

New Philippine bill payment service from SingPost

Paying up made easy

By Chua Kong Ho

EACH payday, Ms Diane Djorolan, 27, a Singapore-based banking journalist, makes a trip to Lucky Plaza and wires \$1,000 to her mother in the Philippines.

Two days later, her mother in Makati City receives the credited amount in her Bank of Philippine Islands account and withdraws it to pay bills such as Ms Djorolan's credit card bill.

This is because the card Ms Djorolan uses here was issued in the Philippines.

But by the end of this month, Ms Djorolan will be able to use a bill payment service to pay her bills directly, without the hassle of making a trip to Lucky Plaza or troubling her mother to handle her bills.

The best part is, she can do so at any of SingPost's 62 post offices and 127 self-service machines across Singapore.

Yesterday, SingPost unveiled its participation in the Parmon Payment Network, a partnership between Parmon Group of the Philippines, British Telecom and a consortium of postal companies which includes SingPost and Hongkong Post.

The bill payment service will be rolled out later this month.

Initially, users will be able to pay their bills from a list of 25 companies, which includes telecoms companies (Globe Telecom, PLDT, Liberty Telecom, Smart Communications, Islacom), credit card companies (MasterCard Philippines and Visa Philippines) and medical institutions (Makati Medical Centre, National Hearts Centre and St Lukes Hospital).

Said Ms Djorolan: "I'll definitely try out the service because it's more convenient to pay my bills directly."

Parmon Group's chairman, Mr Paul Monozca, 35, has his eyes set on the



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US\$160 million (S\$278.9 million) the 100,000-strong Filipino community in Singapore sends back home each year.

He said: "A lot of that money is actually for paying bills. Now, they can do that directly."

Yesterday's launch was attended by Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Ernesto Llamas and Consul-General Minda Cruz.

Said Ms Lynette Koh, SingPost's director for sales and marketing: "It's convenient; you can settle your bills in the Philippines using cash at any of SingPost's post offices, or use our SAM machines located across Singapore."

SingPost will charge a flat transaction fee of \$3.50 for the service. Remittance

agencies here typically charge \$5 to transfer amounts under \$1,000.

This will be the first time SingPost is offering direct bill payment outside of Singapore.

The Parmon Group, whose majority shareholders include scions of the Yuchengco, Lucio Tan, Chiongbian, Palanca and Leviste families, will also shortly launch direct bill payment and remittance services with British Telecom and Hongkong Post.

Parmon's shareholders own or control many of the companies on the bill payment list.

Ms Koh said that SingPost, whose IPO closed yesterday, was looking at similar direct bill payment services with other countries.

