

S'pore unions offer support to any recently laid-off TikTok staff

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Unions here are offering support to any employees laid off earlier this week by social media platform TikTok.

TikTok Singapore, a non-unionised company, has not announced local job cuts, amid media reports of global cuts of hundreds of TikTok staff.

Some of its employees are members of Tech Talent Assembly (TTAB), an association affiliated

with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). TTAB is contacting its members, it told The Straits Times in a joint statement with the Creative Media and Publishing Union.

Non-unionised employees can seek help from the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM) at TADM@NTUC, or access NTUC's online workplace advisory portal if they wish to seek recourse.

San Francisco-based tech publication The Information reported on May 21 that TikTok planned to lay off a large percentage of the

roughly 1,000 people from its global user, content and marketing teams worldwide. TikTok declined to comment when asked by ST to confirm the report.

A source says the job cuts were not triggered by any changes in the legislative and regulatory environment. There is speculation that the platform is bracing itself for slower growth, after United States President Joe Biden approved a contentious ban on its existing operations in the US on April 24.

The number of employees at TikTok Singapore – the firm's other headquarters besides Los Angeles

– has not been disclosed.

Over 300 job openings and internship positions are listed for Singapore on the career website of ByteDance, its parent company.

CNN said employees were notified they were being laid off on the evening of May 22. It added that TikTok had 7,000 employees in the US.

It also reported that TikTok's global user operations team will be dismantled as part of the move, and the remaining employees will be reassigned to the company's trust and safety, marketing, content or product divisions.

The layoffs had been in the works for some time, perhaps almost a year, but recent turnover in TikTok's marketing, trust and safety and operations teams prompted delays, CNN added, quoting unnamed employees.

TikTok was reported in January to have cut about 60 jobs, mostly in its sales and advertising division.

Dr Tracy Loh, a senior lecturer in communication management at Singapore Management University, said TikTok's move is not unexpected against the backdrop of tech layoffs in recent months.

In fact, the firm has slashed

headcount later than other big tech companies, she noted.

Douyin, its sister firm in China, has been more aggressive. "So if you're looking at it as a corporate strategy from headquarters, this is not unusual," said Dr Loh.

"What might be slightly more interesting for TikTok is they have said that they are letting people go in the marketing, the content marketing as well as in the user support teams," she added. "That is a little bit more unusual. They're not letting go of the tech people."

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