

Japan 'drone-brella' promises hands-free sun cover

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Asahi Power Service hopes its 'drone-brellas' will become par for the course for golfers

It's the hands-free experience you never knew you needed—a Japanese company has developed a drone-powered parasol it says can hover over

users, protecting them from the sun.

The drone-powered sunshade—being developed by Asahi Power Service—should be released next year, and will initially target those in need of a hands-free head covering wider than your average hat, like golfers.

The potential headaches posed by crashes, and regulations governing [autonomous aircraft](#), mean the company expects the product will initially be used in closed private spaces, like [golf courses](#).

"I decided to develop it as I don't like to hold an umbrella," company president Kenji Suzuki told AFP.

At 150 centimetres (60 inches) wide, the [parasol](#) prototype weighs five kilos (11 pounds), and so far can only fly for five minutes on one charge.

Asahi Power Service is hoping to quickly extend flying time to at least 20 minutes, partly by making the device lighter, Suzuki said.

"The first prototype we made was just a drone attached to a regular umbrella," he said.

"We are now testing the third-generation prototype and trying to overcome (the technological challenges of) hovering in a stable manner above the head of the user and then chasing the user."

The drones are fitted with cameras that help the parasols track their owners and stay over the correct head.

The [company](#) expects the [device](#) to have a price tag of about 30,000 yen (\$275), a hefty investment for a parasol that isn't yet able to protect its users from the rain.

For now, the devices are not waterproof.

"Eventually, we aim to develop it into an umbrella," Suzuki said.

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