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JR East to expand functions of Mobile Suica service

Tokyo

East Japan Railway Co. said Tuesday it will expand the functions of its "Mobile Suica" online payment service in October and make the service available on Vodafone K.K. cellphones in December.

The firm, also known as JR East, launched the Mobile Suica service in January to allow cellphones to register and be used as Suica rechargeable prepaid cards, in a bid to increase the number of users to one million by March 2007. But the number at the end of August was limited to 110,000.

JR East said it expects the expansion of functions to help increase the number of users.

The expansion of functions will enable cellphones to register as Suica cards even without special credit cards and allow payments via cellphones to be charged to credit cards or accounts at three major banks -- Mizuho Bank, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp. and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

JR East also said it has tied up with nine companies in addition to Yahoo Japan Corp. to allow the Mobile Suica service to cover payments for Internet shopping.

Vodafone cellphones that can offer the "Vodafone live! FeliCa" service will be used for the Mobile Suica service initially. When Vodafone changes its name to Softbank Mobile Corp. on Oct. 1, the Vodafone service will be renamed "S! FeliCa."

The Mobile Suica service is already available on cellphones of two other major mobile phone service providers -- NTT DoCoMo Inc. and KDDI Corp.

---- Index References ----

Company: NTT DOCOMO INCORPORATED ADR; KDDI CORP; NTT DOCOMO INC; SUMITOMO MITSUI BANKING CORP; MIZUHO TRUST AND BANKING CO LTD; BANK OF TOKYO LIMITED (THE); EAST JAPAN RAILWAY CO LTD

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