

## Central government employees to be prohibited access to social media at work

The central government Wednesday told the Delhi High Court that it will issue an advisory prohibiting government employees from accessing social networking websites through officials systems and networks.

A division bench of Acting Chief Justice B.D. Ahmed and Justice Siddharth Mridul asked the centre to immediately issue an advisory prohibiting public servants, who already have an official e-mail account, from using external services.

The bench took into note the submissions of Additional Solicitor General Rajeev Mehra that 4.5 lakh government employees have been allotted official email accounts and they have started using them.

Mehra further submitted that there would be requirement of five million such account holders and setting up of such e-mail accounts would require some time and infrastructure.

"You (centre) will issue an advisory that those people who have been given official e-mail accounts ([nic.in](http://nic.in)) will immediately use that e-mail ids and to increase the number of employees on official accounts," the bench said.

The court told the government that the server pertaining to the official e-mail account should be "housed in India itself".

It also asked the information and technology department to process a draft e-mail policy proposal for the committee of secretaries within two weeks, and the committee to approve the e-mail policy and another policy "on acceptable use of IT resources of the government of India" within two weeks after that.

Filing an affidavit, the centre told the high court that it has proposed a national e-mail policy for official communication of government employees, saying the objective of the policy was to ensure "secure access and usage of data" by them.

In an affidavit filed in the high court, the department of electronics and information technology said the use of e-mail accounts of external service providers will be "prohibited for official communication" by government employees.

Earlier, the bench had asked the central government to bring in an e-mail policy for government officials in consonance with the Public Records Act in order to bar transfer of data to a server outside the country.

The public interest litigation (PIL) filed by former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader K.N. Govindacharya, said the use of e-mail accounts whose servers were outside India and transfer of the nation's official data using this medium violated the Public Records Act.

The central government in its affidavit also said it has proposed another policy “on acceptable use of IT resources of the government of India” that lays down the guidelines with respect to use of all IT resources.

The court will hear the case April 30.

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[<http://gadgets.ndtv.com/social-networking/news/central-government-employees-to-be-prohibited-access-to-social-media-at-work-500906>]