

# ALL INDIA INSURANCE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

LIC BUILDING SECRETARIAT ROAD HYDERABAD 500 063

Cir.No.5/2010

24<sup>th</sup> February 2010

To all the Zonal/Divisional/State/Regional Units:

## **Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all Centenary year of International Women's Day**

International Women's Day is annually held on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements throughout history and across nations. It is also known as the United Nations (UN) Day for Women's Rights and International Peace.

The history of International Women's Day started with a struggle organised in 1908. In New York, women garment makers demanded better working conditions and equal pay with their male counterparts.

In 1910, an international conference of women determined that each year a day should be observed to press for women's demands. International Women's Day stands for equality between women and men. The first International Women's Day was observed on March 19 in 1911. International Women's Day was observed on March 8 from 1913 onwards. Thus 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010 marks the centenary year of International Women's Day. International Women's Day is remembered for the struggles launched to build a society that is fair to all its members.

In India, the equal wages for equal work is a slogan which is still to be achieved in many sectors. Safety measures, facilities for women workers at work places and other benefits are there on the statute but are yet to be implemented in many industries particularly in the private sector.

Equal treatment for the girl child still remains elusive in the society. Adult literacy rate is 76.9% for men where as it is 54.5% for women as per the figures for the year 2009. Atrocities on women continue due to the continued apathy towards meeting this evil.

All these go to indicate that in spite of various initiatives from the government which are on paper, women continue to be discriminated. The demand for 33% reservation for women in Parliament and the Assemblies is a demand which may not solve all the problems at one go. But it would be a part of the political empowerment which would provide opportunities for the society to overcome the discrimination. The President in her address to both houses of the Parliament on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010 said that "the Government is committed to ensuring early passage of the Women's Reservation Bill which was introduced in Rajya Sabha in May 2008". This statement on its face is welcome. But the government which could push through issues like nuclear deal in spite of the opposition from large number of MPs is dilly-dallying on this issue in the name of consensus. The ruling classes are really not interested in this issue and hence this denial in spite of the proclaimed stand by the major political formations in favour of the bill. It is only the left parties which are firm in their support for the bill.

In this background when the centenary year of International Women's Day is being celebrated, women and men and the progressive sections of the society including the trade unions and mass organisations should mark this day as an important event for emancipation of women.

All Divisional/State/Regional Units of AIIEA being a responsible part of the democratic and trade union movement should observe this day with a conscious efforts to mobilise the opinion of the workers in favour of a just society where women are given equal rights and status.

Comradely yours,



General Secretary.