



Fiji Teachers Union

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

Newsletter

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GREETINGS

"There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals." (Idowu Koyenikan)

Warm greetings to all our members during the new normal at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic!

Just when the year had started on a high note and union activities had kickstarted, the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the activities.

The FTU National Elections concluded on Saturday 17th April, and preparations were in full swing for the 91st FTU Annual Conference and AGM in Rakiraki. Schools were also gearing up for the 2021 Coke Light Games. The H. T's Conference was also scheduled to be held in Nadi.

However, the closure of all schools w.e.f Tuesday 20th April due to the surge in Covid cases threw everything in disarray

The FTU office was closed, as it did not fall under the list of essential services released by the Trade Ministry. However, union services, especially medical services continued.

The Suva-Nausori lockdown also affected the office, as most staff, including GS, were stuck outside the containment zone.

The FTU office re-opened adhering to the protocols stated by the Health Ministry. Meetings are now conducted via zoom. The union continues to have dialogue with the Ministry to address issues facing teachers and its members.

The union was relieved by the assurance given by the Minister for Economy that there would be no pay cut for civil servants in the 2021/22

national budget.

Press releases were issued on issues of concern as and when required.

FTU acknowledges the hard yards taken by its members in taking zoom classes, distributing, collecting and marking worksheets. In numerous instances they travelled through difficult terrains to assist students in remote locations.

The union reminds members to take all precautionary measures.

91st ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM

The Annual Conference had to be postponed indefinitely. Members will be informed of the new date in due course.

BRANCH AGMs

Branch Annual General Meetings were conducted and completed within the month of March, as per the Union's Constitution. Branch elections were conducted by the respective Branch Secretaries in compliance with the Union's Constitution.

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 Rishikul AGM in October 2020. However, there was delay in getting the new subscriptions effected from source. There was further delay due to the pandemic.

This was communicated to the members via the FTU newsletters after the AGM and also the March newsletter.

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 Rewa AGM in 2011.

Medical expenses increased from \$400,000.00 in 2011 to 1.7 million in 2019.

Hence, the change in premium is as follows:

- (i) **Family cover increased from \$17.31 to \$23.00 per fortnight.**
- (ii) **Single cover increased from \$13.46 to \$17.00 per fortnight.**

MEHA had been advised to effect the changes in deductions from pay 1, but there was a delay. However, from pay 14, the new deductions have started progressively, and members will note the difference in their deductions towards FTU. Members are also requested to pay their arrears from pay one. Letters have been sent in this regard to members.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING

The National Executive Meeting took place on Saturday 10th February 2021 at the FTU HQ. Industrial Relations issues, Union Services, Branch Reports and the Financial Report were discussed at length.

OFFICE OPERATION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FTU office was closed from 26th April to 7th June. However, union services continued to be provided. The union office is now open, but there is no physical contact, as we have to adhere to the Ministry of Health standard operating procedures. Hence, members are urged to seek clarification on the following phone contacts- 9928096/ 9928098 and the email address ftu@connect.com.fj

ZOOM MEETINGS

Two Working Committee meetings and one National Executive Committee meeting have been conducted via zoom.

POST PROCESSING

The union is pleased that as per the revised Matrix, relevant experience in leadership positions is given the weighting it deserves. While primary school head positions were confirmed with effect from 18th January 2021, positions in secondary schools were advertised in July.

MABS & MEDICAL INSURANCE REMINDERS

Members must take note of the following as far as medical services is concerned:

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 new 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.**

PAYMENT OF ACTING ALLOWANCES

FTU thanks MEHA for facilitating the payment of acting allowances, which were back dated. Members would recall that this has been a matter that FTU continued to pursue. It took some time, but finally acting allowances have been paid.

FTU NATIONAL ELECTIONS

The National Elections for FTU took place on Saturday 17th April 2021. The table below summarizes the positions that were contested as per the Union's Constitution:

POSITION	NAME
PRESIDENT	MUNIAPPA GOUNDAR
VICE PRESIDENTS	NAKUL BARMAN AJESHNI LAL PRANESH SHARMA
GENERAL SECRETARY	AGNI DEO SINGH
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY	RAJNESH ISHWAR LINGAM
GENERAL TREASURER	SASHI MAHENDRA SHANDIL
PERSONNEL OFFICER	RAMESHWAR LAL
PUBLICITY OFFICER	BRIJ SINGH
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS	PRATOSH KUMAR PRANESH KUMAR MADHUR PRAKASH



Hearty congratulations to the elected NE members for 2021-23!



FRONT-LINERS HAILED

To thank the efforts put in by the front-liners, FTU provided lunch packs, fruits and water bottles to some 100-plus front-liners in the Central Division. We thank these front-liners for serving the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic.



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The union continues to pursue industrial relations issues like JEE anomalies, unfair dismissal, disciplinary cases, promotions and MyAPA payment. Most of the cases are on hold, considering the situation in the country.

PRESS RELEASES

The union issued the following press releases via *The Fiji Times*:

- FTU national elections results
- FTU national budget submission
- Health concerns of members distributing and collecting worksheets

BUDGET SUBMISSION

The union made its budget submission to the Ministry of Economy. One of the top priorities was the request to avoid pay cut for civil servants, as it would disrupt the economic affairs of the nation, and that teachers, like all other civil servants, had financial commitments, and families, who were affected by the pandemic, to look after. The union is grateful that there was no pay cut for civil servants. On another note, they have not been paid the merit increase as per JEE structure for the past 3 years.

GRADUATE SALARY

The former Hon. Minister for Education, Rosy Akbar, 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 will continue to pursue this blatant breach of the JEE 2017.

PREMILA KUMAR APPOINTED EDUCATION MINISTER

FTU congratulates Hon. Premila Kumar on her appointment as the new Education Minister. We hope that the new Minister will address the numerous pending grievances raised by the union.

MEMBERS HEALTH/ WELFARE

At the height of the pandemic, FTU advises all members to look after their health, and to abide by the social gathering restrictions as well as the curfew.

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 as well as medical services.

CTCL DIVIDEND CHEQUES

The CTCL dividend cheques have been posted to members' postal address.

CONCLUSION

"You guide your team when they lose the path, you pick them up when they fall, and you give them motivation when they have none." (Pooja Agnihotri). FTU acknowledges the work done by its members in teaching the students using online strategies. We urge members to take care of themselves and the health of their family members.

The commitment of the leadership to stand up and defend the collective and individual rights of the membership remains steadfast. A truly democratic society is the cornerstone of trade union and human rights. The furtherance of the right to freedom of association, expression and the right to collective bargaining cannot be compromised. Lest we forget, our predecessors fought relentlessly to achieve the status we enjoy today.

LONG LIVE FIJI TEACHERS' UNION





FIJI TEACHERS UNION



National Executives 2021 - 2023



MUNIAPPA GOUNDAR
National President



AGNI DEO SINGH
General Secretary



SASHI M. SHANDIL
General Treasurer



RAJNESH LINGAM
Asst. General Secretary



AJESHNI LAL
Vice President



PRANESH SHARMA
Vice President



NAKUL DEO BARMAN
Vice President



BRIJ BHAN SINGH
Publicity Officer



RAMESHWAR LAL
Personnel Officer



PRATOSH KUMAR
National Ex. Com. Mem.



PRANESH KUMAR
National Ex. Com. Mem.



MADHUR PRAKASH
National Ex. Com. Mem.

