Union wants stronger constitutional safeguards

SHRATIKA NAIDU
LABASA



Fiji Teachers Union general secretary Muniappa Goundar in Labasa on October 24, 2026.

The Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) is calling for constitutional reforms that strengthen democratic safeguards, protect children's rights and promote national unity.

In its submission to the Special Parliamentary Committee, the union said constitutional reform must strengthen democratic institutions, expand enforceable rights and avoid unnecessary restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

FTU opposes any constitutional provision that permits or legitimises corporal punishment of children.

It recommends removing any exception that allows corporal punishment and expressly guaranteeing every child protection from all forms of physical punishment, violence and degrading treatment, including in educational settings.

FTU opposes blanket restrictions that prevent trade union officials and employees from exercising their political and civic rights.

Union general secretary Muniappa Goundar said children had an inherent right to dignity, safety and protection from physical and psychological violence.

"Schools must remain safe environments where discipline is achieved through positive, respectful and child-centered approaches," Mr Goundar said.

The union also recommends retaining a common Fijian national identity for all citizens while recognising and protecting the legitimate identities and rights of indigenous and other communities.

"Unity must not require cultural assimilation, and cultural recognition must not undermine equal citizenship," he said.

FTU opposes blanket restrictions that prevent trade union officials and employees from exercising their political and civic rights.

"No future unconstitutional seizure of power should receive immunity. Teachers understand that the foundations of a just society are laid in the classroom.

"Children must learn to respect the law, value human dignity and resolve differences peacefully. Those lessons are credible only when our national institutions demonstrate the same principles," the union said.

"A Constitution must never serve the interests of those who hold power at the expense of those whom power is meant to serve," Mr Goundar said.

shratikan@fijisun.com.fj