

## **Income Tax department launches secure email system for staff to curb frauds**

To curb misuse of official cyber tools and attempts of phishing, the Income Tax department has rolled out a secure email system for all its employees and officers.

The department, official sources said, has recently discontinued its existing email systems (called Lotus mail and IMail) and has issued instructions to its countrywide staff to get new email IDs prepared after "validation" of their bona fides.

"The I-T department's work over email involves some very secret and proprietary information about taxpayers like refunds and tax returns data. There have been few instances of breach in this system earlier which led to fraudulent transfer of funds. The new email system is more secure and reliable," a senior I-T officer said.

The officer said the I-T department does not directly deal with taxpayers for want of information and its I-T returns collection centre in Bangalore just sends an acknowledgment email once the process of filing is completed.

"The new email system is for secure communication within the department which will ensure no confidential information or data is pilfered," the officer said.

Under the new mechanism, an I-T officer or employee will have to fill up a proforma which requires him or her to share their employee code, designation, personal email ID, mobile number, the Commissionerate they are working in and bona fide signatures after which the database cell of the CBDT will create an email ID and a password.

The new IDs of the department will be registered under 'incometax.gov.in' or 'incometaxindia.gov.in' domain and all its records will be maintained once it is launched, the officer said.

The new government, recently, has also made its plans clear for enabling an official email services environment to all government employees for conducting not only secure exchange of information but also to establish a faith among the general public that any communication made to them over email is not genuine until and unless it emerges from the official government platforms.

The taxman, time and again, has been making public announcements that taxpayers should guard against suspicious hacking or phishing emails which fraudulently use the departments name to con a taxpayer.

"The I-T department does not request detailed personal information through e-mail. The Income Tax department does not send email requesting your PIN numbers, passwords or similar access information for credit cards, banks or other financial information," the I-T has said in its advisory.

It has alerted the taxpayers that if someone happens to receive an email from a link claiming to be authorised by the department, the taxpayer should "not reply."

"Do not open any attachments. Attachments may contain malicious code that will infect your computer. Do not click on any links. If you clicked on links in a suspicious e-mail or phishing website then do not enter confidential information like bank account, credit card details," it had said.

An official explained that Phishing is the process of attempting to acquire sensitive information such as user names, passwords, and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication like email.

*(Economic Times)*