



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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MINE WORKERS' PLIGHT

THE Fiji Trades Union Congress calls on the government to prioritise the inclusion of mine workers in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. This after another death of a mine worker in Vatukoula was reported on Wednesday.

The FTUC has continually, over the years, raised concerns and questions with the government on why Health and Safety Laws in the country do not cover the protection of mine workers. There is absolutely no justification for the exclusion of workers involved in the most hazardous work from the OHS Act when it came into effect in 1996. Over the years there have been a number of deaths and serious injuries, many of which go unreported.

We are calling on the government to immediately include mine workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. A thorough review of the special needs of mine workers in relation to safety and health should also be also carried out without delay. We now have other workplaces where mining has begun or will soon begin. It is incumbent on Government to ensure that there is sufficient legislation that would also ensure a safe mining industry, free of accidents and deaths at workplaces

Mining has been a tremendous contributor to Fiji's Gross Domestic Product and it is unfair that mine workers have long been excluded from the protection they surely deserve.

The occupation itself has seen fatal accidents occurring over the years and the workers need legal protection that would not leave them at the mercy of the hazards of the work.

The FTUC believes that a full OHS audit must be carried out in Vatukoula and a report should be made to the OHS Board who should take the initiative to ensure preventative measures are taken that would reduce the risk of accidents and ensure a safe working environment.

The FTUC offers its condolences to the family of the mine worker who lost his life after sustaining injuries in a work-related accident.

Our thoughts are with the family in this trying time and we as a union body will continue to fight for the protection and the rights of our workers who work under such hazardous conditions.

Felix Anthony
National Secretary

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