

"THAT IS NOT A LIVELIHOOD — THAT IS HELPLESSNESS"

FIELD NOTES FROM THE FRAAZO DELIVERY WORKERS STRIKE
IN NOIDA, GREATER NOIDA, AND GHAZIABAD

Rikta Krishnaswamy

ALL INDIA GIG WORKERS UNION

2023





The **All India Gig Workers' Union (Affiliated to CITU)** is a registered trade union for all food delivery, logistics, and service workers that work on any app-based platforms in India.

Contact

contactaigwu@gmail.com

Connect

twitter.com/aigwu_union

facebook.com/aigwu

Author

Rikta Krishnaswamy

Delhi NCR Coordinator, All India Gig Workers' Union

Images

All India Gig Workers' Union (AIGWU)

Design

Annushka Jaliwala

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The onset of COVID-19 saw a dramatic rise in investments in platform start-ups in India. Amidst the pandemic and an economic crisis that left millions of Indians unemployed, sick or starving, new app-based start-ups focusing on lifestyle shopping, hyperlocal deliveries, education, and health services sprung up to capitalise on new market opportunities through the ‘digitalisation’ of services or ‘platformisation’ of work.

In a 2022 [report](#) titled ‘India Unicorns and Exits Tech Report’, the publisher Orios Venture Partners stated that “these startups are not only developing innovative solutions and technologies but are generating large-scale employment.” What they might have been referring to as ‘large-scale employment’ is what we have come to know as ‘gig’ or ‘platform’ work—essentially a contemporary term for zero-hour contract work done on app-based platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto, Ola, Uber, Urban Company, and many others.

A [policy brief](#) by NITI Aayog (published in July 2022), titled ‘India’s Booming Gig and Platform Economy’, claims, “the gig workforce is expected to expand to 2.35 crore workers by 2029–30” and goes on to list a flurry of pro-corporate recommendations to further harness the potential of the platform economy.

What these reports fail to acknowledge is how the enormous growth of capital investment and rising market share fails to reach the gig workers—who are the engines of these platforms. The gig workers provide essential services based on the platform’s domain of expertise, and it is through the workers’ [collective data](#) that platforms develop digital intelligence infrastructures to enable on-demand services for customers that rake in [billions of dollars](#) in valuation.

We have observed that over time, Indian gig workers across these platforms almost certainly face a decrease in overall wages, an increase in working hours, and ever-worsening working conditions.

The rhetoric of ‘large-scale employment’ is a false one, as corporates do not consider the gig workers as employees and the workers do not come under the aegis of the country’s labour laws. They are bereft of any protections as they are “engaged in livelihoods outside the traditional employer-employee arrangement” as per the government (Code On Social Security 2020).

But the gig workers on these platforms don’t share the corporate and government view at all.

On 30 May 2022, striking delivery workers in Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad—all of whom work for an app-based, fresh produce and grocery delivery platform called Fraazo — approached the All India Gig Workers’ Union (AIGWU). Many of these delivery workers, who are usually referred to as ‘partners’, had lost jobs at banks, data or telecom companies, and call centres during the pandemic, and

had joined Fraazo after it started operations in December 2021. They were paid a daily wage, called a minimum guarantee (MG) payout, of INR 500 for a 10-hour work shift during which they delivered vegetables, fruits, and groceries to residences near them. Alongwith the MG payout that was disbursed weekly into their accounts, they were also given a petrol surcharge of four rupees for every kilometre they travelled.



Img 1: Demand placards of striking Fraazo Delivery workers

The workers told us that on 28 May 2022, the Fraazo head office in Mumbai decided to replace their daily MG payout with a piece-rate payout of INR 45 per delivery. At a time of sky-rocketing fuel prices and inflation, the company decided to remove the petrol surcharge for delivery distances of less than five kilometres (which constitute a

bulk of the orders that these delivery workers service). The delivery workers were apprised of these changes the next day—with a promise that the new piece-rate system would bring in more earnings—by the Fraazo Store Managers, who are themselves salaried employees of Fraazo in charge of supply management and customer care at a store level.

