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Granger defends move to unilaterally accept new parties into APNU

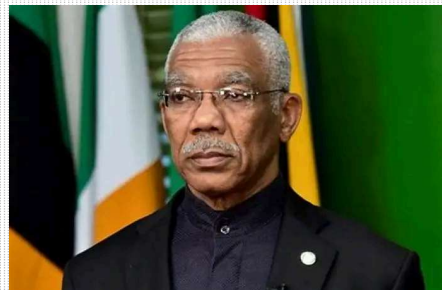
Jul 25, 2021 News

— says PNC/R is part of APNU not APNU part of PNC/R

By Shervin Belgrave

Kaieteur News — Leader of the People's National Congress Reform, (PNC/R), David Granger, on Friday last defended his recent move to unilaterally accept two new parties into A Partnership for National Unity (APNU).

Granger, who has not held a press conference for over a year and who does not grant access to independent media, was at the time being interviewed by Gabriella Patram on his weekly online media programme called "Public Interest". During the interview the PNC/R leader indicated that he did not need any instruction or advice from his party's Central Executive Council (CEC) to accept the parties into the partnership. Those two new parties are the Equal Rights and Justice Party (ERJP)



Leader of PNC/R David Granger.

consisting of former Minister, Jaipaul Sharma; and the Guyana Nation Builders Movement (GNBM) formed by current Member of Parliament, Tabitha J. Sarabo-Halley.

Citing the recent controversy that arose over his decision to accept them into APNU without getting the greenlight from the PNC/R's CEC, Patram asked him to shed some clarity on the matter. In his response Granger posited that the controversy stemmed from a misunderstanding and stated, "Both Sarabo-Halley and Sharma (leaders of the new parties) submitted their applications to the APNU Executive Council (AEC)".

He continued his defence by stating, "The PNC is part of APNU and not the other way around — APNU is not a part of PNC and so the APNU Executive Council met and I think it was in June, the 11th of June, and we examined the applications and accepted them."

Granger further stated that by the time his party's CEC met, the AEC made up of representatives from the Guyana Action Party (GAP), National Front Alliance (NFA) and the PNC/R had already accepted the new parties. The PNC/R leader added that after the decision was made he reported it to the CEC.

Stopping short from saying that some of his party comrades did not agree with his decision, Granger related that "there seems to be a frenzy in the media because of a perception".

He said that he doesn't know if the perception is that the two new parties should not have been accepted. Kaieteur News had reported on July 18, there was a major rift in the PNC/R over the acceptance of the new parties into the partnership. The rift came to light after the media had reported on an unsigned statement by some members of the CEC accusing Granger of turning PNC/R into a "one man show" by unilaterally accepting the parties.

The statement was reportedly circulated to party members just moments before a virtual observance of APNU's 10th anniversary. It is believed that some of the CEC members decided to make the statement after they saw the new parties' symbols affixed to the programme of the anniversary observance.

According to the unsigned statement, PNC/R had never agreed to accept the recently formed parties into APNU. The CEC members behind the statement are of the view that they might be shell

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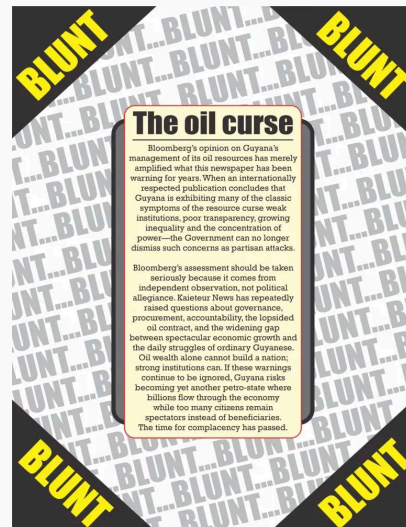
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Granger said too that the CEC, in its last meeting, had instructed Granger and PNC/R's General Secretary, Amna Ally to put the admission of ERJP and GNBM on hold, but they went ahead and accepted.

While some members of the CEC supported Granger's move other senior members opposed. Chairman of PNC/R, Volda Lawrence had confirmed support of the anti-Granger release and Aubrey Norton and Dr. Richard Van-West Charles shared their views with this newspaper.

Van-West Charles had explained that members on the AEC represent the various parties of the partnership and that before casting any vote, it is only right for those representatives to consult with their respective parties first. Apart from the controversy over whether Granger was correct in making such a decision by himself, the authors behind the unsigned statement had opined too, that PNC/R knows nothing about the new parties he had accepted.

Claims were made that ERJP and GNBM were never launched nationally and that PNC/R is unaware of the benefits they can bring to the table before even considering accepting them into the partnership.

In Friday's interview however, Granger argued, contrary to those who disagreed with him, that his move to accept ERJP and GNBM is a good one because its leaders are well known to the coalition. Granger started off by saying, "After the elections last year two partners, the WPA (Working People Alliance) and the JPA (Justice for All) had left and the vacancies were not filled".

He continued that two other persons, Sarabo-Halley and Sharma who were former members of the WPA and JFA respectively, and ex-ministers in the coalition formed new parties and applied to fill the slots. With regards to Sharma, Granger detailed that he has been with APNU since 2012 and described him as "a hard working minister" who is "no slouch".

He added that after reviewing their applications the AEC felt that they were "quite in order" and had cited the fact that they were always members of the coalition who had served as ministers.

Sharing his personal view on the decision, the PNC/R leader stated that he feels that both of their parties would be able to bring constituency into the partnership. Granger added too, that GNBM and ERJP have a concept paper, along with their own logo and structure paper which have been submitted to PNC/R for scrutiny.

Indirectly responding to the criticisms of why the parties were not fit to be accepted into APNU in the first place, Granger said, "We have always insisted that we shouldn't be disparaging or we shouldn't speak of parties as if they were non-entities".

Moreover, he continued, PNC/R for a couple of decades now has embraced the concept of "inclusionary or coalition politics" and the admission of these new parties was a fulfillment of that mandate.

That mandate, stated Granger, is a mission to create this "big benab" and in order to do this, other minor or smaller parties should be encouraged to join. Granger said too, that there is nothing wrong with any party, regardless of its size, seeking to join APNU. The only thing these parties have to do, according to the PNC/R leader, is to adhere to the core values of APNU.

Granger's recent comments come in stark contrast to his assertion in the lead up to the 2020 elections that new parties that were formed in the lead up to those polls, would need to prove that they had a constituency. Neither Sarabo-Halley nor Sharma have offered any membership of their respective new parties outside of themselves.



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