The People’s National Congress Reform elected Brigadier (ret) David Granger as the Party’s Presidential Candidate to contest the 2011 general elections. The historic Special Congress, which was held on Saturday 26th February, concluded the six-month, country-wide, democratic selection process that involved the Party’s entire membership.

Brigadier Granger pledged to work towards unifying the Party and collaborating with party officials, members and other nominees to ensure that the People’s Progressive Party Civic was removed from office at the forthcoming general elections. Granger had campaigned consistently on the platform of education, employment, economic development, private enterprise and public security. He declared, in his acceptance speech, that employing the process of going to the people to elect persons to “high” offices in the party had become “irreversible”. He also took the time to thank the Diaspora, Guyanese at home and military veterans for their support.

Party Chairman Bishwaishwar Ramsaroop welcomed delegates and observers to the Party’s Special Congress held to elect the presidential candidate for the general elections due this year. Ramsaroop, identifying four significant features of the Special Congress, stated that it signalled the de facto start of the PNCR election campaign for 2011; marked a new dimension and manifestation of democracy within the Party; consummated a process which for the first time witnessed the election of a presidential candidate other than the incumbent Leader of the Party and, ushered in a new dynamic for the Party that would lead to the resumption of the reins of office and the formation of the next government of Guyana.

Party Leader Robert Corbin explained that discussions on developing a system of primaries for the identification of candidates to contest local government, regional and general elections had commenced more than thirty years ago.
Deputy Secretary General of the Organization of American States Albert Ramdin paid a courtesy call on the PNCR on Wednesday 9th March 2011. The Party took the opportunity to brief the OAS official on the malicious statements made by President Bharrat Jagdeo at Babu John, Port Mourant during the PPPC’s annual observance of the deaths of former Presidents Cheddi and Janet Jagan. The view was expressed that such statements were provocative and could re-ignite racial conflicts and promote social instability.

CPC Delegation visits

A Communist Party of China delegation – led by Vice Minister, International Department of Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Chen Fengxiang – met representatives of the People’s National Congress Reform on Wednesday 2nd March. The two sides shared perspectives of developments in China and Guyana and reaffirmed their commitment to the maintenance of good relations between the two parties and between the two countries.

UNDP delegation visits

A UNDP Mission paid a courtesy call on the People’s National Congress Reform on Thursday 24th March 2011. The visiting UNDP Mission was in Guyana to undertake a pre-election assessment of the Technical assistance needs of GECOM in its preparations for the National and Regional elections which are constitutionally due later this year. The PNCR’s major concerns included the remaining obstacles facing citizens in being registered, particularly obtaining source documents. The PNCR side noted that sufficient effort was not being made by the PPPC administration to facilitate citizens’ obtaining basic source documents so that they could get their names on the Voter’s List.

The Party was concerned also about the radio monopoly and political control of the State media by the PPP which continues to ignore demands to establish a NationalBroadcasting Authority. The PNCR also highlighted the misuse of the State Media for PPP propaganda as a dangerous development that would affect the smooth conduct of the forthcoming elections.

Guyana Islamic Trust delegation visits

A Guyana Islamic Trust high-level delegation which included visiting scholars from Canada paid a courtesy call on the People’s National Congress Reform. Party Leader Robert Corbin, General Secretary Oscar Clarke and Presidential Candidate Brigadier (ret) David Granger comprised the PNCR team. The visit was part of a programme to observe Islamic Awareness Week from Friday 4th March to Sunday 13th March 2011 under the theme, “Islam, the Divine Model for society.”

Facing the Future initiative

A PNCR team led by General Secretary Oscar Clarke met a team of constitutional experts – led by Professor Yash Ghai, an eminent Kenyan-Asian constitutional lawyer and former Chairman of the Kenya Constitutional Reform Commission, and including Dr Jill Cottrell and Dr Bertie Ramcharan – on 23rd March. The team visited Guyana at the invitation of the civic organizations sponsoring the “Facing the Future” initiative and held discussions on issues relating to managing ethnicity in divided societies.
Women challenged to start social revolution

PNCR Presidential Candidate David Granger has lauded the contribution of women to the Party and the Nation on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2011. The theme of this year’s observance was ‘Equal access to education, training and science and technology; pathway to decent work for women.”

