



Fiji Teachers Union

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

Newsletter

MARCH 2021

Published by the
Fiji Teachers Union

Vol. 91 No. 3

1-3 Berry Road, P.O. Box 2203 Govt Building, Suva. **Phone:** 3314 099 / 3314 668 **Fax:** 3305 962 **Email:** ftu@connect.com.fj

GREETINGS

"The people united will never be defeated."
(Cesar Chavez)

Bula Vinaka! Warm greetings to all members of FTU and a special and warm welcome to the members who have joined FTU this year.

FTU wishes you a productive and prosperous 2021 academic year. On the same note, Brothers and Sisters in Union we thank you for your unreserved support and assistance in 2020, which was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2021 did not have the perfect start as Fijians felt the full brunt of STC Yasa and TC Ana. FTU partnered with Sangam to distribute stationery to students affected by STC Yasa and TC Ana. Members whose homes were affected were also assisted by FTU CTCL.

FTU continued to have dialogue with the Ministry to address issues facing teachers.

This year, FTU needs unwavering support from its members as member support determines the success of Union activities.

Hence, we look forward to your participation in all branch activities. The Union is also looking forward to the 91st Annual Conference and AGM that Rakiraki Branch will be hosting.

This is the month where Branches are having their Branch AGMs, and we wish all our Branch Executives the best!

The Union is relieved by the assurance given by the Minister for Economy that there will be no pay cut for civil servants.

The Union congratulates and compliments those school heads who have been

promoted.

SCHOOL TERMS 2021

- Term 1- 18/01/2021- 23/04/2021
- Term 2- 10/05/2021- 13/08/2021
- Term 3- 30/08/2021- 26/11/2021

91st ANNUAL CONFERENCE

This year's Annual Conference will be hosted by Rakiraki Branch. Rakiraki last hosted the Annual Conference in 2001, and Rakiraki is beaming with excitement to host the next. We hope that our members will enjoy the hospitality of Rakiraki. The Union urges members to be part of the huge contingent that will travel to Rakiraki to be part of the 91st Annual Conference. The Executives of Rakiraki Branch will leave no stone unturned to make your stay there enjoyable.

The details of the conference are as follows:

- ❖ Host: Rakiraki Branch
- ❖ Dates: 27th April to 30th April 2021
- ❖ Venue: Penang Sangam
- ❖ Theme: "COVID -19 A Challenge to Education Resilience".
- ❖ Chief Guest: Govind Singh- Secretary General Council of Pacific Education



The Chief Guest for this year's Annual Conference is Bro. Govind Singh, the Secretary General of Council of Pacific Education (COPE) since 2005 and Senior Coordinator for Education International (EI) in the Pacific (since 2010). Bro. Govind Singh, who hails from Dravo, Bau in Tailevu, received his primary education at Krishna Verdic, secondary education at Saraswati College and Marist Brothers High School and did his graduate and post graduate studies education at USP.

Prior to this appointment as Secretary General (COPE), Bro. Govind Singh was the Personal Officer of the Fiji Teachers Union, and he served in several positions of FTU and FTU-CTCL for 30 years.

Having taught in several schools in the Central Division, he served as Principal of Baulevu High School, Bhawani Dayal Arya College and Rishikul Sanatan College. Bro. Govind Singh is the founding President of the School Management Association of Fiji, a position he currently holds. His commitment to social justice, trade union rights and unionism is the heart of his work across the Pacific Islands Teacher Unions. He has developed and implemented campaigns for all Pacific Island countries affiliated to Education International. The campaigns include and are not limited to social justice, human rights, gender, violence and bullying, code of ethics for teachers, sustainable development goals, education funding and status of teachers. Bro. Govind Singh has vigorously opposed contractualisation of the teaching profession.

He has further served on numerous committees and boards including Council Member of University of Fiji, Education Consultative Committee of USP, Technical and Vocational Education Association, Training and Productive Authority of Fiji-Quality in Schools program.