The delivery workers rejected this new system outright and demanded that Fraazo restore the earlier payout system with an assurance that in the future, Fraazo will take the consent of the workers before introducing any drastic changes to their service conditions. In addition, they demanded that all delivery riders be provided with accident insurance and paid leaves.

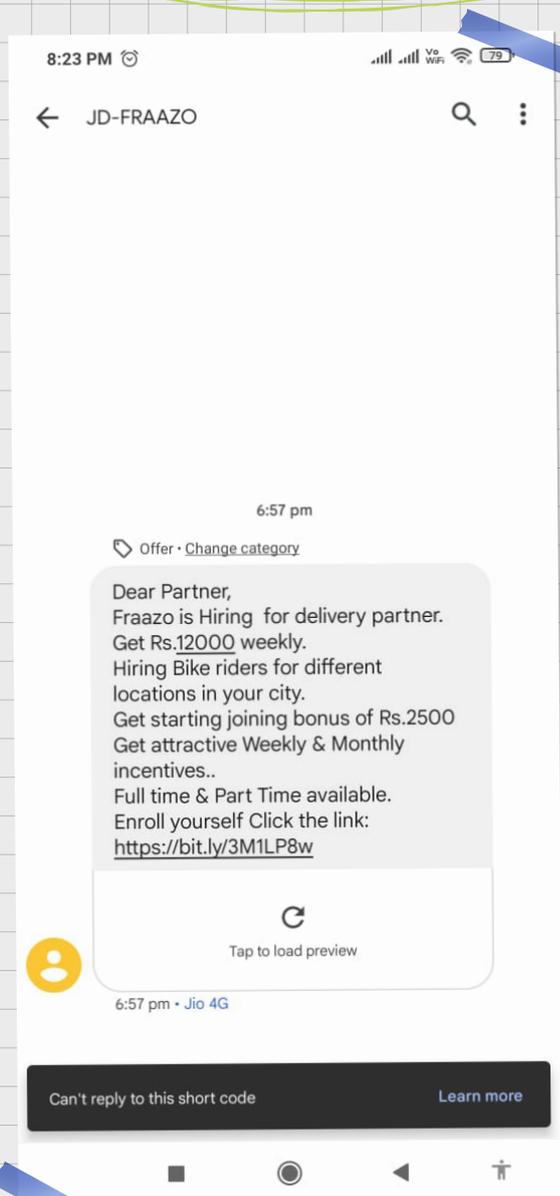
The workers did not view themselves as merely freelance delivery partners. When the store's operations had just begun, the company faced a lot of challenges in ensuring consistent service. Some delivery partners would help with unloading and sorting produce at the store during or after their work shifts. Even after operations stabilised, many worked overtime (with no pay) at the behest of the store managers

to ensure that deliveries were completed to the customer's satisfaction. A significant portion of deliveries involved carrying 10 kilos of produce to customers' homes. Delivery workers were entrusted to escalate and resolve complaints as well. Fraazo's customers complained that the store managers were lackadaisical when it came to providing appropriate support and often called the delivery workers directly to get items replaced.

Anywhere between 25–40 workers were tied to a store, according to the size of the operations, and helped Fraazo set up and smoothly run its services across its various stores in Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad in the first half of 2022. They usually worked through the week, had no paid sick leaves, and were allowed to take just one unpaid day off during a work week (they

often incurred penalties if they took more than one leave). While there were problems with their previous time-wage system, they were dead against the new system of a piece-rate payout. The latter meant that their employer could potentially hire hundreds of workers for a store with no minimum guarantee pay, thereby annihilating the earnings of all the workers.

