings.

He added: "With limited availability of trucks drivers in Singapore, moving to autonomous transport is the right path forward. We need a system where transport is more automated.

Mr Damian Chan, executive director of energy and chemicals at the Singapore Economic Development Board, said: "We are excited for Katoen Natie to be pioneering the first of its kind autonomous driving truck trials in Singapore at its Jurong Island facilities."

If the trial is successful, it can pave the way for further productivity improvements in the logistics activities on Jurong Island, and enhance the competitiveness of Singapore's chemicals sector, he added.

Other plans in the pipeline involve the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and ST Engineering's land systems arm ST Kinetics inking an agreement to launch a 3½-year autonomous vehicle trial, which could pave the way for driverless buses to ferry passengers along fixed routes based on selected feeder and trunk bus services.

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Under the project, ST Kinetics will build two 40-seater electric buses - the first time a Singapore company is building an autonomous bus - and test them at an industrial area during off-peak hours, before being rolled out to more complicated test sites.

Potential locations for the trial include Jurong Island and the National University of Singapore (NUS) campus.

Earlier in January, it was announced that driverless trucks, which would ease a manpower crunch in the industry, are set to hit the roads next year.

It will see a truck driven by a person leading a convoy of driverless trucks along the West Coast Highway next year, moving containers from one port terminal to another.

The Transport Ministry and PSA Corporation signed agreements with automotive companies Scania and Toyota Tsusho to design, develop and test the truck platooning system for use here.