Bro. Govind Singh has travelled to all Pacific Island countries running workshops for teachers and teacher union leaders. He had attended a number of seminars and conferences globally. He continues to serve several religious and educational institutes.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Tuesday 27/04/2021

10.00am	Pre Conference Meeting
2.00pm	Sports Committee Meeting

Wednesday 28/04/2021

8.30-9.00am	Registration of Delegates
9.15am	Guests and Delegates get seated
9.30am	Official Opening of the 91st AGM and Annual Conference
	Welcome Address by Chairperson – FTU Rakiraki Branch
	Presidential Address
	Keynote address and Official Opening
	Vote of thanks
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am	Annual General Meeting
	Resolutions (Part of AGM Agenda)
2.00pm	Lunch
3.30pm	Sports Official Opening
7.00pm	Cultural Night

Thursday 29/04/2021

9.00am	FTU-CTCL AGM
11.30am	Morning Tea
12.00pm	Women's Wing AGM
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Sports
7.00pm	CTCL Dinner Night/ Social

Friday 30/04/2020

8.30am	FTU Sports
10.00am	Post Conference Meeting
5.00pm	Presentation of Prizes

BRANCH DELEGATES

Branch delegates should be appointed as per the FTU Constitution Section 32 Clauses 1-9. It is advisable that all members in the Branch are informed of the above well before the Branch AGM, and delegates be appointed in the Branch AGM for the Annual Conference.

CULTURAL NIGHT

Members who wish to perform during the Cultural Night on Tuesday 27th April 2021 are to give their names to their Branch Secretaries. There is a need for more commitment from our members to revive the Cultural Night and make it more



melodious.

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Branches are requested to bring large delegations to the 91st AGM in order to make a strong statement to the authorities on the numerous matters of grave concern pertaining to the status of teachers and workers at large in the country. Unity is solidarity, and in solidarity we shall pursue!

SPORTS

As usual sports will be a major feature of the conference. Branches are expected to prepare the teams to participate in soccer, netball and men's and women's volleyball. FTU HQ also anticipates an increase in membership during this period.

BILLETING

Branches are requested to contact Bro. Hazrat Ali - Chairperson Rakiraki Branch on 9767673/9658402 for the arrangement of billeting during the Annual Conference.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Members are invited to write an A5 2-page article for this year's Journal on the Annual Conference theme. The National Executive members are reminded to submit an article for the Journal as well. *Members are reminded not to submit University assignments. Please include a reference with your article.*

The due date for the article is 5th April 2021. Articles can be e-mailed to: ftu@connect.com.fj. The Publicity Committee has the right to select and edit the articles.

FTU AGM RESOLUTIONS

All resolutions for AGM's consideration should come through your respective branches. The resolutions should be tabled in the Branch AGM and endorsed by the house, with a mover and seconder. All resolutions must reach the Secretariat by close of business on **16/04/2021**.

BRANCH AGMs

All Branch Annual General Meetings must be conducted and completed within the month of March, as per the Union's Constitution.

Branch elections will be conducted by the respective Branch Secretaries in compliance with the Union's Constitution.

Members, who were fully subscribed until 26/02/2021, were eligible to participate in their respective Branch Annual General Meetings.

Your name must appear in the Branch list for eligibility to vote. However, if your name is not on the list, then the Master Roll will be referred to.

Cash Paying Members- subscription must be fully paid for 2021 to be eligible to participate in the Branch AGMs.

New Members- Civil Servant teachers who have signed the Authority Forms for their membership deductions at source and their membership has been approved, will be able to participate and vote at the Branch Elections.

Please check your membership status, with the Secretariat or the Branch Secretaries.

Note: The notice of branch AGM's are being advertised in *The Fiji Times*. All nomination forms must be forwarded to the Branch Secretary.

