

MARCH 2025

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UCS POV | Work-from-Home Policy

Shaiju Mathew
Chief Operating Officer

The Andhra Pradesh government has recently approved a "Work from Home" policy, primarily aimed at women, to promote work-life balance and flexibility. This initiative is a key component of the Andhra Pradesh IT & GCC Policy 4.0, designed to strengthen the state's IT sector and generate more employment opportunities. The policy emphasizes flexible remote and hybrid work arrangements, particularly benefiting women professionals. Additionally, the Union Labour Ministry has included the 'work from home' provision in its draft model standing order for the service sector.

The Model Standing Order has incorporated the concept of 'Work from Home' stipulating that an employer may permit an employee to work from home for a duration that the employer determines and subject to terms that are mutually agreed upon. The government has not established specific conditions for the 'Work from Home' arrangement for employees, though some states required companies to offer this option during the lockdown period. According to the draft of The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, crèche provisions must also be extended to female employees working from home, with additional guidelines outlined in the draft.



Companies face several administrative challenges in allowing employees to work remotely, particularly those who require direct supervision by a manager. Remote working can lead to moonlighting, where employees take on additional projects or jobs without informing their employer, as it is easier for those working from home or remotely.

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As of now, Indian labour laws do not include any provisions prohibiting dual employment or employees taking on additional work alongside their primary job. There is always a risk of data and knowledge leaks, especially since moonlighting often involves working with competitor companies. Companies face challenges in monitoring the work hours of employees working from home or remotely, as well as detecting concurrent employment with other organizations. Tracking employees' working hours, managing overtime wage claims, and monitoring attendance and leave can be complex. Additionally, there is a high risk of data security breaches.

There are no changes to the compliance requirements under various labour laws, even

when employees work from home or remotely from a location without an official office premises of the establishment. Employees working from home or remote locations must be tagged under the nearest office location of the establishment, and the list of such employees must be included in the relevant compliances, just like regular employees at that specific location. The headcount in registrations, registers, remittances for state-specific government contributions, and all periodic returns should include employees tagged to the designated office location. In view of the above-mentioned challenges, many IT companies have reinstated mandatory office attendance for employees or adopted at least a hybrid work model.

EPF New Rules for Employees

The EPFO has introduced several changes for 2025, aimed at improving services and efficiency:

- **Easier PF Transfer:** Online transfer requests no longer need to be routed through employers in many cases, making it simpler to move your PF account when changing jobs.
- **Member Profile Updates:** Aadhaar-verified UAN holders can directly update personal details online without submitting documents.
- **Joint Declaration Simplification:** A streamlined process replaces specific recommendations from SOP Version 3.0, making it easier for members and employers.
- **Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS):** No more PPO transfers due to banking jurisdictions, and pensioners can use their UAN-KYC linked accounts for pension receipts.
- **Higher Pension Guidelines Update:** Ensures fair and uniform pension calculation, adherence to trust rules, and separate handling of dues and arrears.

EPF Changes

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has implemented significant service updates, such as a Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS), a simplified joint declaration process, clarified pension policies for higher wages, the ability to update member profiles online, and simple PF transfers. The following details outline each of these adjustments, which you can use to better manage your EPF.

Joint Declaration process

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has issued a new circular on the Joint Declaration process, which has been simplified and replaces certain recommendations from SOP Version 3.0. The new guidelines replace the earlier version of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP Version 3.0), which was issued on July 31, 2024. The latest updates include specific changes introduced to streamline the process, including new classifications for members, revised document submission methods, and updated procedures for employers and claimants.



Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS)

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) in a new circular outlines the implementation of the Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS), effective January 1, 2025.

