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PNCR rebuts Minister Singh's criticism of social programmes; says essential to improving living standard

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By Mark DaCosta- The People's National Congress Reform (PNCR) has issued a robust rebuttal to Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh's criticism of its proposed social programmes, asserting that its policies are designed to ensure every Guyanese household achieves a livable income. The party has dismissed Singh's claims that its measures are financially unsustainable, arguing that its people-centred approach is both feasible and necessary for national development.

In his closing remarks during the 2025 Budget Debate, Dr. Singh labelled the PNCr's social protection measures as a "whimsical and fanciful dream," estimating that they would cost the nation approximately \$800 billion annually. The PNCr, however, has countered that its proposals are not only achievable but essential for reducing poverty, improving living standards, and fostering economic growth. The party has outlined a detailed plan to fund these initiatives, emphasising its commitment to good governance and prudent financial management.

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At the heart of the PNCr's strategy is a pledge to spend about \$600 billion annually on social programs aimed at uplifting citizens. Key measures include a \$400,000 monthly tax-free threshold, which is expected to benefit over 200,000 workers in both the public and private sectors, as well as self-employed individuals. The party argues that this measure will stimulate consumer spending, encourage savings, and improve tax compliance.

Another significant proposal is a \$100,000 cash grant for 600,000 adults, which could cost \$60 billion annually if distributed once, or \$120 billion if provided twice a year. The PNCr plans to fund this initiative through what it calls a "Good Governance Dividend," which will be generated by reducing corruption, tightening public financial management, and conducting rigorous audits of oil company expenditures. The party also aims to address flaws in the 2016 Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) to prevent financial leakages and ensure prudent investment of the Natural Resource Fund (NRF).

The PNCr has also proposed a graduated salary increase, ranging from 35 percent for lower-income workers to single-digit increases for higher earners, at an estimated cost of \$283.5 billion. This measure is intended to eliminate the working poor and ensure all Guyanese can afford a decent standard of living. Additionally, the party plans to provide \$8.4 billion in stipends for 14,000 tertiary-level students and \$1 billion to reimburse student loans at the University of Guyana.

To address the rising cost of living, the PNCr has committed to spending roughly \$40 billion on electricity and water subsidies, as well as reducing the price of cooking gas. The party has also pledged to increase old-age pensions to \$100,000 monthly, benefiting approximately 70,000 citizens aged 65 and older. The PNCr argues that this investment will not only improve the quality of life for the elderly but also reduce healthcare costs associated with poverty-related illnesses.

The party's proposals also include raising the minimum wage to \$200,000 monthly, which is expected to cost \$43.2 billion. While this measure remains under active consideration due to its potential impact on the private sector, the PNCr has emphasised its commitment to ensuring fair wages for all workers. Additionally, the party plans to reform the current job seekers' program, providing \$50,000 monthly to 23,000 participants while offering structured training to help them transition into full-time employment.

The PNCR has also proposed a monthly childcare allowance at a cost of \$25 billion for children up to 16 years old, which it says will provide significant financial relief to families. Combined with other measures, the party estimates that its policies will deliver over \$100,000 in additional monthly income to each household.

In defending its proposals, the PNCR has criticised the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) for what it describes as a "friends, families, and favourites" approach to development. The party argues that its policies represent a direct investment in the people of Guyana, contrasting sharply with the PPP's trickle-down economics. The PNCR has also dismissed Dr. Singh's concerns about inflation and economic overheating, stating that its predictive economic modelling will guide its spending decisions.

"We are hellbent on eliminating poverty and providing a livable income by year two in government," the PNCR stated, adding that its measures will create a demand-driven economy characterised by increased employment, higher tax revenues, and greater consumption. The party believes that its policies will more than pay for themselves.

As Guyana continues to benefit from rising oil revenues, the PNCR has vowed to prioritise the well-being of citizens, ensuring that the nation's wealth is used to improve the quality of life for all Guyanese.

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