The dates and venues of the Branch AGMs are as follows:

BRANCH	DATE	VENUE	TIME
Savusavu	06/03/2021	Khemendra Central Primary	10.00am
Nasinu	17/03/2021	Rishikul Sanatan College	4.30pm
Navua	17/03/2021	Vashist Muni Primary	4.00pm
Lautoka	04/03/2021	Lautoka Special School	4.30pm
Tavua	18/03/2021	Tavua Primary School	4.00pm
Bua	06/03/2021	Korokadi Primary School	10.00am
Suva	17/03/2021	FTU HQ	4.30pm
Nadi	25/03/2021	Sangam SKM College	4.00pm
Tailevu	24/03/2021	Korovou Primary School	4.00pm
Nadroga	25/03/2021	Tuva Primary School	4.00pm
Labasa	06/03/2021	Kshatriya Hall	10.00am
Levuka	20/03/2021	Levuka Public Primary	10.30am
Ba	03/03/2021	Xavier College	4.30pm
Rakiraki	18/03/2021	Penang Sangam High	4.00pm



Taveuni	13/03/2021	Taveuni Central Sanatan Primary	10.30am
Rewa	17/03/2020	Vunimono High School	4.00pm

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

This year's International Women's Day was celebrated on Monday 8th March with the theme 'Choose to Challenge' - A challenged world is an alert world, and from challenge comes change. So let's all choose to challenge. Branches are urged to celebrate this important day with women members, and appreciate their contributions to the economy and society in general. The Southern Branches met at FTU HQ to celebrate.



YEAR PLANNER

The FTU Year Planner has been sent to the Branches to be distributed to all the FTU members. School reps must ensure that the FTU members are given a copy of the FTU Year Planner.

CHANGE OF BRANCH

Members who have changed Districts or Branches are to notify the Secretariat immediately so that the membership records could be updated.

Please note that if you change schools or are posted out of the current district and which means a change in the Branch, please have your records updated.

Members who want to participate in the Conference Sports must ensure that their names appear in the appropriate Branch Register.

Note that your choice of a Branch can be either through residential qualification or the school in which you teach.

The final date for membership for participation in the AGM & Conference is 19/04/2021.

ASSISTANCE TO AFFECTED STUDENTS

FTU partnered with TISI Sangam to distribute school kits to the students affected by STC Yasa and TC Ana. During the meeting with MEHA, FTU and TISI Sangam were allocated schools to assist. National President and the General Secretary of FTU and members of TISI Sangam were in the North to distribute the school kits. We wholeheartedly thank TISI Sangam for their support and generosity. The Union also thanks the various NGOs for the help and support rendered to schools which were affected by STC Yasa and TC Ana.



SCHOOL REP & SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP LIST

School Reps are requested to forward the school membership list to FTU HQ at the earliest as this will enable HQ to have accurate information on the number of members in every school so that the right number of Union literature could be sent.

The School Rep should be elected by the members at school. The School Rep is FTU's mouth-piece to the members at grass-root level. School Reps are requested to deliver the required Union Literature to the members in their schools.

The Union Administration System has been upgraded and members are urged to update their personal information, email address, telephone number, marital status (including dependents) and school address at their earliest- even during the school holidays.

INCREASE IN INSURANCE PREMIUM

Members must note that the premium for the FTU Self-Funding In-house Medical Insurance Scheme was to increase effective from 1st January 2021 as per the decision of the AGM held at Rishikul College.

The reason for the increase in the FTU Self-Funding In-house Medical Insurance Scheme is that the medical cost has risen worldwide and that the premium had not



been increased since the inception of the Medical Insurance Scheme at the AGM in 2011 hosted by FTU Rewa Branch.

Medical expenses have increased from \$400,000.00 in 2011 to \$1,700,000.00 in 2019.

Hence, the change in premium is as follows:

(i) Family cover will increase from \$17.31 to \$23.00 per fortnight.

