

Government to launch \$750M housing plan

School projects, agriculture revival also priorities



Caroni Central MP David Lee, left, Agriculture Minister Ravi Ratiram and Defence Minister Wayne Sturge at Wednesday's Budget Consultation in Freeport. PHOTO BY SHASTRI BOODAN

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The Government's national housing programme is set to begin this year, Planning and Development Minister Kennedy Swaratsingh announced on Wednesday.

Speaking at a national budget consultation hosted by Caroni Central MP and Housing Minister David Lee at Three Road, Freeport, Swaratsingh said the administration has found a way to commercialise the incomplete housing stock left by the previous government.

He disclosed that the Housing Ministry is negotiating \$750 million in financing to complete those units and begin distribution. Once this is finalised, he said, the UNC-led Government will launch its housing initiative, aiming to deliver 10,000 homes to citizens.

Swaratsingh also said that plans are underway to make it easier for private developers to access financing for residential construction and other development projects.

He acknowledged the significant economic challenges facing the country, noting that the national

debt has more than doubled—from \$70 billion in 2015 to \$145 billion in 2025. He estimated it will take five to ten years to fully turn the economy around.

In his remarks, Minister Lee said urgent attention is being given to the Preysal Government Primary School, where students have spent the last decade attending classes at a dilapidated community centre.

“Preysal Primary School is one of the high-priority schools to be completed in the next fiscal year. I want to assure the community of that,” Lee said.

He added that water supply remains another critical issue for the constituency but reported overall improvement in national water distribution since the UNC took office.

Residents of Cashew Gardens expressed frustration that their community still lacks a functioning primary school. They recalled that Palmiste Government School, which served the area, was destroyed by fire in 2023 and its pupils have since been split between the Edinburgh 500 Community Centre and Longdenville Government School.

Although five acres of land were allocated for the construction of Longdenville Presbyterian School back in 2005, the project has never materialised.

Meanwhile, residents of Edinburgh 500 are calling for the community centre currently housing displaced students to be handed over for village development programmes once the students are relocated.

Farmer Sharaz, speaking during the consultation, criticised the continued neglect of Carlsen Field and the wider agricultural sector, describing it as “the bastard child of the economy.”

He said agriculture must be modernised and rebranded to appeal to younger generations, adding that millions have been wasted due to abandoned projects.

“One example is the \$40 million invested at Mon Jaloux to produce grass for animals. That facility was shut down under the last government and has been left to rot for the past nine years. It needs to be revived,” he said.

Sharaz also raised concerns about the lack of proper food safety oversight, claiming the Chemistry, Food and Drug Division of the Ministry of Health has been non-functional since 2014.

“Since then, nobody has been doing proper testing except Cariri,” he said.

Agriculture Minister Ravi Ratiram also addressed the gathering, sharing his plans for revitalising the sector, though details were not provided at the meeting.