

STE CROIX – FOOTBALL GROUNDS (No. B/884)

Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Youth and Sports whether he will state if, on or about 11 May 2006, he had a meeting with members of the *Komité Vizilans*, Ste Croix and, if so, will he state if, following that meeting, any decision has been taken in regard to the use, for training purposes by the football teams of the region, of the football grounds of the – (a) Bien Heureux Père Laval Stadium at Nicolay Road, and (b) GSS North and Ste Croix Government School, after school hours.

Mr Tang Wah Hing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will, with your permission reply to PQ Nos. B/884 and B/885 together as they are inter-related. In fact, I attended the meeting on 11 May, as Minister of Youth and Sports at the invitation of *Komité Vizilans* of Ste Croix and to which the hon. Member was also invited. It is unfortunate that he did not stay till the end if not he would have been aware of the grievances of the inhabitants of this region. Members of the *Komité Vizilans* imparted to me their grievances and made several requests among others regarding the lack of sports infrastructure. On 22 May 2006 a copy of their grievances was personally forwarded by me to hon. Mrs B. Juggoo, representative of the Constituency for her consideration. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to information available at my Ministry, another group known as *Comité le Quartier Le Cornu* has also submitted a similar request. I wish to inform the House that since May 2000 the need to provide sports and recreational facilities in this region had been identified by hon. J.F. Chaumière who was then Junior Minister. A project comprising a football ground and a youth centre at Cité La Cure had been proposed. A plot of land had even been identified. The Ministry of Youth and Sports made a site visit in July 2000 and recommended that a sport complex comprising of handball/basket ball/volleyball grounds and a youth centre be set up subject to a proper drainage system put in place as the site is flooded during heavy rainfalls. This project was subject to the land being vested in the Ministry and the Ministry of Housing and Lands was accordingly requested to do the needful. However, it is four years later i.e. in July 2004 that the Ministry of Housing and Lands informed the Ministry of Youth and Sports that the land had already been vested in the Ministry of Environment and NDU for a different project. However, I am prepared to liaise with my colleagues, the Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit and the Minister of Housing and Lands, to provide the inhabitants with proper facilities.

As regards arrangements for use of school infrastructure, my Ministry and the Ministry of Education will, this month, sign a protocol agreement to that effect.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the GSS North football ground has been commissioned and vested in the Ministry concerned and, if yes, when will that football ground be put at the disposal of the inhabitants of that area?

Mr Tang Wah Hing: My Ministry will sign a protocol in a few days' time.

SOUILLAC VILLAGE - LE BATELAGE – RENTS (No. B/888)

Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if his Ministry is letting two unfurnished lots at Le Batelage in Souillac Village and, if so, if any arrears in rent are due to the Ministry.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has let two unfurnished commercial spaces, namely, lots A and B at Le Batelage, at Souillac Tourist Village. I have been informed that in respect to lot A, of an extent of 302 m² leased to one Mr R. Rajkoomar, for a monthly rental of Rs15,100, there is as at to date no arrear of rental. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lot B comprises two commercial spaces of 40 m² each on the ground and first floors of the building. The lease agreement was signed with one Mr Seerputh Raggioo, on 14 December 2000 for a period of five years, at a monthly rent of Rs5,000. The tenant paid the rental for the month of December 2000 and made a deposit of Rs30,000, representing six months rental, on 09 January 2001. However, the tenant failed to pay the subsequent rentals due. On 23 February 2001, the tenant was requested to pay the arrears due. Subsequently, four reminders had been sent to the tenant. The last reminder dated 16 October 2002. On 29 August 2002, and on the advice of the State Law Office, a *mise-en-demeure* was served on the tenant. However, the SLO informed this Ministry that no service could be effected because the tenant was not in the country. On 25 October 2005, the SLO served a second *mise-en-demeure* on the tenant. Thereafter, on 05 January 2006 my Ministry was informed by the SLO, that the tenant was arguing that he had never occupied the spaces allocated to him. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

since the lease has expired on 30 November 2005, my Ministry sought the advice of the SLO on 28 December 2005 on the proposed launch of fresh tenders in respect of lot B and at the same time requested the SLO to initiate further legal action to recoup the rent due. We are waiting for a reply.

