

Jagdeo underscores need to move beyond racial politics

October 15, 2026



Vice President Dr Bharrat Jagdeo

Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo has warned that Guyana's two traditional political parties face extinction unless they abandon entrenched racial divisions, embrace new political thinking, and find ways to work together in the national interest.

Speaking at the wake on Wednesday for the late People's National Congress (PNC) leader Robert Corbin, Jagdeo delivered a pointed assessment of Guyana's political history, arguing that decades of mistrust and ethnic polarisation have undermined opportunities for national unity.

"And what I'm saying is, unless our parties, these two parties, change today – the era of binary thinking of old things is long gone – we will face extinction. We will face extinction," Jagdeo declared.

He argued that the PPP and PNC shared more ideological similarities than differences, but had remained divided largely by racial politics and historical grievances.

"So, there were not many things dividing us, separating us, except this old boogie of race and racial politics," he said.

In a revealing account of his relationship with Corbin, Jagdeo disclosed that the two leaders had explored political cooperation during his presidency, holding meetings involving senior officials from both parties.



However, he said the initiative collapsed after Corbin faced accusations within the PNC of betraying his party.

"We had a first meeting, and we had a second meeting, and then there was there was the PNC's Congress, and he was accused of selling out to the PPP and Jagdeo. And that was the end of the discussions," Jagdeo explained.

Jagdeo strongly rejected suggestions that Corbin had been politically compromised by his willingness to engage the PPP. He said, "Robert Corbin defended his party fiercely in every engagement we've had. He always defended his party. He was the strongest advocate for the People's National Congress."

"But he had a bigger vision for the country, and he understood government," Jagdeo added.

The former president traced Guyana's political divisions to the racial tensions of the 1960s, arguing that historical grievances and ethnic stereotypes continued to influence political behaviour and discourage cooperation.

He also acknowledged that constitutional reforms introduced in 2001 had failed to eliminate mistrust between the parties, frustrating efforts towards greater political inclusion and power-sharing.

Turning to the future of the opposition, Jagdeo said the PNC must reconsider its political direction as Guyana undergoes significant economic and social change.

The VP said, "The PNC has to make its own decision on where it's going to go in terms of the new world and the new challenges and the new Guyana and what role they want to play in it and how they're going to adjust their philosophy or thinking to be part of that role."

He maintained that the PPP was also seeking to adapt, including by embracing new ideas and individuals who had previously opposed the governing party.

He said, "In the People's Progressive Party, as General Secretary, every day I try very hard to keep to understand the changes of our country and the world, and try to adjust my Party's thinking as well as the inclusion – making sure that we remain receptive to inclusion of new ideas, new approaches, and people who may have even just a day before stood against us, because they did so not because they hated us personally, but because often their party philosophy forced them to take some positions of that nature."

Jagdeo argued that younger generations were increasingly unwilling to accept rigid political loyalties, making traditional partisan approaches less sustainable.

Reflecting on Corbin's legacy, he expressed regret that their attempts at cooperation had failed.



"I genuinely miss him and his thinking, genuinely. Truly, our country is poorer because he's no longer here with us. And I wish that he had succeeded. Maybe this would have been a different case for our country had we succeeded," he said.

Jagdeo concluded that meaningful national progress would ultimately require cooperation between the two historically rival parties.

He said, "And we believe that the future of Guyana would involve, at some level and in some fashion, whatever that framework may be, these parties working together. They have to, of necessity." **[DPI]**

Discover more from INews Guyana

Subscribe to get the latest posts sent to your email.