

ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION
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To
All the Employees,

Dear Comrade,

WELCOME NEW YEAR 2018

We wish a very happy and purposeful New Year to all insurance employees, their family members and the entire working class. New Year is the time for new resolutions with renewed determination and reinvigorated commitment. This is also the time for drawing proper lessons from the year that is past and charting out a course for the future.

The year 2017 was important for the working class in many respects. March 5, 2017 marked the beginning of the 200th birth anniversary year of Karl Marx. September 2017 marked the 150th anniversary of the publication of Das Kapital. 2017 marked the centenary of the Great October Socialist Revolution that changed the contours of human civilizational progress. 2017 was the 50th death anniversary of legendary revolutionary Che Guevara. For us in India, 2017 was all the more important because it marked the 70th anniversary of India's independence from colonial rule and exploitation. While the working class was rejoicing over these remarkable convergences of historical events in the year 2017, one had to recognize that it was precisely in this year that savage attacks were mounted on whatever values and ideals these events stood for. But the greatest redeeming feature of 2017 was that resistance to the attacks has been equally impressive.

There was no letup in US imperialism's attack on the lives and livelihoods of people. Like in the past, this time also the moral cloak has been 'humanitarianism'. If it was Iraq that was the target of the attack in 1991 and 2003, or Yugoslavia in 1999 or Afghanistan in 2001 or Libya in 2011, this time it was Syria. Heinous attempts are being made to shift the theatre of war to North Korea. The world economy is still in tatters. According to the World Economic Outlook report of the IMF released in October 2017, global growth in 2018 is only likely to rise to 3.7%. Growth prospects for emerging and developing economies are only marked up by 0.1 %, primarily owing to a stronger growth projection for China. Slow growth has led to weak investments. Weak investments have led to fewer jobs. More unemployment has necessitated the demands for protectionist policies, interestingly from those forces that were out to teach us the virtues of 'free market economy'. The failure of free market capitalism was in abundant display in the recently concluded 11th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at Buenos Aires during 10-13 December 2017. The US Trade Representative (USTR) worked overtime to wreck the multilateral framework of the WTO. US President Donald Trump himself pitched for an 'America First' policy at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Vietnam in the month of November. Rejecting the proclaimed virtues of multilateralism, the US President went on to declare that the US would pursue "mutually beneficial commerce" via bilateral trade. Does that signify the beginning of the end of 'Globalisation'?

The corporate communal axis in power in India is however determined to tread the same beaten path. A neo liberal offensive has been mounted on the lives of the working people in India. The ill-advised demonetization measure and hastily implemented GST policies have wrought havoc on the lives of a people already groaning under the burdens of price rise and unemployment. Agriculture is in deep crisis. So is manufacturing. Suicides by farmers are continuing unabated. About joblessness the less said the better. Privatisation of profit making public sector enterprises is being pursued with a vengeance. GIC Re and New India Assurance in the public sector general insurance industry are the latest to have been put in the chopping block of disinvestment. The commendable performance of public sector LIC even in the face of stiff competition has become an eyesore for our policy planners. Sooner rather than later, LIC will be in the line of fire. Insurance employees under the banner of the AIIEA will have to brace themselves in the New Year not only for a struggle to clinch their legitimate charter of demands in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds but also to protect the public-sector character of LIC and the general insurance companies.

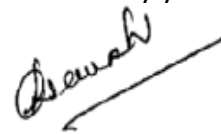
Not only public-sector industry or public health or public education, even public intellectuals have come under increasing attack. Systematic efforts are being made to subvert intellectual spaces and capture institutions of higher learning. Universities which should ideally be the clearing houses for ideas, places where young and curious minds should engage in the process of questioning, debating and discussing a range of issues are however being reduced to the status of battlegrounds. All voices that do not conform to the ideology of the current regime are sought to be silenced. The current climate in the country is such that vigilante justice of all kinds is being endorsed by the state.

The redeeming feature of the year that went by, however, is that resistance and protests by the exploited has grown in tandem with exploitation. Rather than being silenced, the oppressed people have developed the 'culture of protest'. How can one explain an otherwise forgiving and forgetting citizenry, pumped up on the projection of a hyper-masculine and hyper-efficient leader, rising in revolt! The ten day historic strike by farmers in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, the successful strike action of farmers in the state of Rajasthan, the 'Kisan Parliament' of over 100 farmers' organisations in New Delhi, the historic 'Mahapadav' of lakhs of workers in New Delhi from 9th-11th November, 2017 and the unremitting struggle of students in almost all important universities have all heralded the beginning of a resoluteness to fight oppression and exploitation. The ever increasing number of the protests and protestors should inspire us all to action with a new hope and new conviction.

Let's all join hands and welcome the New Year 2018.

With Greetings,

Comradely yours



General Secretary..