HOW GIG WORKERS ARE ENTRAPPED INTO ZERO-HOUR CONTRACTS



Most delivery platforms follow a similar modus operandi when it comes to entrapping their app-based workers. In its early days of operations, the company will usually provide a variation of a ‘minimum guarantee’ (better known as the ‘MG Plan’) and extremely lucrative incentives. This is offered only to initially amass a workforce supply or create sustained customer demand. Platforms assure a standard payout for a full- or half-time shift in the case of delivery workers, irrespective of the number of deliveries made. There are also additional incentives for completing a quantum of work and additional occasion-based benefits (for example, festival bonuses or late-night delivery surcharge). The workers are ‘onboarded’ on an app, made to digitally accept lengthy ‘terms and conditions’ documents, and receive aggregated earnings on a weekly or monthly basis after starting work.

Img 2: A SMS sent by Fraazo citing lucrative salaries to get new joinees on the platform. Their actual payouts per month are one-fourth of the salary they advertised.

Over some time, the platform establishes some scale in its operations and abruptly changes the payout system. Time wages are replaced with zero-hour contracts – a system wherein the employer is not obliged to provide any guaranteed work – that pay piece wages. This is accompanied by harder-to-achieve gamified incentives that ensure that workers stick to the platform and provide a set amount of hours per day. The platform management often uses the rhetoric that the worker will ‘earn more money’ through this new piece wage and incentives system to allay workers’ opposition. In reality, the new piece wage system allows the platform to hire many more full- or part-time workers, as they have no minimum guarantee obligations. The workers are ultimately forced to work harder and longer, with overall decreased pay and fewer jobs. This new piece wage system also allows platforms to steal wages on each delivery earning through penalties based on unfair rules that they create.

Given that delivery platforms have been around for more than 7–8 years, most gig workers are now fully aware of these insidious wage theft machinations that the companies employ through their transition from time wages to piece wages.

As their concerns regarding the new payout system weren’t addressed by the store managers or the area in-charge, the Fraazo delivery workers in the Sector 22 store in Noida decided to call a spontaneous strike on 30 May 2022. Within a day they mobilised the delivery captains and workers in other stores in Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad, and managed to impact operations in key residential areas. On 31 May 2022, the second day of the strike, the company sent their legal head from the Mumbai head office for damage control.



Img 3: Fraazo delivery workers picketing a store in Indirapuram, Ghaziabad (L) and Noida (R) with their strike demands. May 30, 2022

In an informal discussion with the delivery workers from different stores, the legal head pointed out that workers had ‘signed a contract’ (a 10-page ‘terms and conditions’ document in English that no one had been allowed to read at the time of joining), which stipulated that they have to adhere to changes in their payout structures or service conditions as per company directives. When the workers challenged the

validity of such a contract and demonstrated clauses (such as overtime work without pay, unpaid sick/casual leaves, etc.) that were in direct contravention with the [Uttar Pradesh Shops and Establishments Act](#), the legal head changed his stance. He declared the strike illegal—as the workers hadn’t provided prior notice (as per the Industrial Disputes Act) to the company—and threatened police action.

In the legal head's topsy-turvy rationale we can see that gig work is nothing but a smokescreen to disguise a 'traditional employer-employee arrangement' so that platform companies can circumvent labour laws and other protections afforded to workers by the rule of law.

Sensing that the workers would not cower under threats or budge from picketing at the store, the legal head pulled out one last trick from his hat—blaming the customers. He told the workers, “We are a start-up, so we have to change with the times as customers now want 10-minute

deliveries. Why don't you try this new system for a month? The INR 45 per delivery we are providing you is much higher than what delivery workers get in the market. Look at Zomato or Swiggy—people are working there for 15–20 rupees [per delivery]”.

Krishna, a Fraazo delivery worker who was also leading the protest at that particular store, responded, “Sir, woh kaam nahi, majboori hai” (“Sir, that is not livelihood—that is helplessness”). Perhaps unbeknownst to the company representatives, some of the Fraazo delivery workers had previously worked for companies like Swiggy and Zomato. They knew that it would not take Fraazo any time to slash their per-delivery earnings to match 'market rates'.

