Ministry of Labour & Employment

EPFO urges eligible establishments to settle long-pending EPF damages disputes at substantially reduced rates under VISHWAS, 2026

High Courts endorse the Scheme, encourage establishments to avail benefits

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The Government of India has launched VISHWAS, 2026, a one-time settlement scheme that allows employers to close long-pending disputes by paying a sharply reduced penalty amount.The Scheme will remain open until 28 December 2026. Employers are encouraged to apply within this period, as the closing date will not be extended.

Under normal rules, the penalty for late PF deposit can be as high as 37% per year. Under VISHWAS, 2026, the penalty has been reduced as follows:

- Delay for up to 2 months: pay only 0.25% per month,
- Delay from 2 to 4 months: pay only 0.50% per month,
- Delay beyond 4 months: pay only 1% per month.

The Hon'ble Bombay High Court (Pune Bench), in WP No. 4246 of 2018, ordered an employer to apply under VISHWAS, 2026 within two weeks, modified the earlier tribunal order accordingly, and disposed of the writ petition. The Hon'ble Madras High Court disposed of WP No. 38008 of 2024 the moment the employer expressed willingness to avail the Scheme, closing the writ petition and related tribunal proceedings simultaneously. The Hon'ble Kerala High Court (Ernakulam Bench) has gone a step further and issued similar directions in nineteen separate cases, directing those establishments to approach EPFO and settle under VISHWAS, 2026.

In a significant relief measure for employers, cases relating to delayed payment of Provident Fund (PF) contributions prior to 14 June 2024 may be considered under the applicable provisions, provided the employer falls within specified categories. The coverage includes cases where proceedings relating to penalties are currently pending before a court or tribunal; cases where the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has already passed a penalty order but recovery, either fully or partially, is still pending; cases where EPFO has issued a notice proposing the imposition of a penalty but a final order has not yet been passed; and cases where EPFO records reflect delays in PF payments but no penalty notice has been issued so far.

The entire process has been made available through an online mechanism. Employers are required to first clear all outstanding interest on delayed PF contributions before submitting an application. Thereafter, they may log on to the EPFO Employer Portal at https://unifiedportal-emp.epfindia.gov.in, access the VISHWAS, 2026 module, select the applicable category, upload the required documents and complete the process through digital authentication.

The system will automatically calculate the revised penalty amount. Employers will be provided 15 days to make the payment, with an automatic extension of a further 15 days, wherever required. Upon confirmation of payment, EPFO will issue a digitally signed Settlement Certificate, following which the concerned proceedings pending before a court or tribunal shall stand closed.

Employers are encouraged to avail the benefits of the Scheme before its closure on 28 December 2026. Assistance is available at all 153 EPFO Regional Offices across the country, where dedicated VISHWAS Cells and Helpdesks have been established to facilitate and assist applicants. Detailed guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions are available on the EPFO website. For further assistance, employers may also contact the toll-free helpline at 1800-180-1820.

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