Dear Comrades and Colleagues

These days, the political establishment is going through tumultuous times on account of a host of developments in the recent past. Difficulties in AIR and Doordarshan might appear too small in front of some other issues prevailing in the political horizon. But, that should certainly not be reason for us to be complacent and allow further deterioration of these departments.

The movement of NFADE has been able to convince the government about the dark future of employees in Prasar Bharati and compelled the Govt of India to bring in normalcy to some extent. Restoration of the facilities of Central Govt employees to the employees of AIR and DD has been a major achievement for us.

As all these facilities were in the form of temporary solutions, we have been continuing our efforts till today for a final settlement. Our experience with Prasar Bharati so far has made us realize that owing to a number of shortcomings in the implementation of the act, Prasar Bharati cannot protect the interest of its employees. Subsequently, we were forced to take the line that “Since we have joined as Central Govt employees it should be ensured that we should retire as Central Govt employees”. While hoping to see some positive inputs in the smooth functioning of AIR and DD, we used different slogans such as repeal PB Act 1990, follow the models of Supreme Court, Election Commission, UPSC, SSC etc or even Railway Model. When there were objections in comparing it with these models, we even hoped to see some life in a new model by retaining the employees & assets with Govt of India while granting autonomy in policy decisions to PB Board.
Meanwhile Govt has introduced the PB amendment Bill 2010 in the Rajya Sabha on 31st August 2010 proposing to retain the employees joined upto 05/10/2007 on deemed deputation with all facilities at par with Central Govt employees while handing over the rest to PB. This has been done on the recommendations of GoM. This will not only create different sets of employees in AIR and DD, but might result in conflicting circumstances in coming years. A number of other sub sections of the bill are also not in the interest of the employees. Now, the Govt has forwarded some newer recommendation to the GoM, which includes making it easier to remove the CEO, and full time members of PB; Removal both the DGs (ex officio) and the two employee’s representatives from the PB Board: reducing the tenure of full time members to 3 years instead of 6 years etc.

We are certainly not bothered about the removal of employees’ representatives from the board, but what bothers us is the future of the recruitments taking place in coming years and how adversely it is going to impact us all. It is learnt that the GoM has decided in principle to strengthen the working of Prasar Bharati by providing financial support so as to brighten the possibility of passing the PB Amendment Bill during the Monsoon session of Parliament. Though it may look like a good proposal in some aspects, its disadvantages include:

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1. The government can in future take a general decision to restrict the facilities of Central Government Employees to only those working in government departments. In that case all those working in Prasar Bharati will become non-eligible for these facilities. Example: Section-22 of Prasar Bharati Act provides exemption to PB from taxes (at par with other government departments). But during the budget speech in 2004 this exemption was restricted only to government departments. Thereafter, Prasar Bharati has become liable to pay taxes to the government (e.g. sales tax, income tax, property tax etc).

2. When the department starts recruiting employees other than ‘govt employees’, then all of us are bound to be treated as a burden, and efforts will surely be made to phase us out as soon as possible.

3. There is a possibility that, in due course, it might be difficult for Prasar Bharati to arrange enough funds for the salary of the employees. In that case, Prasar Bharati may start relying only on contractual employees as recommended by a Task force some time back.
4. With the availability of enough ‘non-govt employees’, the day is not far when we start loosing our bargaining power.

We must not forget that whatever we achieved till today is only due to the unity of the members, irrespective of their cadre and discipline, of constituent Associations of NFADE. Midway we must realize that we have miles to go to reach the destination i.e. repealing the Prasar Bharati Act. It is also a fact that at the time of constituting the Federation, it was accepted very clearly that the NFADE will fight for the issues which are common to all employees (particularly for all members of the constituent Associations) but the individual Associations or joint movements of similarly placed Associations will fight for the issues concerned with their members. Accordingly individual Associations and combined bodies used to make their movements, without affecting the united movement of NFADE.

