

**EAST CENTRAL ZONE INSURANCE EMPLOYEES'
ASSOCIATION**

Jeevan Deep Buildings (1st Floor), Exhibition Road, Patna-800001

Circular No. : 01/2012

Date: 06.02.2012

To,
All members
Dear Comrades,

Re: All India General Strike on 28th February 2012

As you are aware, the central trade unions and independent federations of insurance, bank, telecom, Railways, Central government, State government and other sectors have given a call for one day all India Strike on 28 February 2012 against the anti people policies of the central government. This strike decision is in keeping with the decisions of the National Convention of workers held at New Delhi on 7th September 2011 and also the meeting of almost all the central trade unions at Delhi on 2nd December 2011. The main demands of the all India Strike action are: against disinvestment of profit making Public Sector Undertakings; against back breaking price rise; against contractorisation of works of permanent nature; demanding assured pension for all; demanding removal of all ceilings on bonus and increase in the quantum of gratuity; demanding strict enforcement of basic labour laws; demanding universal social security for workers in unorganized sector; demanding compulsory registration of trade unions within a period of 45 days from the date of submission of all necessary papers; demanding amendment of minimum wages Act and fixation of minimum wages at Rs.10,000/- with indexation and demanding concrete steps for linkage of incentive package to industry with creation of jobs. The demands projected for the Strike action are very comprehensive in nature and have a bearing on the life and living of all section of workers, insurance employees included. The sweep of the Strike action is also going to be equally all encompassing because almost all the central trade unions are a party to the strike action this time around. It is expected that workers' participation in this strike will break all previous records.

Insurance employees under the banner of the AIIEA are in the midst of struggle against liberalization and privatization of the insurance industry since long. It is through sustained struggle that we have been successful in protecting the nationalized insurance industry till date. Our relentless struggle and glorious campaign by making common cause with other sections of workers has helped us stave off the threat of privatization of the LIC, for the time being, with the passage of the LIC Act Amendment Bill. But the dangers pertaining to public sector general insurance industry are still looming in the horizon. Even though the Standing Committee of the Finance Ministry has given some positive recommendations in respect of FDI in insurance industry, it has more or less concurred with the thinking of the government on the issue of disinvestment of public sector general insurance companies. There are strong enough reasons to be circumspect about the ultimate decisions of the government because the UPA II government is wedded to the neo liberal ideology. We must understand that international finance capital and the neo liberalisers in India are not satisfied with piecemeal reforms of the insurance industry, they want wholesale privatization of the public sector insurance industry. The continuance of our industry in the public sector is therefore integrally linked to the success of the 28th February One Day strike action.

Insurance employees need no elaboration on the debilitating impact of the skyrocketing price rise. The back breaking price rise is severely eroding the real wages of workers. The poor and

downtrodden who spend a major chunk of their daily earnings on food items and items of basic necessity, are bearing the brunt of the price rise. Since they have to cough up a substantial portion of their income on the purchase of basic items of consumption, little else is left with them for meeting other essential requirements like education and health. According to a report published by the global research agency CRISIL, Indian households have had to spend an additional Rs.5,80,000 crore during the last three years due to heavy inflation in India. It is rather unfortunate that when things have come to such a sorry pass, the Prime Minister and Finance Minister of India simply shrug off their shoulders and say that they don't have any magic wand to control the price rise. In spite of repeated demands of the working class movement, the government has taken no concrete steps to control speculative trading in food items.

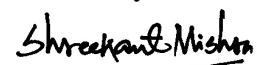
A frontal attack has been launched on the social security provisions of workers, including the provision of Pensions. Vast sections of workers have been thrown out of the provisions of the existing system of Pensions. The defined benefit Pension system has been replaced by a New Pension system which is essentially a defined contribution system. The government intends to throw the lifelong savings of the workers to the uncertainties and vagaries of the capital market by forcibly parking their funds in the stock market. It would be instructive to recall that LIC employees who have joined the corporation after April 2010 have been unjustifiably included in the new pension system. While the erstwhile left led governments of West Bengal and Kerala and the left government of Tripura have steadfastly resisted the move of the central government to impose this anti worker pension system on employees of their states, other state governments have already gleefully yielded to this. The upcoming Strike of 28 February has opened up a grand possibility of forging a grand alliance against the nefarious designs of the government to privatise the pension system. The steep increase in the cost of living as a direct consequence of the high inflation enumerated above has rendered the present ceilings on Bonus and Gratuity absolutely meaningless. There is an imperative need to enhance the ceilings on both these counts. This can be done only through a concerted action of the broad spectrum of the working class. The Strike action is therefore a step in this direction.

It is an open secret that the global economic meltdown has had its repercussions on the Indian economy. Lakhs of workers have been thrown out of jobs, many more are still on the firing line. But it is an irony that the poor workers have been left to fend for themselves while lakhs of crores of rupees are being given to the corporate houses in the name of bailout packages. The working class of India demands that these bailout packages be linked to the creation of jobs by the industrial houses. While the workers are suffering the pangs of hunger, the ruling classes are attacking on their right to protest by curbing the right to form unions. Employers have been given the right to hire and fire indiscriminately. The workers' struggle in Maruti Suzuki plant in Manesar in Haryana is too well known to be repeated here.

The attacks on the working people are a direct fall out of the neoliberal economic policies being pursued by our rulers. We cannot hope to reverse these policies only through sectoral struggles. A broad based movement of the entire working class, irrespective of political affiliations, was a long felt need. The all India General Strike on 28th February 2012 has thrown up a unique opportunity to move ahead in that direction. We must seize upon this opportunity and ensure that the Strike becomes a Grand Success all over the zone.

With Revolutionary Greetings,

Comradely Yours



General Secretary