



Government Taps Private Sector to Run Staff Email Service

For Prelims: NICNET Services, [National Informatics Centre \(NIC\)](#)

For Mains: Role of digital transformation in modernizing government communication systems

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has approved bids from six companies - Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, Softline, Zoho, Railtel, and Rediffmail in response to an RFP (request for proposal) floated in March 2023 for the selection of a **Master System Integrator (MSI)** for providing email cloud solutions for the Government.

- The government is conducting Pilot Projects to test the efficacy of these **alternate email providers**.

What are NICNET Services?

- NICNET is a **satellite-based nationwide computer-communication network**, that is a type of **Wide Area Network (WAN)**.
- It is run by the [National Informatics Centre \(NIC\)](#), which is a part of the MeitY.
- NICNET has **institutional linkages** across all the Ministries /Departments of the Central Government, State Governments, Union Territories, and District administrations of the country.
- The current NICNET e-mail service, hosts government email addresses ending in @nic.in and @gov.in, is distributed across many mail servers located at various NIC Centres.

What Are the Pilot Projects to Test the Efficacy of Alternate Email Providers?

- **Microsoft Office 365:** Microsoft is conducting its email testing services on 7,036 email users in the **railways**.
- **Zoho:** Zoho, the **cloud-based software** company, is performing test runs on 6,825 email users in Ministries like MeitY, the Department of Technology, and the NIC itself.

What is the RFP issued by the Digital India Corporation?

- It outlines the requirements and specifications for a robust **cloud-based email solution**.
 - Cloud-based email solution provides email hosting and management on **remote servers** that are accessed via the internet. Cloud-based email solutions offer a **flexible, scalable and cost-effective alternative for businesses and individuals**.
- The RFP focuses on [data security](#), **privacy**, and **the use of advanced technologies**.
- It plays a pivotal role in involving the private sector in managing government email services.
- The RFP ensures that the **email solution is hosted within India's boundaries for data sovereignty and security**.

- It emphasizes the use of **Artificial Intelligence** models to detect phishing and prompt notification of **cyber-attacks**.
- The RFP is part of the government's initiative to enhance its **communication systems and facilitate digital transformation**.

Note: Digital India Corporation is a not for profit Company set up by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India, under Section 8 of Companies Act 2013.

What are the Benefits of Private Sector Involvement in Government Email Services?

- **Enhanced Expertise and Resources:**
 - The government recognized the **expertise and resources** offered by the private sector in managing communication systems effectively.
- **Improved Efficiency and Productivity:**
 - The government aims to **enhance the efficiency and productivity** of its internal communication processes by involving private companies while ensuring a **robust cybersecurity mechanism and cloud security**.
- **Digital Transformation:**
 - The move aligns with the **government's agenda of digital transformation** and modernizing its communication systems.
 - This project aims to **migrate nearly 3.3 million government employees** registered on **NIC to an email service** hosted on a secure cloud, providing them with a range of office productivity tools, collaboration features, and services such as video conferencing and chat.
- **Scalability and Flexibility:**
 - Partnering with private companies allows the government to **leverage scalable solutions** that can accommodate its **large workforce and evolving needs**.
- **Digital Sovereignty and Security:**
 - The government emphasizes hosting email services within India's boundaries for data sovereignty and enhanced security. The use of AI models and prompt notification of cyber-attacks contribute to strengthening security measures.

Source: IE

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