TOURISM FUND – HOTEL PROMOTERS – CONTRIBUTIONS (No. B/889)

Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications whether he will state if all the liabilities and sums owed by hotel promoters to the Tourism Fund have been paid and, if not, the actions that are being taken to recover same.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that all promoters have paid their contributions to the Tourism Fund, except Salt Lake Resorts Ltd, promoter of Voile D’Or. Out of the Rs25 m., representing the normal contribution payable by Salt Lake Resorts Ltd to the Tourism Fund, the promoter has been authorised to deduct expenses, amounting to Rs1,120,000, incurred in connection with the reinstallation of the irrigation system for the relocation of five vegetable growers at Bel Ombre. To date the company has paid only Rs12,500,000 out of the amount owed to the Fund. Despite several reminders, the company still owes Rs11,380,000 to the Tourism Fund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the actions taken to recover the amount outstanding are as follows – (i) on 12 December 2003, a letter was sent to the company to pay its contribution. Subsequently, 10 reminders have been sent to the company requesting it to honour its obligation. The last reminder was sent on 06 September 2005; (ii) since the lease agreement was signed between the Ministry of Housing and Lands and Salt Lake Resorts Ltd, and as payment of the contribution is one of the conditions of the lease agreement, my Ministry has on 06 September 2005 requested the Ministry of Housing and Lands to initiate necessary legal action to recoup the outstanding balance; (iii) as proposed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Tourism Fund, on 27 December 2005 also sought the advice of the State Law Office; (iv) on 02 March 2006, as requested by the SLO, documents, comprising copy of Letter of Reservation, Letter of Intent, etc. were forwarded to the SLO to facilitate tendering of legal advice, and (v) on 13 April 2006, a letter has been sent to the legal representative of Salt Lake Resorts Ltd to ensure that the

outstanding balance of Rs11,380,000 is paid to the Tourism Fund and on 29 June 2006 a reminder was sent, to his effect, to the legal representative. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, furthermore, in order to ensure that such similar situation does not recur in the future, all promoters of hotel projects on State land are required to pay their contributions in full on the day and upon signature of their lease agreements.

Mr Dowarkasing: May I know from the hon. Minister the number of hotel projects that were launched in the region of Bel Ombre?

Mr X. L. Duval: There are a number of hotel projects. But, as I mentioned, the contributions payable to the Fund are upon signature of the lease agreement.

Mr Dowarkasing: Can the hon. Minister, therefore, confirm whether two hotel projects belonging to the same group agreed to pay only one off contribution of Rs25 m.?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, Sir.

Mr Dowarkasing: Is that the proper way of doing things or will he try to remedy this?

Mr. X. L. Duval: I do not know the date on which this was done. But it was agreed by the then Minister.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to hotel promoters in regards to Tourism Fund, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether Anahita Group has made any contribution and, if so, how much. How does he intend to use this money?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have the information on Anahita Group. But I know it is not a debtor to the Fund.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister if any contribution from this Group will be used for the creation of a tourism village in this part of the island.

Mr X. L. Duval: The tourism village will be financed by the Empowerment Fund. As far as Anahita is concerned, if it has a lease, then upon the

signature of that lease with Government, it will pay the amount due. If it is on private land, it will not pay.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one last question. May I know the status of the free advances of Rs100 m. that were paid by the Ministry of Finance to the Tourism Fund?

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if the hon. Member comes with a specific question, I will provide the answer.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY - MEDICAL /GENERAL PRACTITIONERS – EMPLOYMENT (No. B/890)

Mr M. Dowarkasing (Third Member for Curepipe and Midlands) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether, in regard to medical practitioners and general practitioners employed by her Ministry, she will state if all the criteria set down for their employment have been adhered to.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Speaker Sir, there are two categories of Medical Practitioners employed by my Ministry, namely - (a) Medical Practitioner (Generalist) (b) Medical Practitioner (Specialist) I am informed that for the employment of Generalists, all the criteria set down have been adhered to. The criteria for employment of Generalists are - (a) Medical Practitioners in the private sector (b) Fully registered under the Medical Council Act (c) Not above 70 years of age The criteria for employment of Specialists are - Private and Public Medical Practitioners Fully registered under the Medical Council Act Hold a Specialist qualification in one of the following fields – (a) Orthopaedic Surgery (b) Ophtalmology (c) Psychiatry (d) Dermatology (e) E.N.T. (f) General Medecine (e) General Surgery (f) Gynaecology (g) Oncology – related to cancer They must not be above 70 years of age . As regards the employment of Specialists, in view of the dearth of Medical Specialists in the field of General Medicine, and in order not to penalise beneficiaries, the Ministry had no alternative than to continue the employment of four (4) such Specialists, although they are above 70. Approval has been obtained from the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms and has raised no objection to the continued employment of these four specialists. Action has already been taken also to issue fresh advertisement for the recruitment of Medical Specialists. Once