Addressing the National Congress of Women on Saturday 12th March, Granger said that Guyana needed to start a social revolution to overcome the psychological trauma of the last decade. He noted that the disruption of the social matrix within which affiliative bonds are forged – between parent and child, between siblings and among fellow men and women, and the eruption of hatred and violence – was bound to have serious consequences. He felt that bonds of kinship and friendship were ruptured; children became homeless, jobless orphans and the tranquility of rural life was shattered during “the Troubles” over the last decade. It would have been impossible for those who were exposed to these events not to have suffered in some way.

How the PPPC underdeveloped the hinterland

Addressing largely Amerindian audiences at ‘town-hall’ meetings at Mabaruma and Lethem earlier this year, David Granger accused the People’s Progressive Party Civic administration of underdeveloping the hinterland. The majority of indigenous people still live in the hinterland which is also the source of the country’s mineral wealth but their communities were underdeveloped and their children faced an uncertain future.

Granger admitted to being appalled at the state of the four main hinterland centres which administer the huge regions which together comprise about 70 per cent of the country’s landspace. The regions are the 20,339 km² Barima-Waini; 47,213 km² Cuyuni-Mazaruni; 20,052 km² Potaro-Siparuni and 57,790 km² Rupununi Regions.

He called for the four main hinterland regional administrative centres – Bartica, Mabaruma, Mahdia and Lethem – to be upgraded to municipality status. This he felt was a necessary first step to ensuring that each centre could have its own mayor and town council to administer its township efficiently.
Mobilisation meetings: PNCR Presidential Candidate Brigadier (ret) David Granger has embarked on a series of ‘Mobilisation’ meetings across the country. He took the opportunity to thank members at all the meetings for their support for the presidential candidate selection process, whether or not they supported him.

Linden: At a ‘Mobilisation’ meeting at the Constabulary Hall, Granger drew Lindeners’ attention to the education crisis. Several rural schools had to be closed down by parents, teachers, and students. He promised that a new PNCR administration would make Guyana an ‘Education Nation’ once again – one in which young people could become better qualified and better employed.

New Amsterdam: At New Amsterdam in the East Berbice-Corentyne Region, Granger thanked Berbicians for the support of their delegates at the Party’s Special Congress. He told residents that his top priorities were to preserve the Party’s unity, to persuade former members to rejoin the Party and to convince persons of all ethnicities to support the PNCR in the forthcoming elections. Granger also promised to improve the scrutiny of the election process in the Region in light of credible reports of rigging during the 2006 elections.

Plaisance: At a ‘Mobilisation’ meeting in Plaisance in the Demerara-Mahaica Region, Granger appealed to villagers to mobilise for the forthcoming elections. He urged them to ensure that they collected their new national identification cards and checked the preliminary voters’ lists during the ‘Claims and Objections’ period.

Lichfield: At Lichfield in the Mahaica-Berbice Region, Granger told residents that, on 26th February, the PNCR buried factionalism within its ranks. It once again became a united Party with one aim which was to remove the PPPC from office. Granger told Berbicians that, after 18 years in office, the PPPC administration’s main legacy was one of hopelessness.

Soesdyke: David Granger called on residents of the Soesdyke-Linden Highway, the East Bank Demerara corridor and Soesdyke Village to mobilise and organise in readiness for the campaign for the forthcoming general and regional elections. Speaking to a packed Soesdyke Secondary School hall, Granger explained how poorly equipped rural schools had contributed to degrading the educational system and had produced large numbers of dropouts. This had a direct impact on joblessness because it had become increasingly difficult for many school-leavers to find gainful employment. The result was a growing sense of normlessness and hopelessness among rural youth.

Georgetown: Speaking at a ‘Mobilisation’ meeting in Lodge, Granger explained that the PNCR was fighting for all Guyanese. He told the residents of Georgetown that Guyanese continued to experience widespread unemployment among young people and pointed out that the children of Guyana were living in a dangerous society which was a legacy of the PPPC administration. He promised to create a better life for all.