(ii) Single cover will increase from \$13.46 to \$17.00 per fortnight.

MEHA has been advised to effect the changes in deductions. Members are also requested to pay their arrears from pay one.

Increase in the benefits since 2011.

PERIOD	
2011/2012	Initial Coverage. Local Limit \$10,000 Overseas \$250,000. Age Limit 65 years. Premium applicable Single - \$13.46 / fortnight Family - \$17.31 / fortnight
2012/2013	Coverage extended to cover those patients on waiting lists @ Public hospital to be treated at Private Medical Facility up to a limit of \$3,500 or 50% of the total cost per treatment whichever was lesser. Advanced coverage also included for gall stones and kidney stone removal at private medical facility. No increase in premium.
2013/2014	Local limit increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Private ward limit of \$500 was removed. \$100 per person was included to be paid for overseas evacuation, where the patient and accompanying person are in transit for more than 3 hours. No increase in premium.
2014/2015	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$4,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. No increase in premium.

2015/2016	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$5,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Age limit increased from 65 - 68 years. No increase in premium.
2016/2017	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$6,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Local hospitalisation limit increased from \$15,000 to \$20,000. No increase in premium.
2017/2018	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$7,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Age limit increased from 68 - 70 years. No increase in premium.
2018/2019	Wait listed cover limit increased to \$8,500 + 50% of the balance incurred cost. Local hospitalisation increased from \$20,000 to \$25,000. \$100 accommodation allowance to be paid in cases where member decides to stay with their family during the treatment overseas including local hospitalisation. Coverage extended to include dependent child's age limit more than 25 years provided he/she is fully dependent on his/her parents. No increase in premium

FNU STAFF GRIEVANCES

The Education Ministry in May 2019 passed on the responsibility of running the 15 technical colleges to Fiji National University. FNU had notified the staff in November 2020 that 10 colleges would close from 1st January 2021 because the Government was not in a position to meet FNU's request of \$6.9m to fund the cost. The Director-HR FNU met with FTU and FTA and stated the same. Some 59 FTU members are affected. Hence, the Unions have jointly submitted a dispute in the Employment Court.

BRANCH VISITS/ CLUSTER MEETINGS

The General Secretary will continue to visit schools and districts, and will address cluster meetings to enlighten members on current issues, as well as, maintain connectivity. School Reps and Branch Executives need to work hand-in-hand to ensure that these cluster meetings are a success in terms of attendance of members.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

The National Executive Meeting took place on Saturday 13th February 2021 at the FTU HQ. Industrial Relations issues, Union Services, Branch Reports and the Financial Report were discussed at length. Branch Reps are requested to disseminate discussions via their Branch Newsletter. The elected members of the National Executive met on Friday 12th February 2021.

POST PROCESSING

The Head of HR advised that as per the revised Matrix, relevant experience in leadership positions would be given the weighting it deserved. While Primary Head Positions were confirmed with effect from 18th January 2021, positions in secondary schools will be advertised this year. The Union congratulates the new promotes. The Union thanks MEHA for implementing the agreed criteria for promotion.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

FTU continues to remind members to refrain from using Facebook during official hours and to avoid posting comments on issues related to the Ministry or to the Government as you could face disciplinary consequences. While we are concerned that this limits an individual's freedom of expression, the rule in place has to be abided by.

MABS & MEDICAL INSURANCE REMINDERS

Members must take note of the following for MABS:

1. For Medical Insurance, the FTU office must be notified if there is a change in status (marriage) and children's name added if there is any addition in the family.
2. Referral letter must be obtained from FTU doctor for any tests or specialist treatment through MABS.
3. MABS claim must be made within a month.
4. Medical reports must be provided by all news applicants who have been in the teaching service for more than 12 months.
5. If the spouse is a teacher, then both have to be members to get Insurance and MABS benefits. If not, only the member and children will receive the benefits.
6. Under FTU Medical Insurance Cover, all post-surgery reviews are to be done at the nearest Public Hospital. Any cost incurred at the Public Hospital

will be reimbursed.