CPPS enables pension payments through the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), allowing pensions to be processed for any bank account, in any branch, of any scheduled commercial bank across India. Regional Offices (ROs) are now equipped as CPPS-enabled offices. The EPFO said in a circular dated January 17, 2025, "It is reiterated that as CPPS is implemented w.e.f 1st Jan 2025, there shall be no transfer out to another RO. For cases which are already marked for transfer out but not yet transferred through e office as per Instructions Issued, the original RO in which claim is received, shall process it without transferring to any other RO. The claims erroneously transferred to another office in e office after 1st Jan 2025, shall be returned back to original office for necessary action."



Clarification on higher pension

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) issued a new circular outlining policy clarifications on the processing of pension cases for individuals receiving higher earnings under the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS). Field offices raised questions regarding specific policy issues related to Pension on Higher Wages (PoHW) cases. These concerns were referred to the Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoL&E) for resolution.

The clarifications focus on:

Ensuring equity in pension computation between categories of pensioners. Following trust rules strictly for exempted establishments. Maintaining clear processes for dues and pension arrears without mixing the two. These clarifications aim to align field operations with legal and procedural standards while ensuring consistency and transparency in handling PoHW cases.

EPF Member Profile Update

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has significantly simplified the member profile update process to demonstrate its dedication to enhancing member services and guaranteeing the accuracy of member data. According to the updated process, members whose Universal Account Number (UAN) has already been verified via Aadhaar can update their personal information, including their name, birthdate, gender, nationality, father or mother's name, marital status, spouse's name, joining and departing dates, and date of birth, without having to upload any supporting documentation. The update would only need the employer's certification in specific situations if the UAN was issued before October 1, 2017.

Transfer of PF

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has substantially simplified the procedure for transferring Provident Fund (PF) accounts for EPFO members who change jobs. According to an EPFO circular issued on January 15, 2025, in the following cases online account transfer requests need not necessarily be routed via past or present employer.

Source : Tax Concept



Urban Company, Zomato, Blinkit & Uncle Delivery register on e-Shram portal; aid govt move for social security to gig workers

Four leading aggregators — Urban Company, Zomato, Blinkit and Uncle Delivery — have registered on the e-Shram portal, joining an initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Employment to register themselves and their gig employees for availing social security benefits. The Ministry had last year rolled out a pilot project for registering platform workers and aggregators on the e-Shram portal which was also meant to formalise the gig economy spread across sectors of e-commerce, transportation and delivery services.

An aggregator module too has been piloted enabling digital platforms to onboard themselves and their workforce onto India's national database for unorganised workers. The Ministry's move was also captured in the Budget 2025. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech in parliament on Saturday announced that 1 crore gig workers will get access to healthcare under PM Jan Arogya Yojana. She also spoke of measures to facilitate their identification through unique identity cards and streamlining their registration on the e-Shram portal.

80 per cent higher

The Union Budget allocated a record ₹32,646 crore for the Ministry of Labour & Employment in FY 25-26—the highest ever and almost 80 per cent higher than last year's revised estimates. Mansukh Mandaviya, the Minister for Labour and Employment, said, "I thank Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji for this historic budget which is the highest ever and almost 80 per cent higher than last year's revised estimates." "Our focus is firmly on the newly announced Employment Generation Scheme (ELI), for which the budgetary allocation has been doubled from ₹10,000 crore to ₹20,000 crore. The allocation under the Employees' Pension Scheme has been increased by ₹300 crore and under the PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana by 37 per cent compared to last year,"

Mandaviya added to share the fine-print of allocation to his Ministry.

1 crore workers to benefit

He also stated that the gig workforce is a vital pillar of India's new-age economy, driving innovation and efficiency across digital platforms. "Recognising their contribution, the government's decision to provide them with identity cards, e-Shram registration and healthcare security under PM Jan Arogya Yojana is a transformative step towards their social security and well-being. This initiative will empower nearly 1 crore gig workers," Mandaviya observed. "Beyond this, the government remains committed to extending social security benefits to workers in other unorganised sectors as well, ensuring dignity, security and prosperity for every worker in the country," said the Minister.