Krishna continued, “We will not resume work, and we are not preventing any rider from working at your store, sir. But, we will stand outside and tell the delivery workers why we are on strike and how this company misbehaves with its workers.”

DIRECT ACTION – GIG WORKERS' ONLY RESORT IN A BROKEN SYSTEM

The view that gig workers fall outside the realm of a traditional employee-employer relationship creates immeasurable barriers to recourse from exploitative company policies. Platform

companies ward off accountability at labour offices with impunity, and their representatives refuse point-blank to initiate any conciliation process, claiming that the gig workers are not their employees. In such a scenario, direct action through strikes and work stoppages are the only negotiation tools in workers' arsenal.

Since the beginning of COVID-19, we have seen an escalation in direct struggles by gig workers. Platform companies have leveraged the pandemic and resultant unemployment crisis to further squeeze and enslave workers. While the

media heralded them as essential workers during the lockdowns, companies 'rewarded' their gig workers with payout cuts, increased commissions, and ever-worsening working conditions.

These strikes, whether spontaneous or organised, have become a critical political learning ground for workers. With each struggle, the workers have understood the systemic causes of their current plight and leveraged creative tactics to put pressure on the platforms by taking to social media and raising customer awareness.

During such strikes, companies often hire threat managers, block the IDs of crucial organisers, or threaten workers with police or legal action on false charges. They also hire third party workers (from companies like Shadowfax or Rapido) to keep their operations running smoothly. The area managers in charge of worker 'supply' rarely meet with protesting workers, preferring instead to wait them out.

This is precisely why it was surprising that Fraazo sent a legal head from their Mumbai head office to deal with the workers as early as the second day of the strike. A delivery captain from Ghaziabad explained that one possible reason for this haste could be that the customers, especially those who had grocery 'subscriptions', had started calling the delivery workers to ask about work stoppages. The delivery workers had in turn sent their strike demands, [videos of their protest](#), and apologies for inconvenience to these customers via WhatsApp, some of whom included senior or retired government officials and media figures.

Sensing that the discussions with the legal head were headed towards an impasse, the Fraazo delivery workers left the meeting and stood outside the store shouting slogans of their demands. Within 15 minutes, two constables showed up, responding to a false complaint that

the workers were threatening one of the women store managers with physical harm. An AIGWU union representative present there reasoned with the constables to allow the worker to rightfully protest close to the store, while also agreeing to meet the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) at the local police station.



Img 4: Workers picketing the store after a failed meeting with the legal head (L) and police constables trying to break up the strike (R)

As the union rep and workers waited to speak with the ACP, the Fraazo legal head went into his chambers and falsely accused the peacefully striking workers of disrupting store operations and harassing the store managers. The matter was forwarded to a sub-inspector (SI) at the same police station, who called both parties to put forth their case.

While meeting the SI, the Fraazo legal head spoke first. He told the SI that the new payout system is a better deal for the workers, and that their demands were unreasonable, as the company cannot have a special system just for one region. He also falsely claimed that there was no opposition by the delivery workers in any of the other regions where Fraazo operated. As it happened, the AIGWU representatives had scheduled a public meeting with striking Fraazo workers in the Mira-Bhayander area in Mumbai that very evening.



Img 5: AIGWU organisers in Mira Road, Mumbai hold a public meeting with striking Fraazo delivery workers from Mira-Bhayander Area on the evening of 31 May 2022

The workers told the SI that no company would ever pay workers more money and refuted the optimistic claims made by the company representative. Vishal, a delivery worker, said, "Inspector saab, the company is saying workers will make more money with this [new system], [but] the workers are saying we don't want it. Let the company save that extra money and give us INR 3,500 per week along with a petrol fee. We don't want more money if that means working for a piece-wage."