7. Members must check with MEHA to see that their Union and Medical deductions continue when contracts are renewed.

8. Death benefit for non-member spouse and child has now been increased from \$500.00 to \$1000.00. However, still born child or death at birth would remain \$300.00.

MEMBERSHIP- ECE TEACHERS

Some ECE teachers have joined the Union and others are welcome to join as well, as per the Rules and Constitution of FTU. The NE had approved a further waiver for the ECE teachers to join, however, the requirement of providing a medical report will apply. The amnesty period is until 30th April 2021.

NON-MEMBER SPOUSES

Non-member spouses who are teachers may join the Union to benefit from the medical scheme. The requirement of providing a medical report will apply. This amnesty period will be in effect until 30th April 2021. Affected teachers are urged to take advantage of this opportunity.

FTU NATIONAL ELECTIONS

The National Elections for FTU will take place on Saturday 17th April 2021. The table below summarises the positions that will be contested as per the Union's Constitution:

POSITION	NUMBER
PRESIDENT	1
VICE PRESIDENTS	3 (ONE RESERVED FOR WOMAN CANDIDATE)
GENERAL SECRETARY	1
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	1
GENERAL TREASURER	1
PERSONNEL OFFICER	1
PUBLICITY OFFICER	1
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER	3

Please note the following:

- Call for Nomination- 17th March 2021
- Closing date for Nomination- 31st March 2021
- Withdrawal and Objection List- 2nd April 2021
- Blackout period – 48 hours prior to the election.



Date	Branch	Venue	Polling Time :
17/04/21	Suva	FTU Head Quarters	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Nasinu	Rishikul Sanatan College	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Rewa	Vunimono High School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Tailevu	Korovou Primary School	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Rakiraki	Penang Sangam Primary School	9am - 4pm
17/04/21	Rakiraki	Vunikavikaloa Arya Primary School	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Tavua	Tavua Primary school	9am - 1pm
17/04/21	Ba	Ba Sangam Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Lautoka	Lautoka Special School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Nadi	Nadi Sangam College	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Nadroga	Sigatoka Methodist Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Nadroga	Loma Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Nadroga	Tuva Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Navua	Vashist Muni Primary School	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Labasa	St Mary's Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Labasa	Dreketi Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Labasa	Daku Bhartiya Primary School	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Labasa	Seaqaqa Central College	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Savusavu	Khemendra Central Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Taveuni	Taveuni Central Primary	9am - 12pm
17/04/21	Bua	Namau Primary School	9am - 2pm
17/04/21	Levuka	Levuka Primary School	10am - 3pm

Members are urged to exercise their right to vote.

MEETING WITH PS- MEHA

FTU GS had a fruitful meeting on Tuesday 22nd December 2020 with PS - MEHA Dr. Anjeela Jokhan. The following issues were

discussed in the meeting:

- JEE Reveiw
- Anomalies in Graduate Salary
- My APA
- Acting Policy
- Location Allowance
- ET Positions
- Staff Disciplinary Guidelines
- Curriculum Development
- Teacher Training Institutes

The next meeting is expected to be held soon.

EXECUTIVE TEACHER POSITION

Members will recall that the Executive Teacher positions were reduced by 50% in 2010 and then totally removed despite earlier assurances of full restoration. The Union continues to pursue this matter.

DIPLOMA IN TERTIARY TEACHING

Teachers having Diploma in Tertiary Teaching qualification were directed to complete PGCE from USP within two years or face relegation to 'unqualified classification'. Their contracts were also limited to two years. Upon Union intervention, MEHA reversed the decision and the affected teachers have been given five year contracts.