India's gig and platform economy has witnessed rapid expansion, with NITI Aayog's report 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' projecting that the workforce in this sector will cross 1 crore in 2024-25 and grow to 2.35 crore by 2029-30.

One of the four labour codes — Code on Social Security, 2020 (CoSS, 2020) — for the first time defined 'aggregator', 'gig worker' and 'platform worker' and introduced legal provisions for gig and platform workers, ensuring their inclusion in social security measures. The codes are still to be implemented.

Source : The Hindustan Business Line



EPFO achieves milestone of settling over 5 crore claims in FY 2024-25: Mansukh Mandaviya

Union Labour and Employment Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya has said that Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has achieved a historic milestone by crossing the 5 crore claims settlement mark for the first time in its history in a fiscal year. In the financial year 2024-25, EPFO has processed over 5.08 crore claims amounting to ₹2,05,932.49 crore, surpassing the 4.45 crore claims worth ₹1,82,838.28 crore settled in the previous financial year 2023-24. Mandaviya highlighted that this achievement has been made possible due to a series of transformative reforms initiated by EPFO to enhance claim settlement processes and reduce grievances among members.

"We have implemented key measures, including an increase in the ceiling and categories of auto-settled claims, simplified member profile changes, streamlined PF transfers, and improved KYC compliance ratios. These reforms have significantly improved the efficiency of EPFO," he stated. A major enabler for faster claim processing has been the auto-claim settlement mechanism, ensuring that claims are settled within three days of submission. Dr Mandaviya said that the impact of this reform is evident, with auto claim settlements doubling to 1.87 crore claims in the current financial year, compared to 89.52 lakh auto claims processed during FY 2023-24.

Similarly, reforms in the PF transfer claim submission process have streamlined the workflow significantly. Since the introduction of a simplified transfer claim application, only 8 per cent of transfer claims now require member and employer attestation. Notably, 48 per cent of claims are submitted directly by members without employer intervention, while 44 per cent of transfer requests are generated automatically, he added. Mandaviya further emphasized the impact of member profile correction reforms. "Since the introduction of the simplified procedure, approximately 97.18 per cent of member profile corrections have been self-approved by members, with only 1 per cent requiring employer approval, and office intervention has been reduced to just 0.4 per cent.



Further, the rejection cases have dropped to 1.11 per cent by the employer and 0.21 per cent by the regional office, reflecting the effectiveness of the streamlined processes and reduced procedural bottlenecks in claim settlements", Union Minister stated. Reaffirming the government's commitment to enhancing ease of access for EPFO members, Union Minister underscored that the organization will continue to leverage technology and process simplification to ensure a seamless and efficient service experience.

"These reforms have not only accelerated the claim settlement process but have also contributed to minimizing member grievances, further strengthening trust in EPFO," he added.

Source : Live Mint



Women hold 23% of senior leadership roles in IT sector: Survey

Women hold 23% of senior leadership roles in India's information technology sector as of 2024, an increase from 18.7% in 2023, according to a new study. Avsar, a recruitment consulting and outsourcing company specialising in talent acquisition, has revealed in its latest report – which surveyed 150 IT companies – that although men still hold the majority of leadership positions, ongoing women empowerment initiatives through mentorship programmes and leadership development programmes are working towards reducing the gender representation gap.



The report sheds light on crucial leadership positions that significantly impact the IT industry's expansion. Job roles such as chief technology officer, chief information security officer, chief data officer, and the emerging chief AI officer are among the most in demand. These roles need more than just tech expertise and demand a more strategic vision to guide organisations through progress in fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), data-driven decision-making and cybersecurity. Insights into compensation reveal the growing demand for these roles. Chief technology officers earn between Rs 1.5-4.5 crore annually, while chief information security officers command Rs 1-3 crore per annum, emphasising the critical importance of safeguarding organisational data. Similarly, chief data officers receive annual packages ranging from Rs 1.2-3.8 crore, highlighting the strategic role of data analytics. Meanwhile, the emerging role of chief AI officer offers initial packages between Rs.1.5-3 crore in leading firms.