we obtain the required number and specialisation as per age criteria, the employment of those who are above 70 will be terminated.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether for the Medical Practitioners, the criteria set up by the Ministry of Civil Service Affairs, stating that the age limit should be 65, were respected?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said that we requested the approval of the Ministry because there was a lack of Specialists and the approval was given. As far as Medical Practitioners are concerned, authorisation was sought from the Ministry of Civil Service and there was no objection.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know whether these doctors are being employed on a determined period or on an undetermined period?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these doctors are presently appointed on a sessional basis and their employment terminates, of course, once they reach the age of 70, but I did explain the problem that has arisen as for the age criteria and we went according to the authorisation of the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs.

Mr Dowarkasing: Is the hon. Minister aware that some of these Medical Practitioners draw salaries on sessional basis which are far more than the salary of Medical Practitioners actually being employed by the Ministry of Health?

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are aware of such problems arising, but there has been, of course, equal distribution of sessions and domiciliary visits as far as possible. But, it should be pointed out that most of these doctors are involved in private practice during the day and are available only in the afternoon. We are also recruiting additional general practitioners in the near future. As regards the fees, the following should be highlighted. Firstly, these general practitioners in Government hospitals are eligible to a contribution of 25 percent of their salaries for pension purpose and such is not the case for those employed by my Ministry. They are not eligible for any paid leave, they are not eligible to overtime payment as their counterparts in the Ministry of Health; they are not eligible for duty-free

concession for the purchase of a car or commuted travelling allowance; they are not eligible for the annual allowance of Rs10,000 for the purchase of medical books, and they are not eligible for any passage benefits. The fee paid for a session of three hours is only Rs450. For visits at domicile, it's Rs340. The fee paid for specialists is only Rs730 for Medical Tribunal and Rs620 for Medical Boards.

SUGAR – RETAIL PRICE (No. B/916)

Mr S. Soodhun (Fifth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the selling price of sugar on the local market, he will state if he has received any representations from sugar producers to increase the retail price thereof and, if so, will he state the stand of Government in relation thereto.

The Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce & Cooperatives (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply to this question. The Mauritius Sugar Syndicate (MSS), the Mauritius Chamber of Agriculture (MCA), the Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation Ltd., the Cane Growers Association and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association (MSPA), in a joint letter, wrote to me on 10 March 2006, requesting to review the price of sugar on the local market. According to these stakeholders, due to the application of price control on sugar by Government, the stakeholders of the sugar industry are made to pay heavy subsidies on the sale of sugar in the domestic market. Price fixing by my Ministry actually follows policy decision on the issue by the Ministry of Agro Industry & Fisheries. I understand that the request of the sugar producers is being viewed in a broad perspective, especially in view of the 36% price cut announced by the European Union (EU). I am also informed by my colleague, the Minister of Agro Industry & Fisheries, that Mauritius has devised a Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan 2006/2015 which has been submitted to the EU. My colleague is also discussing the issue of cess and proposed cess reduction with the MSPA. In fact, the package I have just mentioned and on which the Ministry of Agro Industry & Fisheries is working, that is, the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan 2006/2015 will, *inter alia*, look into the price of sugar on the local market.

Mr Soodhun: Sir, I would like to know simply whether the price of sugar will increase, yes or no? That is all.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have answered the question, the hon. Member has to listen.

Mr Dowarkasing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have not heard the answer. Can the hon. Minister repeat whether the price of sugar will increase, yes or no ?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have answered the question. I'll read it again. As I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me first explain. Price fixing depends on policy decision by the Ministry of Agro Industry & Fisheries. The hon. Member has to understand the mechanism first. (*Interruptions*) My colleague has devised a Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan and subsequent to that, we will take whatever decision that we have to take.

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister what is the percentage increase which has been requested by the sugar producers?

Dr. Jeetah: I have the information, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a letter written to me actually. I cannot give it as a percentage, but I have been informed that the price of sugar – the landed cost - is about Rs16,000 per tonne.... (*Interruptions*) They ask questions and they don't want to listen.

