

Check your inbox: Big Brother is emailing you

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A man tries out the new wireless internet services at a cafe along Orchard Road in Singapore, in 2002. Singapore will give all citizens, foreign residents and businesses an electronic mailbox to receive bills and other correspondence from the government, officials have said.

Singapore will give all citizens, foreign residents and businesses an electronic mailbox to receive bills and other correspondence from the government, officials said Tuesday.

Called "OneInbox," the service will be launched in 2012 in the high-tech city-state, which now has five million residents including a million foreigners who enjoy nearly universal computer access.

The mailbox provides a centralised platform for the government to contact individuals and businesses. Messages can be automatically

forwarded to a preferred personal email address.

"It's your own personal correspondence with the government," a spokeswoman from the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) said.

Recipients can opt to get text alerts when a message is sent, a highly useful feature in a society where the mobile phone penetration rate was estimated at 137 percent last year because some people own two or more phones.

A fact sheet issued by the IDA said "OneInbox is expected to bring greater convenience to individuals and businesses, by providing a one-stop access to all correspondence from government agencies in place of hard copy letters."

"Through the integration of the OneInbox with e-services of government agencies, it will also allow individuals and businesses to perform transactions with the government immediately upon receiving the electronic correspondence."

The service will be confidential and secure, and users can link their OneInbox accounts to their personal emails and mobile phone numbers, the literature said.

Government agencies will be able to confirm receipt of correspondence and bills paid.

However, users will not be able to tap their OneInbox accounts for personal purposes, such as sending casual emails to friends, an IDA spokeswoman said.

A business survey conducted by the government showed 66 percent of

respondents "would definitely use OneInbox."

A separate study done by the Ministry of Finance and the IDA showed nearly 65 percent of respondents willing to receive correspondence from the government via electronic means.

Many government transactions, including income tax payments, renewal of residency permits and payment of traffic fines can now be done online in Singapore, where the government estimates 83 percent of people have a computer at home and Internet cafes are widespread.

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