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**PUNEET GUPTA**

## Aadhaar-based e-sign facility at EPFO makes signing documents easier

**THE EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT** Fund Organisation (EPFO) has launched free Aadhaar-based e-sign facility for employer's provident fund portal for signing documents digitally in addition to the Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) facility. The Aadhaar-based e-sign facility has been introduced as many employers were facing multiple difficulties in using the already available DSC facility.

As part of the Digital India initiative, the EPFO has introduced various digital services such as online registration of establishments, online transfer of balance and Know Your Customer (KYC) validation of employees. In order to digitally sign the documents uploaded on the Provident Fund portal, the only option available earlier was to use the DSC of the authorised signatory of the employer.

### Electronic form

A DSC is an electronic form of physical or paper certificate such as driver's licence, passport, etc., which can be used to prove the



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identity of the sender of the message and that the original message has not been altered. DSC can also be used to access online information, online services or to sign documents digitally. The Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA), Government of India, through licensed Certifying Authorities, such as eMudhra, NIC, TCS, MTNL, n-code, etc., can issue DSC. A physical hard copy application along with relevant proof of identity and address of the individual needs to be submitted along with a fee with the Certifying Authority to purchase and obtain DSC. Upon validation, the Certifying Authority issues a DSC of the individual in a soft token (stored in a soft copy format in the computer) or in a USB token (stored in a USB drive or smart card).

To use the DSC facility on the Provident Fund portal, an employer needs to do the following:

1. Purchase and obtain DSC for each of its authorised signatory from the Certifying Authority as mentioned above
2. Register the DSC on the Provident Fund portal
3. Download specific softwares (such as Java, drivers for USB token/ soft token)
4. Set specific browser settings in the computer accessing the Provident Fund portal
5. Develop technical skills on how to use the DSC on the Provident Fund portal and troubleshooting in case of any error.

### Specific software

As there were specific software and browser settings required to use the DSC facility, many employers were facing multiple difficulties in using the DSC facility and were unable to properly use the digital services of the EPFO. Further, there is a fee to purchase and obtain DSC. As an alternative, the EPFO has now launched free Aadhaar-based e-sign facility to ease the process of signing documents digitally.

The Aadhaar-based e-sign facility does not require any specific software or browser settings to use the facility. Once the authorised signatory of the employer is registered for Aadhaar-based e-sign, the documents can be signed digitally by using the one time pin (OTP) sent on the mobile registered with Aadhaar of the authorised signatory of the employer.

To use the new e-sign facility on the Provident Fund portal, the Aadhaar of the authorised signatory of the employer needs to be registered on the Provident Fund portal. For employers, where DSC of the authorised signatory is already registered, the Aadhaar-based e-sign facility can be activated by providing Aadhaar of the authorised signatory, name (as per Aadhaar), designation, gender and date of birth (as per Aadhaar) on the Provident Fund portal. An OTP will be sent to the mobile number registered with Aadhaar of the authorised signatory. On submission of the OTP, Aadhaar-based e-sign will be registered and ready to use.

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