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To

All the Zonal/Divisional/Regional/State Units,

Dear Comrades,

**New Year 2019**

We wish a very happy and purposeful New Year to the insurance employees and the working class. We hope that the New Year brings peace, prosperity and progress for one and all.

As we set out to celebrate the New Year, the world is in the throes of a serious crisis. According to a report of the World Bank, growth rate of the world economy is expected to come down from 3.8 per cent in 2018 to 3.5 per cent in 2019. The US economy is projected to slowdown from 2.9 per cent in 2018 to 2.5 per cent in 2019. The European economy is also projected to slowdown from 1.9 per cent in 2018 to 1.6 per cent in 2019. Japan's growth rate is expected to be around 0.6 per cent in the year 2020.

In this period of crisis, not only have output and employment growth slowed down but growth of government revenue has also slowed down. Deceleration in government revenue growth has pushed up the fiscal deficit level almost everywhere. Governments across the world have resorted to the easier option of curtailment of public expenditure to bring down the level of the fiscal deficit. Reduction in public (government) expenditure has however had two devastating effects. First, it has only served to aggravate the crisis through a further curtailment of demand and secondly, since any cut in public expenditure has to adversely affect welfare expenditure, working people naturally have been the worst affected lot. This has been amply proved in the ILO's Global Wage Report 2018-19. According to this Report, the real wage growth for the world economy has not only come down from 2.4 per cent in 2016 to 1.8 per cent in 2017 but this is the lowest annual growth rate since 2008. This has resulted into a huge growth in income inequalities across the world. Developments throughout the world clearly point to the fact that neo liberalism has miserably failed to address the problems of the people. Ardent advocates of neo liberal globalisation like the US imperialism are now resorting to protectionist measures to safeguard their own interests. A trade war has virtually begun. In other words, Globalisation is in retreat today.

The policy makers in India seem altogether impervious to this stark reality. The Indian economy is stuck in deep crisis. The twin shocks of demonetisation and hasty implementation of GST wrought havoc on the economy. The agriculture sector is in an unprecedented crisis. The banking sector of India is saddled with huge non-performing assets because of the crony capitalism being pursued by the government. Manufacturing sector continues to falter. Exports are on the decline because of the problems in the world market as enumerated above. Unemployment problem has assumed monstrous proportions. The Indian Rupee seems headed on a fathomless downward slide. Privatisation of public sector undertakings is being pursued with a vengeance. With disinvestment of GIC Re and New India having already begun in the general insurance industry, a chorus is being orchestrated for privatising the LIC.

Sensing their inability to provide relief to the masses and sensing the mood of anger among the masses, the ruling party and its assorted outfits have stepped up their stock agenda of polarisation among the masses and attack on the democratic rights of the working people. While attempts are being made to disrupt the unity of the masses through communal polarisation, systematic attempts are also made to snatch away the hard-earned democratic rights of protests from the working people. Heinous attempts are being made to dismantle 44 existing labour laws and instead bring four labour codes to promote the interests of capitalists and big businesses. Similar attempts are also being made to amalgamate the existing 15 social security legislations into a single legislation. 'Ease of leading a normal life' is being sacrificed at the altar of 'Ease of doing Business'. Almost all the democratic institutions so assiduously built over the last 70 years are under attack today. The Election Commission, the higher Judiciary, the CBI, the RBI are all under attack.

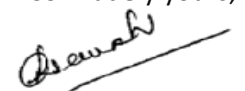
But a welcome augury in the New Year is the growing protests against these disastrous social and economic policies. There is a remarkable unity of farmers, farm labourers and workers that is developing in India today. The 180 Kms long march of 50,000 farmers in Maharashtra in the month of March was something historic. There has been massive mobilisation of farmers in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and a number of other states. The 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018 worker-peasant rally was undoubtedly one of the biggest mobilisations of workers and peasants. Three hundred thousand workers, peasants and agricultural workers converged in Delhi to lodge their strong protest against the anti-people policies of the Modi government. The Long March conducted by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee representing over 200 farmers' organisations from all over India during 28-30 November was historic. Workers and employees belonging to 10 central trade unions and a host of independent federations and unions in banks, insurance, central and state government and other sectors of the economy have given a call for two-day strike action on 8-9 January 2019. This is going to be the 18<sup>th</sup> General Strike ever since the process of economic liberalisation started in India and around 150 million workers are expected to participate in it.

Struggles and protests are not only taking place in India. France has witnessed a massive protest of the "Yellow Vests" over the neo liberal policies of President Macron. Protest actions have taken place in Netherlands, Hungary, Greece, Belgium and very many other countries. The ruling classes have been forced to concede the demands of the workers, like it happened in France. In our own country, the elections to five state assemblies have not only severely deflated the arrogance of the ruling party but has forced the Congress to talk about issues of 'farmers' and 'working people'. Struggle of the working class-peasantry combine has therefore brought about one significant change: 'people' have made a comeback to the centre stage of political discourse. In this New Year, let's strive to bring that Change on a permanent basis. As has been aptly said:

"The horizon leans forward,  
Offering you Space to place New Steps of Change"

With Revolutionary New Year Greetings,

Comradely yours,

  
General Secretary.