

INDIAN JOURNALISTS UNION (IJU)

(Regd. No.4001)

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//Press Note//

Hyderabad/New Delhi, October 1: The Indian Journalists Union, the largest and most representative organisation of working journalists in the country, strongly condemned the arbitrary and illegal retrenchment of 297 employees of Press Trust of India (PTI), across the country on Saturday.

In a statement on Monday, IJU President S N Sinha and Secretary General D Amar said the massive retrenchment of permanent employees in the country's largest news wire agency was not just shocking but highly grave and unacceptable. Worse, the way the management retrenched the employees by issuing a notice with 'immediate effect' and placing the retrenchment letters on the desk of the employees or putting them on the website was unethical, unheard of and smacked of sinister design.

The IJU leadership was equally concerned that the management particularly laid off permanent employees under the Wage Board to not only weaken trade union movement in the media but perhaps to replace employees with contractual jobs so as to have a free hand to 'hire and fire' employees and give a go by to job security as provided under the law.

The IJU also noted that the decision to retrench employees came immediately, rather the same day after a change in the PTI Board, with Mr N Ravi, former editor of the Hindu, taking over as its Chairman. Of equal concern is that the ad hoc decision wherein the management has not cited any reason for its illegal and arbitrary action. The IJU also noted that the dangerous trend of arbitrary sacking of employees in the media sector was on the rise in the country, with number of managements such as the Hindustan Times, NDTV, CNBC, ABVP group resorting to it by citing cutting costs as a reason, which was fallacious excuse.

At the same time, the IJU urged the government, particularly the Information & Broadcasting Ministry and the Labour Ministry to look into this case and intervene in the matter immediately, as it is known fact that the government has to a large extent been subsidising the agency. The PTI, said IJU leadership, must be forced to take back its order, as the action sends a strong and unfortunate message across the media that the government remains a mute spectator to 'hire and fire policy' being adopted by managements.

The IJU expresses solidarity with the employees of PTI and its Union and would like to assure it of full support in their fight against the illegal and arbitrary retrenchment.

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(Y Narender Reddy)

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