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Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh

SENIOR Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, has rejected claims made by opposition parliamentarians during the 2026 Budget debate that Guyana's current poverty rate stands at 58 per cent, stating that the data being relied upon reflects the period when the APNU+AFC was in government.

Singh made the clarification on Friday while responding to presentations in the National Assembly, noting that the poverty statistics cited by the opposition were drawn from an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) working paper that analysed survey data from 2016 to 2018, as well as 2021, the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Finance Minister, the report clearly identifies the timeframe of the data used, but opposition speakers repeatedly failed to disclose this context while presenting the figures as reflective of present-day conditions.

"On page 41 of the report, under the appendix titled Surveys Analysed by Country, it states clearly that the data for Guyana comes from the Labour Force Survey for the years 2016 to 2018 and 2021," Singh told the House.

He pointed out that the 2016–2018 period fell squarely under the APNU+AFC administration, while 2021 coincided with the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, when the incumbent People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) administration returned to power in

2020.

"That poverty statistic they were citing is an APNU legacy. It states it clearly in the document," Singh said.

The IDB publication, titled Ten Findings about Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean (Working Paper IDB-WP-01644), was released in November 2024. Singh said opposition members selectively referenced figures from the report while omitting the context of when the data was collected.

"Not one of them chose to turn to page 41 and disclose that the data related to the period 2016 to 2018," he said.

Singh further explained that the report measures poverty using World Bank international poverty lines, including a moderate poverty threshold of US\$6.85 per day, which he argued does not align with prevailing wage realities in Guyana.

Using an exchange rate of G\$200 to US\$1, Singh said the threshold equates to approximately G\$1,400 per day, adding that such a figure does not reflect current labour-market conditions.

"I challenge the Honourable Member to find anyone in Guyana working for \$1,400 per day, including unskilled labourers," Singh said.

He noted that national labour market surveys show rising incomes, increased employment and a reduction in unemployment, outcomes which he attributed to the current administration's economic policies.

Singh said the continued citation of outdated data without context formed part of a broader pattern of what he described as selective interpretation of statistics by the opposition.

"The Guyanese people are wiser today," he added, noting that voters had already rendered judgment at the polls in 2025.

The Finance Minister reaffirmed that the PPP/C government remains committed to improving living standards and addressing poverty through expanded employment, education, health care and social-support programmes outlined in Budget 2026.

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