The report also identified Bengaluru as the leading city for senior IT leadership hiring, accounting for 48%, followed by Hyderabad (22%), Pune (20%) and Chennai (10%). Additionally, the National Capital Region (NCR) and Mumbai are witnessing increased demand for IT leadership roles, particularly in fintech and consulting-based firms, with NCR accounting for 12% and Mumbai for 8%. "The IT industry stands on the brink of monumental changes, and women holding 20% of senior leadership roles in IT signals a shift towards a more inclusive industry. The ongoing surge in women holding top leadership spots shows a wider understanding that diverse leaders are essential and not just desired to spark new ideas and growth," said Navneet Singh, founder and CEO, Avsar.

Women offer fresh viewpoints and unique strategies, which are vital to handling today's tricky tech and business issues. To sustain this momentum, companies need to break down barriers, invest in growing talent, and create workplaces where everyone can succeed," he added.



Source : HR Economic Times

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No proposal to increase working hours to 70 or 90 hrs per week: Govt

The government told Parliament that it is not considering any proposal to increase the maximum working hours to 70 or 90 hours a week.

Recently, some of the corporate leaders proposed to increase the maximum working hours to 70 and even 90 hours a week. "No such proposal to increase the maximum working hours to 70 or 90 hours a week is under consideration of the government," stated Minister of State for Labour & Employment Shobha Karandlaje in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

She informed the House that labour being a subject under the Concurrent List, the enforcement of labour laws is done by state governments and the central government in their respective jurisdictions. While in the Central sphere, the enforcement is done through the inspecting officers of the Central Industrial Relations Machinery (CIRM), the compliance in the states is ensured through their labour enforcement machineries, she stated. As per the existing labour laws, working conditions, including working hours and overtime, are regulated through the provisions of the Factories Act 1948 and the Shops and Establishments Acts of the respective state governments.

Most of the establishments, including the corporate sector, are governed by the Shops and Establishments Act.

About the discourse over 70-90-hour work week, pre-Budget Economic Survey on Friday last had cited studies to state that spending over 60 hours a week on work could have adverse health effects. The survey noted that spending long hours at one's desk is detrimental to mental well-being, and individuals who spend 12 or more hours (per day) at a desk have distressed or struggling levels of mental well-being. "While the hours spent at work are informally considered a measure of productivity, a previous study has documented adverse health effects when hours exceed 55-60 per week," the survey said, citing findings by Pega F Nafradi B (2021) and 'A systematic analysis from the WHO/ILO Joint Estimates of the Work-related Burden of Disease and Injury'.

Citing data from a study done by Sapient Labs Centre for Human Brain and Mind, the economic survey, said, "Spending long hours at one's desk is equally detrimental to mental well-being. Individuals who spend 12 or more hours at a desk have distressed/ struggling levels of mental well-being, with a mental well-being score approximately 100 points lower than those who spend less than or equal to two hours at a desk". Citing a study by WHO, the survey said globally, about 12 billion days are lost annually due to depression and anxiety, amounting to a financial loss of USD 1 trillion. "In rupee terms, this translates to about Rs 7,000 per day," it noted. The take by the Economic Survey 2024-25 on work hour week had come weeks after Larsen & Toubro Ltd Chairman and Managing Director SN Subrahmanyam sparked off a raging debate on social media when he said employees should work 90-hour a week, including on Sundays rather than sit at home.

He followed Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's suggestion of a 70-hour workweek and Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani's "biwi bhaag jayegi (wife will run away)" remark if one spent more than eight hours at home.



However, Subrahmanyam drew criticism from some peers in the business community. RPG Group Chairman Harsh Goenka said longer working hours was a recipe for burnout and not success.

Mahindra Group Chairman Anand Mahindra also asserted that the focus should be on the quality of work and productivity rather than the amount of time spent working.

