EDITORIALS - 20TH NOV 2026

1. WHAT PROTECTIONS DO WORKERS IN INDIA HAVE IN CASE OF LAYOFFS? (GS PAPER I SOCIETY, GS PAPER III ECONOMY)

This editorial '**What protections do workers in India have in case of layoffs?**' was published in **The Hindu** on 20th Nov 2026, highlights gaps in India's **retrenchment protections, severance pay** and **social security** for workers who lose their jobs.

Retrenchment Protections and Severance Pay

- Rising **AI adoption** has intensified job-security concerns across sectors as India approaches the first anniversary of implementing its four **Labour Codes** on 21 November.
- In India, **contract status** shapes job security, while white-collar workers with firm-specific skills may face **reemployment barriers** that workers with more transferable skills can avoid.
- The **Industrial Relations Code** replaced labour courts with **Industrial Tribunals** to streamline dispute resolution, but timely appointments and the competence of presiding officers will determine effectiveness.
- **Retrenchment** can strip workers of both regular income and family health cover, raising fairness concerns over **severance taxation** under salary or income from other sources, depending on the component.
- Sundar identifies **coverage gaps** beyond coal mining, plantations and manufacturing, particularly for IT, other services and informal workers, and argues that one-time payouts should be supplemented by **reemployment support** such as counselling, legal advice and retraining.

Unemployment Insurance and Wider Social Security

- Germany's **earnings-linked unemployment insurance** ties payouts to prior wages, while the US uses federal and state arrangements with employer **payroll taxes** linked to claims history.
- India could use **tax-funded unemployment assistance** for vulnerable workers and design urban schemes around distinct labour-market needs, while limited **ESI hospital coverage** constrains access for insured workers and families.
- The new codes recognise **gig, platform and informal workers**, while **e-Shram** builds a worker database that can support wider social security coverage.
- **Gig-worker income protection** could combine expanded insurance coverage with voluntary premiums against earnings loss, potentially matched by **aggregators and customers**.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Job Retention During Economic Downturns

- **Work-sharing:** Germany expanded *Kurzarbeit* during COVID-19, allowing firms to reduce working hours while the public employment service covered part of workers' lost earnings.
- **Temporary wage subsidies:** Singapore's Jobs Support Scheme subsidised 75% of the first S$4,600 in April 2020 wages for each eligible local employee, easing payroll costs during lockdown.
- **Temporary redeployment:** Singapore deployed around 900 Singapore Airlines Group crew members as Care Ambassadors in healthcare institutions, putting their skills to use while air travel demand was weak.
- **Collective bargaining:** Volkswagen and IG Metall agreed to a four-day workweek in 1993, using negotiated reductions in working time to avert mass redundancies at German plants.
- **Liquidity support for small firms:** India's Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme offered fully guaranteed additional loans to

eligible MSMEs during COVID-19, easing cash shortages that could otherwise trigger layoffs.

- **Targeted eligibility:** Canada initially tied its emergency wage subsidy to revenue losses, requiring a decline of at least 15% in the first claim period and 30% in the next.
- **Phased withdrawal:** The UK raised employers' share of furlough pay from 10% in July 2021 to 20% in August and September before ending the scheme on 30 September.

2. INDIA'S MINERALS POLICY NEEDS TO MOVE TO MATERIAL SECURITY (GS PAPER III ECONOMY)

This editorial '**India's minerals policy needs to move to material security**' was published in **The Hindu** on 20th Nov 2026, highlights the need to turn **mineral resources** into a reliable supply of industrial materials through **domestic processing, refining** and **recycling**.

Critical Mineral Policy and Processing

- The **National Critical Mineral Mission** has ₹34,300 crore for seven years of exploration, mining and processing, while the **amended mining law** enables block auctions for 24 critical minerals, with more blocks expected before 2031.
- India's **manufacturing plans** depend on secure supplies of **critical minerals** such as lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements for EVs, batteries, electronics, renewable energy and strategic industries.
- India imports most of its critical and processed materials because mineral deposits alone cannot supply industry without **beneficiation** and **refining** at scale, capabilities that underpin China's control of supply chains.

- **Mining and processing** capacity must expand together because environmental concerns, **land acquisition** and limited infrastructure can delay both mines and processing facilities.