To resolve the deadlock, the SI attempted a back-of-the-envelope calculation to compare the amount an average worker would make on the previous system versus the new one. The store managers and the delivery workers furnished the details necessary for the calculation. After mapping several scenarios, the SI concluded that with the current fuel prices, the average worker would make close to nothing and requested the legal head to arrive at a mutually agreeable resolution.

In such matters, the police have no real jurisdiction and usually act as a pressure

group to scare workers into disbanding their strikes. However, the workers were heartened to see the SI siding with them. They said that they were willing to give the company some time to respond to their demands, but would not disband their strike at the various store locations. Aghast at the proceedings of the meeting, the legal head told the SI that their startup was bootstrapped and could not afford to go back on the new policy. The workers retorted that Fraazo and its parent company, VnF Ideas Pvt. Ltd., had secured USD 50 million in their most recent round of funding. They reasoned that if the company was unable to provide

minimum protections to its delivery workers, then perhaps it was not fit to do business. The SI, of his own accord, asked the company representatives for a written copy of the policy changes, upon which their team left the police station in a hurry.

आज दिनांक 31 मई 2022 को नॉएडा और गाज़ियाबाद के फ्राज़ो डिलीवरी पार्टनर्स का कम्पनी के नए पेआउट व्यवस्था के खिलाफ़ आंदोलन, दूसरे दिन भी सफल रहा.

नॉएडा के सेक्टर 22 के स्टोर पर कम्पनी के वकील और स्टोर मैनेजर ने पुलिस को बुलाया लेकिन वे डिलीवरी पार्टनर्स की मज़बूत एकता और दृढ़ निश्चय को नहि तोड़ सके। दोनो पक्षों की बात सुनने के बाद, पुलिस थाने के स्टेशन इन-चार्ज ने भी डिलीवरी पार्टनर्स का साथ दिया और कम्पनी के वकील से सुलह करने की अपील की।

सभी साथी जो हड़ताल में शामिल हैं, उनसे अपील है की वे अपनी एकता, संयम और धैर्य बनाए रखे और शांतिपूर्वक तरीके से इस आंदोलन को जारी रखे। कल हमारे डिलीवरी पार्टनर्स डिप्टी लेबर कमिश्नर और प्रशासन के प्रतिनिधि को अपने माँग पत्र भेजेंगे और उनसे हमारी समस्याओं का समाधान करने की अपील भी करेंगे।

निवेदक - ऑल इंडिया गिग वर्कर्स यूनियन, दिल्ली
NCR

10:24 pm ✓✓

IMG 6 - A WA message on the Fraazo delivery riders group on the meeting with the Police Station incharge

The news of the Fraazo Sector 22 store workers' showdown with the management at the police station reached the workers in other parts of Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad. On 1 June 2022, the third day of the strike, delivery captains and key organisers at other locations

started to reason with their respective store managers, asking them to shut down operations to help add more pressure to the company.

To deal with the strike, the Indirapuram store managers had asked their friends and relatives to help clear the backlog in deliveries. They began smuggling produce from the shop's back entrance to a rental tempo truck parked away at a distance. At the stores in Greater Noida, the store manager had hired third-party riders to covertly pick up and deliver goods. Striking Fraazo workers created picket lines and reasoned with the third-party riders to cancel their jobs in solidarity with their struggle. A few store managers appeared sympathetic as they had recently faced wage cuts as well, but they also declared that this was an inevitable feature of the system.

As fate would have it, over 150 managers, including these store managers, would go on to lose their jobs in the subsequent month. At another Noida store, the store manager tried to provoke the workers to create a situation that would nudge them to call the police just as they did in Sector 22. **"You guys just keep sitting around the whole day. Why should the company pay you when there are no deliveries? You should be paid for the work you do, not for chilling and watching videos. The company is not here to fund your lazing around,"** he said. One wonders how the store managers would react if the company were to cut their pay on account of their not working during the days of the strike.