After a series of agitational steps like; Gate meetings, Dharna, Parliament March, Rabjghavan March, Boycott of duties etc. we have proved the point that united Federation has immense strength. It is now time for us to utilize our total energy for a mass campaign to convince the policy makers of the country about the need of the hour i.e. 'retaining the National Public Service Broadcaster, the AIR&DD, with Govt of India'.

The fallout of Commonwealth scam and the failure of the management & Prasar Bharati Board from time to time for the last 14 years on one hand and the boost in the private media in this time period proved that the concept of PB is irrelevant today.

When we approach the leaders of political parties in opposition, we can also point out the latest developments in which the PB Board was compelled by the Govt to change its decision and Minutes on the appointments of DGs of AIR & DD. The PB Board, which is making all out efforts to transfer the employees to its fold and claiming to have autonomy has even changed its minutes and decisions under the pressure of the Ministry and proved beyond doubt that they don’t even have the freedom to forward its decision, which is envisaged in the Prasar Bharati Act 1990. It is also learnt that Ministry has taken a very dangerous decision of Public Private Participation in Doordarshan DTH Services, future Cricket coverage of All India Radio, outsourcing the procurement & projects to BECIL, by keeping the Prasar Bharati Board as a mute spectator. It is also learnt that there is a serious planning to entrust the OB Coverages of Doordarshan with one outside agency. All

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these activities show that the Prasar Bharati Act is applicable only against the interest of the organisation and its employees.

The seriousness of the threat will be clear if u can read in between the lines of these proposals and the decision of the GoM to extend funds from Govt of India to meet the expenditure on salary head for next five years (only). The basic question should arise in everybody’s mind that what will happened after 5 years of support from the Govt.? It is known to everybody that the Govt became serious on the existence of AIR & DD only after the united movements of the Federation after 2004, even though the funding system of PB changed from 1st April 2004. Now the concept may be:- once almost all basic services of AIR & DD are outsourced, they can concentrate on the outsourcing of Operation & maintenance also. The day will come, when the existing regular staff, they themselves will be compelled to leave the organization when the Management gets enough opportunity to show that the existing staff are redundant. On other words, the Govt/PB will push us to the same direction, where the employees has to be handed over to the surplus cell if they do not opt for the corporation which is not in a position to pay the salaries in time despite the financial support from the govt. It is very clear that the days are numbered for us if we are not utilizing the time with our full enthusiasm. It is upto the Govt to bring the Bill for amendments in the Act; but it is for the Hon’ble Parliament to decide to make amendments in the Act or ultimately to repeal (withdraw) the Act. It will depend upon the interest of our members to bring the real picture of Prasar Bharati before the Hon’ble Parliament of India.

"In early 2003 Govt.was served a direction to implement Section-11 of PB Act. Within 8 weeks and file a compliance,by H'ble Supreme Court. Implementation would have meant total Employees of AIR and DD across the board would have either opted for P.B., in total darkness regarding vital Service conditions including grant of Pension. It was the Unity of the employees under NFADE leadership forced Govt. to approach H'ble COURT and finally employees were spared from opting for PB without any Service conditions etc including grant of Pension ,or would have forced out to Surplus cell .....one can imagine what this really means....DOOM

Similarly through illogical rampant outsourcing to BECIL and CHANNEL-2 {for Radio Commentary} there is a desperate move to render employees redundant without work. Effectively conspireing to force us to SURPLUS CELL......and again DOOM.

We cannot allow ourselves to perish; we have to work hard to ensure that not only we survive but to take AIR&DD back to its golden days.

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Wake up! It is high time for us to ensure the existence of AIR & DD and seek repeal of the Prasar Bharati Act. We appeal each and every member of constituent Associations to immediately start campaigns for ‘Repeal Prasar Bharati Act 1990’, by approaching all influential
personalities like MPs, political leaders, intellectuals, arts, sports and media personalities etc. around you. We are attaching a sample format to be submitted to such people for further taking up with the policy makers of the country.

Keep unity at any cost! Employees Unity Zindabad! NFADE Zindabad

Sincerely yours

(Kulbhushan Bhatia) (Anilkumar S)

Secretary General Chairman