Recycling and Strategic Reserves

- The Mission allocates **₹1,500 crore** to recover **400 kilotonnes** of critical minerals by 2031 from tailings, fly ash, red mud and end-of-life products, a faster route than opening new mines that meets only a fraction of demand.
- India generated **3.8 million metric tonnes of e-waste in 2024**, according to Redseer, while growth in EVs and battery storage will expand the **recycling feedstock**.
- A fragmented scrap economy complicates **waste collection and traceability**, while reliable industrial use requires predictable supplies for recyclers and **consistent material quality** for manufacturers.
- **Strategic stockpiles** can cushion short-term disruptions from export restrictions, while mineral selection and **inventory targets** must account for changing technological priorities.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Mineral Diplomacy for Supply Diversification

- **Supplier diversification**: The India–Australia Critical Minerals Investment Partnership identified two lithium and three cobalt projects for due diligence in 2023, giving India potential supply options in Australia.
- **Overseas equity stakes**: General Motors took a 38% stake in the Thacker Pass lithium joint venture in the US and secured purchase rights, illustrating how equity can be tied to future supply.
- **Long-term purchase agreements**: Tesla's five-year agreement with Australia's Liontown for lithium concentrate from Kathleen Valley

illustrates how manufacturers can secure future supplies while giving producers a committed buyer.

- **Alternative trade routes**: The Lobito Corridor offers an Atlantic outlet for minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia through Angola, adding an alternative to routes through eastern and southern Africa.
- **Joint geological exploration**: India's KABIL secured exclusive exploration rights for five lithium blocks in Argentina in 2024, giving it a chance to assess deposits before committing to mine development.
- **Local value addition**: Indonesia's nickel ore export ban requires domestic processing before export, showing why mineral partnerships must account for producer countries' industrial priorities.
- **Supply-chain traceability**: The EU's Conflict Minerals Regulation requires covered importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold to conduct supply-chain due diligence, making responsible sourcing a commercial requirement.

3. G3 CLAIMS COMMON GROUND, STRIKES NO BARGAIN (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**G3 claims common ground, strikes no bargain**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 20th Nov 2026, highlights the limited **strategic convergence** at the **US–China–Russia summit** in Shenzhen and its implications for India.

Strategic Significance of the Shenzhen Summit

- Amid intensifying rivalries, Trump, Putin and Xi used the **Shenzhen trilateral** to seek common ground on strategic stability and international security, leaving a grand bargain out of reach. The **1945 Yalta Conference** was followed by Allied cooperation.

- Xi invoked the **anti-fascist struggle** and Putin recalled the three **victorious powers** of World War II, apparently signalling to Japan and Europe, respectively.

Four Issues in the Joint Statement

- The three powers called for **UN reform** to address current geopolitical realities while leaving proposed changes to the **1945 institutional framework** unspecified.
- Plans to expand **refined petroleum supplies** likely signalled concern over Ukraine's strikes on Russian refineries and matter for **India's refining sector** amid global energy disruptions.
- The warning against jurisdictional abuse by the **International Criminal Court** serves Putin's interests given his arrest warrant over alleged war crimes. All three powers remain outside the **Rome Statute**.
- The leaders agreed to discuss **nuclear risk reduction** and **non-proliferation**, implicitly targeting Iran while leaving their own arsenals outside any reduction commitment.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Strategic Options for Smaller States in a Great-Power Order

- **Regional bargaining**: ASEAN's role in bringing China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand into RCEP shows how regional coordination can give smaller economies a platform to shape trade rules.
- **Diversified partnerships**: The Philippines expanded US military access under EDCA in 2023 and signed a Reciprocal Access Agreement with Japan in 2024, widening its security options.
- **Issue-based alignment**: Vietnam participates in RCEP with China while maintaining a bilateral trade agreement with the US, allowing it to pursue commercial interests through overlapping arrangements.

- **Multilateral coalition-building**: The Alliance of Small Island States pressed collectively for climate loss and damage funding, helping put the issue on the agenda that led to the fund's establishment at COP27.
- **International legal recourse**: The Philippines used UNCLOS arbitration to challenge China's maritime claims, securing a 2016 ruling that rejected historic rights claims exceeding the Convention's limits.
- **Transparent infrastructure financing**: Samoa's ADB-backed Apia Port upgrade used standard bidding documents and prior procurement review, showing how small states can strengthen oversight of externally financed infrastructure.
- **Economic resilience**: Lithuania's diversified export base and relatively low dependence on China cushioned the overall impact of Chinese trade restrictions, according to an OECD analysis.