Img 7: A shut-down Fraazo store in Indirapuram (L) and Noida (R) on July 1, 2022

Despite all these pressure tactics, the workers were able to shut down operations in all the major stores. They also decided to register an official complaint at the labour commissioner's office to leverage accountability from the company.

EASIER TO SHUT OPERATIONS THAN TO PAY LAWFUL WAGES

On 2 June 2022, the fourth day of the strike, the workers prepared to meet at the Labour Offices at noon. They were abruptly called to the Fraazo store in Sector 22. As most of them waited outside, a few workers were taken inside to talk to the legal head and area manager. After 20 minutes or so, everyone was ushered into the empty store. Around 60–70 workers from different stores had gathered and a majority of them couldn't hear the legal head speak.

The legal head began, **"We understand your apprehensions, but we are sure that with the new subscription system that we are rolling out for customers, you and any new joinees will have more than enough work. We have spoken to the head office and what we ask is that you try this new INR 45 per order system for the next two weeks or so. Then, if there are any issues, we can see if we can bring back the petrol surcharge. If you have any questions, you can ask me. This is the final offer."**

The 'final offer' from the management was an empty verbal promise and did not address a single concern or any of the accompanying demands made by the striking workers. Some workers stated that they were willing to go ahead with the two-week pilot if the company gave them a written assurance that they would revert to the older plan if a majority of them were dissatisfied. The legal head refused.

Most workers were enraged and rejected the proposal outright. The manager urged the workers with whom he had spoken separately to **"reason with the others"** (**"samjhao inko"**). An Indirapuram delivery captain from the group responded, **"No one will accept this, sir. It is not even an offer. We will continue with our protest outside the store."**

"If you people don't want to work, you can leave. Why are you forcing others to kick their livelihood?" the legal head responded. **"You people don't know how difficult it is to run a business. If this is your response, we will shut down this store. We can just start this [somewhere else] and you won't be able to do anything. We will clear the pay for last week."** The legal head picked up his phone decisively and called a number as he left the store, saying, **"Yes, these people are not agreeing. You please go ahead with the necessary formalities to shut down the stores in all the locations."** A union rep from AIGWU who was at this meeting responded that Fraazo would need to provide a month's notice (or pay in lieu of lost work) in case of closure of operations, as per the UP Shops and Establishment Act. The legal head and managers dashed from the store without paying any heed to this.

Deliveroo unveils plans to pull out of Spain in wake of 'rider law'

Delivery firm says 'disproportionate level of investment' would be needed to achieve top-level market position



The changes in Spain will mean a worker is presumed to be an employee rather than self-employed contractor. Photograph: Albert Gea/Reuters

Deliveroo has announced plans to pull out of Spain only months after the government promised a law to give gig economy workers greater employment rights.

Transportation

Uber's food delivery platform agrees to pay severance to couriers let go ahead of Spain's Riders law

Natasha Lomas @riptari / 11:56 PM GMT+5:30 • December 13, 2022

Comment



Time and again we have seen cases of delivery companies pulling out of countries in the light of labour protections granted to gig workers. In 2021, UK-based platform Deliveroo **announced plans** to pull out of Spain shortly after the government promised a law to give gigeconomy workers employment rights. The company declared, “..achieving and sustaining a top-tier market position in Spain would require a disproportionate level of investment with highly uncertain long-term potential returns that could impact the economic viability of the market for the company”. What Deliveroo essentially meant was that their business model would not survive if their workers were given a living wage and decent working conditions. This is the reality of most platform companies across the world.

What happens to the workers when these unsustainable businesses, surviving on a ‘blood transfusion’ of venture capital investments, exit the market? Do the companies that leverage gig workers’ collective data to build the digital infrastructure and economic revenue thereof, provide even basic severances? No. Only in very few cases, owing to long struggles waged by labour unions, companies have been compelled to compensate gig workers for the closure of business.

