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Drop the piecemeal ways to social security for workers

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Context

- India's efforts to establish **social security for online (app-based) gig workers are gaining momentum**, with the central scheme awaiting Cabinet approval.
- Benefits announced include health coverage under **Ayushman Bharat**, **registration on the eShram portal** for access to various social security schemes, and a transaction-based **pension policy**, where a **universal account number** assigned to each gig worker helps **track their earnings across platforms for deductions and company contributions**.
- This pension scheme is particularly notable because, in a way, it acknowledges that **gig workers (operating outside traditional employee-employer relationships) can have multiple employers, and ensures that each contributes, albeit in a limited capacity, towards worker welfare**.
- In a country where social security is typically tethered to formal employment and informal workers are excluded or otherwise disadvantaged, this is clearly a step forward.
- **Despite being a founding member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India is yet to ratify the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the ILO's Convention aimed at establishing basic social security principles.**
- **India's Code on Social Security (Code), one of its four new Labour Codes**, enacted nearly 70 years after the 102 Convention, intends to provide a comprehensive framework for social protection.
- As India strives to make its workforce 'future ready', it is crucial to create robust social protection systems that can withstand workforce and sectoral changes.
- A sensible starting point might be to treat the Code's mandates as the bare minimum, and use these as a foundation to build stronger, more inclusive, accessible and ultimately, universal social protection systems that leave no worker behind.