

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2808
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.08.2026

COST-BENEFIT EVALUATION OF ZOHOS SOFTWARE SUITE

2808. SHRI AZAD KIRTI JHA:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has conducted any technical or cost-benefit evaluation comparing Zoho's ' software suite with existing NIC systems in terms of performance, cybersecurity, scalability, integration and overall cost-effectiveness;
- (b) the details of specific technical or operational reasons for preferring Zoho over strengthening and modernising NIC's in-house infrastructure beyond the 'Swadeshi' rationale;
- (c) the details of measures adopted to ensure data privacy, security, and uninterrupted public services during this transition, given that sensitive Government data is likely to be handled by a private entity; and
- (d) Whether feedback from user Ministries and Departments was obtained and factored into this decision; and
- (e) if so, the steps taken/to be taken to maintain transparency and accountability in procurement and implementation?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a): The Government of India recognizes email as one of the primary modes of official communication and mandates that only services provided by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) be used for such purposes. To ensure secure, scalable, and sustained service delivery, the government through NIC has selected a registered Indian entity as Master System Integrator (MSI) – M/s Zoho, to provision a robust cloud-based email solution capable of supporting all Government users. The selection of Zoho as MSI through a transparent bidding process comes with a cost-effective software package which include the word processor (Writer), spreadsheet (Sheet), presenter (Show), instant messaging (Cliq), video call (Meeting) and drive (Work Drive) in addition to email services. The bundled apps provide a cost-avoidance advantage over assembling separate point solutions from a multi-vendor stack.

(b): The company offers software as a service to enterprises both in India and abroad. M/s Zoho is a registered Indian entity subject to Indian laws and jurisdiction. Zoho stacks up against the major vendors on affordability, breadth of bundled apps and privacy-first positioning. The company now offers more than 60 integrated applications spanning CRM, email (Zoho Mail), accounting (Zoho Books), and more, covering everything from individual users on low-cost plans up to large enterprises. Their turnover in 2023-24 was Rs.10,456 Crores. Out of this their export revenue is Rs.10,132 Crores. Their software services are used extensively across the world and found to be technically high standard. The selection of Zoho's software platform ensures

professional upgrades, seamless migration of existing user accounts, and the integration of modern office productivity tools – such as word processors, spreadsheets, and presentation software – which empowers government employees with a unified collaboration suite.

(c): The contract with the service provider ensures strict adherence to data sovereignty. The security architecture is rigorously defined to protect critical government data. The cloud-based solution, including Primary and Disaster Recovery data centres, are physically located within India, and no data can be shared or replicated outside the country. Robust security evaluations have been undertaken to ensure safe migration and Deployment. The solution mandates that all email data be encrypted both at rest and in transit, with specific requirements for end-to-end encryption using RSA 256 and TLS 1.3 standards. The service provider is required to comply with rigorous control standards and certifications, including ISO 27001, ISO/IEC 27017 and ISO 27018. This cloud-based email solution has undergone following security audits:

- Comprehensive security audit by Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC), MeitY in May 2024.
- Second full security audit by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), MeitY in August 2025.

The contract ensures that the digital communication infrastructure is sovereign, with the government retaining full ownership of all data and intellectual property created during the contract. The service is designed for high reliability, mandating a service availability uptime of at least 99.9% on a 24x7x365 basis.

(d) and (e): The selection of the vendor was through a transparent procurement process on the GeM-CPPP platform. The initial GeM-CPPP bidding process involved Proof of Concept (POC) with two shortlisted bidders and designated groups of government email users before awarding the contract. After the email service went live on the new Zoho platform, online feedback was collected from users across various Ministries and Departments. The contract signed by NIC/NICSI with M/s Zoho is a regular Government contract and hence will come under the ambit of Comptroller and Auditor General's audit. The prime responsibility of providing safe, secure email services for the government through the service provider remains with NIC.