The Deputy Speaker: The specific question was whether....

Dr. Jeetah :I can give the hon. Member the magnitude and he can make his own calculations..... (*Interruptions*) this equates to an ex-warehouse cost of no less than Rs8. per half kilo.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME – SMALL PLANTERS (No. B/922)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries whether, in regard to the priority areas funded by the Empowerment Programme, he will state if the small planters affected by the sugar reform will benefit therefrom and, if yes, the projects which would qualify for same.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has clearly stated that the single over-riding purpose of this year's budget is to create jobs, promote employment and return to

growth by securing the transition from a preference dependent to a globally competitive economy. As stated in the Budget Speech, the programme will facilitate the transition from sugar and promote such employment and entrepreneurship from the smallest trader or artisan or mechanic or planter or fishermen to the small start-ups in trade or manufacturing or agro industry or services.

Out of the seven critical activities to be undertaken by the Empowerment Programme, there are five from which the small planters may benefit on the same conditions as other citizens of Mauritius, namely - (1) land for small entrepreneurs (2) a welfare programme emphasizing training and reskilling (3) special programmes for unemployed women (4) tourist villages (5) support for development of new entrepreneurs and SMEs. Government is taking up the challenge to ensure that these persons do not fall into the poverty trap. The Empowerment Programme will have a special focus on women. We have seen how difficult it has been for women who lose their jobs to get new ones, whether in the textile industry or the sugar industry. The agribusiness forum which we organised in April 2006 has identified a number of promising avenues for small businesses, and we are confident that the reskilling and training programmes, as well as access to funds under the Empowerment Programme will encourage former sugar employees or planters to move into agricultural production or agribusiness, and set up other SMEs for which they may have an inclination. Although the majority of workers exiting from the employment in the sugar industry may not have academic qualifications, they do have skills acquired on the job, which can allow them to become self-employed or set up micro-enterprises, from artisan, mechanic, planter to small start-ups in manufacturing or agro industry and services. As far as small planter sector is concerned, the *pro-poor* dimension has been highlighted in the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy Action Plan 2006-2015. In fact, the main thrust of the Plan for the small planters concentrates on field operations with the objective of reducing costs for the planters and improving cost competitiveness of the sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you are aware under the employment programme, a Task Force with the joint participation of the private and public sector would be set up. Planters may also be interested in developing several projects like especially outsourcing in the tourism sector and the EPZ. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can give the assurance that my Ministry will give its total support to the implementation team that will be appointed to concretise the objectives of the Empowerment Programme.

LE MORNE TRUST FUND - ACTIVITIES (No. B/924)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Arts and Culture whether, in regard to Le Morne Trust Fund, he will state the activities scheduled for the financial year 2006-2007

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund proposes to carry out amongst others the following activities during the financial year 2006-2007 – (a) creation of a web site and finalisation of a logo; (b) putting up of a stele at Le Morne in the context of The UNESCO Slave Route Project; (c) design and manufacture of a maquette of Le Morne; (d) preparation and finalisation of the Management Plan of Le Morne; (e) conservation works aimed at protecting and preserving the natural fauna of the mountain; (f) talks, exhibitions and seminars; (g) research project to set up a database on “Marronage” in Mauritius; (h) review of contents of slavery and “Marronage” in secondary school textbooks, and (i) publication of pamphlets to be distributed to educational institutions Moreover, the Trust Fund will also organise activities in the context of the marking of the abolition of slavery.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the file of the Le Morne Project to be included in the UNESCO Heritage sites, has been submitted to UNESCO and, if not, whether it will be submitted in 2006/2007?

Mr Gowressoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Master Plan has been submitted to UNESCO on 13 January. There are some classifications and we have to prepare the Management Plan by 30 September 2006.