In the case of Fraazo, the legal head’s actions were taken as a thinly veiled threat—a last attempt at scaring workers into accepting the new policy. The workers decided to proceed with their meeting with the Deputy Labour

Commissioner (DLC) of Noida in the hope of a resolution. At the DLC’s office, an Investigating officer (IO) was asked to sit in on the meeting along with workers from various stores and AIGWU union representatives.

The DLC asked for their contract. As all the workers’ IDs had been blocked, they couldn’t show her the ‘terms and conditions’ section in their Fraazo app. “How do you not have the contract? How can I proceed with this case if I don’t know what you have signed?” she asked, exasperated. The union representatives gave her the details of the case and said they would find a copy of the contract and submit it within an hour. Next, she asked the workers for store location details, such as registration information, the store number, and address, so that she could send the IO to investigate the matter. “Please provide the registration details, shop number and full address”. The workers drew another blank.

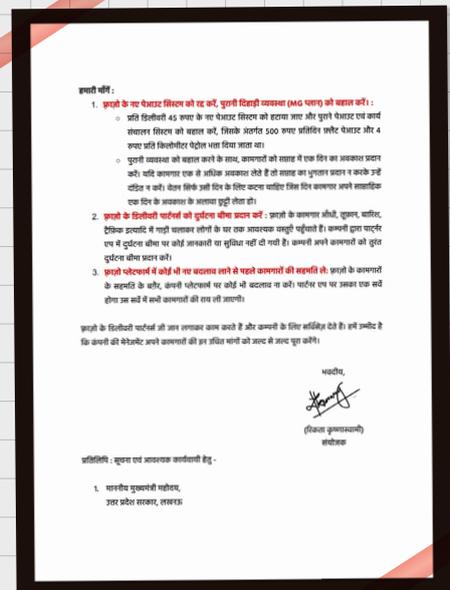
Stores such as the one from where Fraazo delivery workers collect their orders are called ‘dark stores’. Platform companies convert brick-and-mortar stores into dark stores to optimise their supply chains. When a customer makes an order, the dark store staff prepares and packs the items (cooked food, groceries, etc.) and the app-based delivery riders deliver them to the customer’s address. Many times these stores are nondescript, and in the case of relatively newer companies, feature no details of branding, digital locations, or registration/compliance.

“Ma’am, there is no store number or board with the company name. We don’t know the registration details. In Sector 22, it is the store next to Noble Bank in Mannat Complex. We can give you a Google Map location link.” The DLC reprimanded them: “How will this work? How do you not have the contract or even the address? What can we do?”

Even though at present gig workers do not fall under the aegis of labour laws, in the case of Fraazo, the delivery fleet worked exclusively for one store. The Shops and Establishments Act and its various clauses still apply to them. Most of them had been working at least one or two hours of overtime (without pay) every day for six months. They had not been given paid

sick leave or holidays and were now threatened with the closure of operations with no notice because they refused to accept the company's new anti-worker policies. In the face of such a compelling case, we might expect some action from the authorities. But all they received was a contemptuous scolding.

The AIGWU representative explained the precarious realities of gig work to the DLC: "Ma'am, this is not the first case of such a nature that we have brought to the labour office. If workers had any other opportunities, they would not work for such companies. This is a larger issue of not having any legislation to protect these kinds of workers, and your office needs to take cognisance of this. We would like a copy of this letter to be sent to the state labour minister, the principal secretary for labour, and the chief minister of UP."



Img 9: The Fraazo workers submitting their complaints to the Deputy Labour Commissioner, Gautam Budh Nagar, 2 July 2022 (L) demanding a restoration of their old payout system (R)

The DLC listened silently and motioned the IO to go ahead with their investigation. One would have expected the workers to be disheartened by the proceedings of the meeting; instead, they left the room with a clearer mandate. "Without us, this company would not exist. This is a matter of respect for our hard work. We have to stay united and fight," one worker said. Most other workers agreed, knowing fully that this was an uphill battle.

