

PROMISING BILL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE RAJASTHAN PLATFORM-BASED GIG WORKERS (REGISTRATION AND WELFARE) BILL, 2023

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With an estimated eight million people employed in an industry built on the back of the smartphone revolution, [“gig” work](#) has become a major source of jobs for youth in India. It goes without saying that in a country where informal labour and unemployment have defined the nature of the jobs market in the last decade, the gig economy has been a beneficial outlet of employment. This is especially true of youth and migrant workers, as they seek a ready and quick means of securing finances and flexible hours — an option used by informal workers who have used gigs for moonlighting. With growing smartphone use and a reliance on apps for daily needs and purposes, the gig economy is only set to flourish in terms of usage and opportunities. Yet, increased competition among platforms and the availability of a cheap labour force have led to a lowering of incentives for gig workers even as their workload and uncertainty of work hours have increased significantly relative to pay, which has also become insufficient for many. Adding this to the fact that gig workers are not recognised as “workers” but partners by most aggregating platforms and that they lack any social security or related benefits due to them as “workers”, working conditions have become increasingly harsh in an industry that is no longer a fledgling one. This is now evident in growing flash strikes by gig workers.

Seen in this light, the [decision by the Rajasthan government, to deliver a Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers \(Registration and Welfare\) Bill, 2023](#), should be welcomed, even if it will be introduced before the Assembly elections later this year. While the draft Bill envisages a “welfare board” that will design welfare policies and hear grievances of gig workers on a piece rate basis, the specificities of the policies and how they might benefit the workers are still unclear. The board is expected to work towards a social welfare corpus which will be financed by a cess on the digital transactions made by consumers on the platforms that utilise the gig worker labour. This schema is not unfamiliar — platform workers in the transport sector in Thailand and Malaysia, for instance, benefit from health and accident insurance as well as social security that is financed by a deduction of 2% for every ride. Recently, the Union government passed the Code on Social Security (one of four labour codes), which also allowed for some social security for gig workers, but the scheme only remains on paper without proper implementation. If Rajasthan’s pioneering draft Bill takes off, other States could be compelled to utilise similar measures to ensure the welfare of gig workers.

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