IRS PROJECTS – INVESTMENT CERTIFICATES (No. B/925)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the IRS Projects, he will state – (a) the number thereof which (i) have been approved, and (ii) are being implemented and the investment earmarked, and (b) if there is a social component in each project, indicating the value thereof in each case.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development (Mr R. Sithanen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Board of Investment has up to now issued four Investment Certificates under the Integrated Resort Scheme (IRS). These are in respect of the following projects - (i) Tamarina Golf Estate project at Médine (on 2 March 2005); (ii) Anahita IRS project at Beau Champ (on 17 October 2005); (iii) La Reserve Leisure Resorts project at Flic en Flac (on 07 December 2005), and (iv) Pristine Villas Ltd project at Bel Ombre (on 26 June 2006). Total investment earmarked amounts to Rs32 billion, as follows - (i) Tamarina Golf Estate Co. Ltd Rs2.0 billion (ii) Anahita IRS project Rs12.3 billion (iii) La Reserve Leisure Resorts Rs16.5 billion (iv) Pristine Villas Ltd Rs1.2 billion I am informed that implementation of the first two, namely Tamarina Golf Estate Co. Ltd and Anahita IRS project, has reached a very advanced stage and direct marketing to would-be clients has started. In fact, latest information at the BOI shows that a total number of 150 residences have already been pre-sold, 80 by Tamarina project and 70 by Anahita. The other two are still at project finalisation stage. Regarding part (b) of the question, the Investment Certificates issued in respect of the last three projects do contain a social obligation provision. Thus, promoters will be required to make a social contribution under the planning obligation mechanism provided for by the Planning and Development Act 2004. It is indicative of our commitment to ensure that benefits arising from IRS projects trickle down to the local community, that those three IRS projects were approved under this Government. Indeed, the one project that does not contain such a social obligation is the one that was approved before July 2005. As I indicated in my Budget Speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, new IRS Regulations are being made to enhance the attractiveness of the scheme, make it more investor-friendly, plug certain loopholes and also define the social obligations of promoters. The basis and formula for determining the value of the social obligation is almost ready but cannot be prescribed in the IRS Regulations because the enabling section of the Planning and Development Act 2004, that is section 35, has yet to be proclaimed. We expect to be able to make the new IRS Regulations soon after the enactment of the Finance Bill. I must however add that the necessity of integrating the local community into the project so that they become *partie prenante* of the proposed development has been well understood by the promoters themselves. In fact, various initiatives in this direction have already been taken by the promoters themselves even if the new Regulations have not been made yet.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister announced in his budget certain proposals concerning the IRS concept. Can he tell us how these proposals which he announced in his budget will change the IRS concept, if at all?

Mr Sithanen: There is the social component that we have announced, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have also, in fact, included in the budget a change where before it was restrictive in what could be sold - I think if my understanding is correct, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was restricted to villas only - whereas now, we have broadened the scope to include apartments also. We are also looking at the possibilities of ensuring that those who don't have huge acres of land, could also participate in the IRS Scheme.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether once the related sections of the Planning and Development Act are proclaimed the social components of future IRS projects will be made public and whether the public will be allowed to consult those social components?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am in favour of simplicity. But, I must honestly confess that in this particular case, it is not easy to have a single and simple criteria for social obligation. The reason for this - I am sure, hon. Lesjongard, who was Minister before would appreciate - is because there are cases where what they require from Government is significant and others not. It can be in terms of State land, in terms of land swap, it can be in terms of change in zoning, etc. My personal feeling, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - and we have discussed with those who know - is that it will have to be on a case by case basis. Let me mention for the information of the House that with regard to Anahita, which is the first project that was approved by this Government, notwithstanding the fact that we have not embedded in the law the regulations for social obligations, some initiatives have been made by Anahita after discussions with the Board of Investment. I am sure the House is aware that there is an Anahita Fisherman Solidarity Fund. Each of the 220 registered fishermen concerned would be entitled to a particular amount of money. Of course, everybody would like to get more. But, at least, we are starting somewhere. Second, the promoters have agreed to set up a full-fledged Multi Disciplinary Training Centre in the region to meet the manpower requirements of the project in terms of hotel and residence, and also the leisure hospitality industry. Third, the project makes provision for the promotion of entrepreneurship among the local community and

encourages them to participate with subcontractors in the provision of various services, such as transport, landscaping, gardening and cleaning. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is where the Empowerment Programme deals with what is happening there; because, one of the problems that we face with outsourcing is the quality of the service and the quality of the product. One of the objectives of the Empowerment Programme is to train people so that they can improve the quality of the services and the delivery of the products so that they can participate in these outsourcing activities. Fourth, the promoters have reaffirmed the will to give priority to the neighbourhood in terms of hiring people. They have also promised to upgrade public infrastructure in nearby villages, especially pertaining to road safety, street lighting and cleanliness. The point that I am trying to make, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it will depend, on the *quiproquo*, what they are requesting from Government and what Government can impose as social conditions for these projects to go ahead.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I put this question because the Planning and Development Legislation makes provision for the local community to be consulted at different stages of a project. It is important that, in some way, the local community be involved in the process. But then, Government can declare a project either State-significant or non-State significant?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I say it again. It will have to go on a case-by-case basis on what they request; because, at times, they ask for rezoning, *Pas Géométriques*, land swap, construction or deviation of roads, etc. It will have to depend on basically the specifics of each and every case.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance whether he has the date on which the Anahita Project was filed with the Board of Investment?