Similarly, ITC Ltd Chairman Sanjiv Puri stated that empowering employees to realise their potential and accomplish their jobs well was more important than the number of hours put in.

The work-life balance debate echoes a similar one in China where the so-called '996 culture' - the three digits describe a punishing schedule of 9 am to 9 pm six days a week - is being hotly debated.

Source : Deccan Herald

Deadline to activate UAN for EPFO's ELI Scheme extended again; here is how to activate your UAN and avail benefits

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has extended the deadline for activating the Universal Account Number (UAN) and linking your bank account with Aadhaar to March 15, 2025, to avail of the benefits under the ELI scheme. The UAN activation and linking of bank accounts with Aadhaar is necessary to avail of benefits under the EPFO's Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme. "In this connection, the competent authority has granted an extension of the timeline for UAN activation and AADHAAR seeding in bank account till 15th March, 2025," said a circular by the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

The deadline has been extended multiple times earlier. The previous deadline for this was February 15, 2025. Employees seeking to claim monetary benefits under the Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme are required to activate their UAN and link their Aadhaar to their bank accounts. This process, regulated by EPFO, is necessary to access the benefits of the scheme. In the Union Budget 2024 in July, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the ELI Scheme. The scheme has three versions: A, B, and C. According to FM Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget 2024 speech, "Scheme A will focus on first-timers joining the employment and Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) scheme; Scheme B will focus on job-creation in manufacturing; and Scheme C will focus on support for employers."

What is UAN?

The UAN is a 12-digit number assigned by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation to every eligible salaried employee. It serves as a single point of access for managing their PF accounts across different employers throughout their career, enabling them to track and access their provident fund balances under one umbrella number.

It is mandatory to seed your Aadhaar with your bank account to avail the benefits of the Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme, an employment-centric scheme focusing on job creation in the country. Do it timely to avoid the last-minute hassle!" read the EPFO's post on the social media platform X.

How to activate EPF UAN through Aadhaar-based OTP?

According to a PIB release on November 21, 2024, employees can complete the UAN activation process using an Aadhaar-based OTP (One-Time Password). Here are some simple steps for employees to activate their UAN to avail ELI scheme benefits:

- Step 1: Go to the EPFO Member Portal.
- Step 2: Click on the "Activate UAN" link under "Important Links"
- Step 3: Enter UAN, Aadhaar number, name, DOB, and Aadhaar-linked mobile number.
- Step 4: Employees should ensure their mobile number is Aadhaar-linked to access the full range of EPFO's digital services
- Step 5: Agree to Aadhaar OTP verification.
- Step 6: Click "Get Authorisation PIN" to receive an OTP on your Aadhaar-linked mobile number.
- Step 7: Enter the OTP to complete the activation

A password will be sent to your registered mobile number upon successful activation.

Once the UAN is activated, employees can easily access EPFO's wide range of online services, such as managing their PF accounts, viewing and downloading PF passbooks, submitting online claims for advances, withdrawals, or transfers, updating personal information, and real-time claim monitoring.

Source : Economic Times

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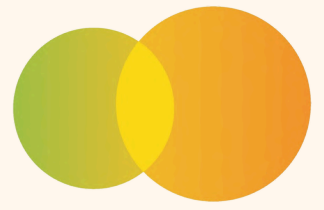
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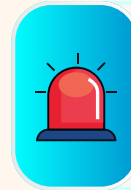
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**MEGHALAYA – LABOUR
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STATUTORY FEE SLAB
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**KERALA-ORDER REVISING
THE WORKING HOURS OF
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**ESIC – COCHLEAR
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**TELANGANA BOCW
RULES, 1999 –
REVISION OF FEE ON
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CONTACT US



UNIT NO. 852 - 856, 8TH FLOOR,
JMD, MEGAPOLIS, TIKRI, SECTOR- 48,
SOHNA ROAD, GURUGRAM, HARYANA-122018

enquiry@ucsdcl.com

unitedconsultancy.com

 0124 2656864