THE ESTRANGEMENT OF GIG WORK

Sandeep, a delivery captain from the Indirapuram Fraazo store, used to be a data entry operator for a bank but was laid off at the beginning of the pandemic. After a year and a half of doing odd jobs to support his family, he was glad to have found work that paid a living wage. At 45 years old, he was one of the older workers in the lot. He has subscribed to several WhatsApp groups in the hopes of finding a stable job but has had no luck.

Vishal, a delivery executive along with Krishna, his friend, had worked for companies like Swiggy and Zomato before joining the Noida Sector 22 Fraazo store together. They had been scammed a few times, by companies masquerading as e-commerce platforms, into giving small

deposits as joining fees. Shiva, another worker, wants to leave gig work altogether and join a call centre, but has been unable to do this due to a lack of spoken English skills.

Hemu, who had left Fraazo a few months before the strike, came to the protest every day 'to stand with his brothers'. He had long vied for a police job like some other members of his family but had failed to clear the exams for the dwindling vacancies even after multiple attempts. He joked, "If I was in the police, I would have taught that [Fraazo] lawyer a good lesson."

Shiva, who reached out to the union for its intervention in this case, had left a job in sales after being denied earned commissions. He stopped coming to the protest after the second day, and left Fraazo to help his mother, who ran a small NGO that provides meals to needy people.

Unlike the capital city of Delhi, the suburbs of Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad have fewer opportunities even for gig work. Delivery workers across platforms regularly face theft and petty crimes, especially during late-night deliveries. Housing societies prevent them from taking their bikes to customers' apartments and, in some cases, deny them access to building lifts to carry out deliveries. Despite its dehumanising nature, gig work provides some means of survival in this epoch of rampant unemployment.

Most of the Fraazo workers with whom we spoke throughout the four-day protest seemed to have imagined their exit strategies from gig work, even though there were no means and opportunities to truly leave. They were hesitant to organise formally because they did not anticipate sticking around for too long. This fallacy continues to exist, as most workers are unaware of the growing attack on worker rights, which allows oligopolistic digital platform companies to take over regulating and defining what work is.



Img 10: Fraazo sector 22 delivery workers give a press interview after their meeting with the Deputy Labour Commissioner, 2 July 2022

After the meeting with the DLC, the Sector 22 store workers decided that they would continue picketing the store for the next few days (this would end the very next day). "If they are really closing down the shop, we want to ensure that not a single item is delivered from there," they said. The union representatives urged the Ghaziabad workers to hold a similar meeting at the labour offices. "No one knows if the labour officer will be able to help us. This company is not beyond paying off officials," reasoned one of their leaders. The helplessness they felt was palpable.

Sustaining a spontaneous strike is not very easy for those who depend on app-based work for their daily subsistence. Most workers wanted to recover their previous week's earnings. In the next few days many workers would leave to join other companies like Dunzo and Zepto. Some would continue working for Fraazo at the new piece-wage rate.

Over the next month or so, Fraazo would **announce** that it was closing down all operations in Delhi NCR and some stores in Bangalore and Hyderabad. On 9 July 2022, 150 store managers from 50 stores would be let go with a one-month severance pay. Despite repeated demands, the gig workers affected by the closure of business would not receive a single rupee.



In the gig economy, there is no work time, workplace, or work tools. All the risks and costs are displaced onto the workers, who use their belongings, vehicles, phones, and soles of their shoes in 'subordinate self-management', controlled in a centralised fashion by algorithms that are obscure but extremely effective in the rationalised management of workers.

It is the profit enjoyed by the capitalist class of the technology sector, which, on one hand, has made big technology company owners the richest people in the world, and on the other hand, exploited and violated all freedoms of the gig workers it employs. For this to change, gig workers have to be guaranteed employment rights along with collective rights to their data.

Note: All the quotes in the article have been translated from Hindi to English.