MyAPA PAYMENT

The Union had made a submission towards the 2020-2021 Budget requesting that provision be made for teachers to be paid MyAPA, for counselor positions and for anomalies in graduate pay to be corrected but to no avail. Less than 2% of the 13,500 teachers qualified for the MyAPA increment. The Fiji Teachers Confederation issued a press statement and a paid advertisement. The Unions have submitted to MEHA that the vast majority of high performing teachers were cheated of their merit increment. FTU has further submitted that an across the board payment be made for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 period. A similar submission is being prepared for the 2021-2022 budget.

GRADUATE SALARY

Hon. Minister for Education is on record for assuring teachers that serving teachers would have their salaries upgraded to the correct Salary Band \$26,283.00. It was not revealed by the Ministry that the remuneration policy had been revised on the quiet on 12th February 2018 to state that graduate salary for all teachers would remain \$22,000.00. The Union continues to pursue this matter.



CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Teachers are reminded that **MEHA has zero tolerance on corporal punishment.** We advise our members not to use any form of corporal punishment. The Union has continued to resolve member's grievances with the Ministry. Where unfair termination or non-renewal of contracts had taken place, the disputes mechanism had been activated.

In cases of corporal punishment, members are requested to note the following:

1. Where a member has confessed in a written or verbal statement that he/she has inflicted corporal punishment, the Union will not be able to represent.
2. Where police has charged a member and the member successfully defends and gets acquitted and re-instated, the Union will reimburse the legal cost up to \$4000.00.
3. Where a member completely denies the allegation and the Ministry appointed panel investigates and declares him/her guilty resulting in termination, the Union will represent the aggrieved member.

DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINE

The Union is pursuing several individual members' grievances through the Employment Relations Tribunal and the Employment Court. Members must note that they are entitled to have their representative General Secretary present when they are interviewed by the investigating panel. The Union has submitted that all cases must be referred to the Public Service Disciplinary Tribunal (PSDT) for a fair hearing.

MEMBERS HEALTH

The Union advises all members to look after their health, the type of food consumed and members must ensure that they have some time in the day to do some physical activities. NCD's are on the rise and members must take precautionary measures to avoid getting NCDs. The Union is saddened to lose members along the journey. The Union is also saddened that some members are not taking good care of their health.

FTUC

The Fiji Trades Union Congress is the mouth-piece of Trade Unions in Fiji. The National Secretary Bro. Felix Anthony has been raising issues with ILO on the challenges faced by Fijian workers. FTUC has applied for a permit to have a march

on 1st May (Labour Day).

FTU WEBSITE/ FACEBOOK PAGE

We encourage members to take advantage of the FTU Website and FTU Facebook page to retrieve more information on the latest developments, press releases and information pertaining to industrial relations issues.

NON-TEACHING TIME FOR HEADS

The Union has submitted to the Ministry the need to address teacher shortage so that the School Heads can ensure quality delivery of education.

ACTING ALLOWANCE

It was brought to the Union's attention that a substantial number of members acting on HOD and other positions have not been paid acting allowances since last year. Both PS and the Head of HR have assured the Union that they will be paid soon. The Union will keep following up.

RECENT VICTORY

The Union is pleased with the outcome given by the Employment Court in favour of one of our FTU members who was dismissed for the use of corporal punishment. The Employment Court ruled that the dismissal of the plaintiff from his employment was unjustified, and that the employer (MEHA) must reinstate the plaintiff to his substantive position with immediate effect. The Employment Court also ruled that the plaintiff be reimbursed his wages from the date of dismissal, and that FTU be paid \$3500.00 for legal costs. This is a huge victory for FTU considering that the case was before the Employment Court for almost three years.

Another member was reinstated to his substantive position w.e.f 19/02/2021 after mediation.

The Union is engaged in regular dialogue with the Permanent secretary and HR section to resolve individual as well as collective grievances. The cordial relationship has enabled us to bring to the table crucial policy matters.

Please note, the Union does not abandon any case, regardless of how long it takes. Information is repeated in FTU Newsletters for continuous awareness.