Mr Sithanen: I don't have the exact date, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, let me state one thing - I was just telling that to my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism. The fact that a project has been announced previously, and has not been done, and we do it, this does not mean that we are copying. There is a big difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being a promise and delivery. There is also permanence... (*Interruptions*)

Many promises have been made and, yet, it is this Government that is delivering. At times, I hear people say that it is bad and, at other times, they say that we are copying 'X', 'Y' or 'Z'.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to clarify one point, whether the new National Residential Property Tax will apply to the residential components of IRS projects, and whether the *Campement Sites* changes that have been announced, will apply where *Pas Géométriques* are concerned?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is being finalised, but my understanding is that it will apply to the IRS project.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who was speaking with so much conviction and passion about the IRS project. Doesn't he think, seriously, that when other Members of Government still talk about apartheid when referring to IRS, this can jeopardise the projects and dissuade other promoters from investing?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think the context is important. We have reviewed, and we are reviewing, the scope and the extent of the IRS project so that it is more socially acceptable. And, I have given reasons why this has to be done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is in the interest of everybody that the local community is engaged in developments that will take place in its region.

Mr Bérenger: I think the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance replied to half of my double barrel question. I think he confirmed that the new Property Tax would apply. But I also ask whether the *Campements Sites* changes would apply where *Pas Géométriques* are concerned.

Mr Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can't give a definitive answer to that, but my understanding is that it would not. In the case of the National Residential Property Tax, it will apply to the IRS project; but insofar as the other point, I think it is 'no', but I'll have to confirm it. And, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these details will be contained in the Finance Bill.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance how many projects are there in the pipelines, and whether he knows where those projects are located?

Mr Sithanen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Member would surely know, there are different stages of *maturité de projet*. I have mentioned the four projects where an Investment Certificate has been given. I am given to understand that there are three projects that are at the stage of Letter of Intent and there are other projects that are still at a lower stage - I think they call it preliminary stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. One of the three projects is Les Salines IRS, Rs6.5 m.; Le Morne Brabant IRS, Rs5 m. and Belle Rivière Promotion Ltée, Rs2.1 m. The total is Rs13.6 m. These three projects are being issued with a Letter of Intent to enable the promoters to finalise the projects as well as the partnership and financing arrangements.

COOKING GAS (LPG) – SUPPLY (No. B/927)

Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce and Co-operatives whether, in regard to cooking gas (LPG), he is aware that there is a shortage in the supply thereof in many regions of the island and, if so, will he state the measures he intends to take to guarantee a regular supply.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that an enquiry has been carried out around the island by the Consumer Protection Unit of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare and Consumer Protection and it was found that cooking gas is available in all areas in sufficient quantities. Further, the managers of Shell (Mtius) Ltd. and Total (Mtius) Ltd., distributors of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) have stated that they have sufficient stock and normal delivery is being carried on a daily basis. They do not foresee any shortage. However, due to the winter season, an increase in demand has been noted and this might explain any temporary depletion of stock at certain retail points. The distributors confirmed that they are putting in extra efforts to supply more cylinders to cater for the seasonal increase in demand.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: May I ask the hon. Minister whether the shortage could have been an artificial one in expectation of the subsequent price rise?

Dr. Jeetah: That could well have been, but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from my records, Shell (Mtius) Ltd. has confirmed that sales in winter are higher than in summer. Its sales for April 2006 were 1,621,116 Kg and for May 2006, it was 1,762,164 kg.

Mr Von-Mally: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given that shortage of gas in Rodrigues is recurrent, can we know what is being done to solve this problem?

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am well aware of the situation currently prevailing in Rodrigues. In fact, the other day we had a meeting with some representatives of Rodrigues. I understand that from January to June 2006, around 34,000 cylinders have been sent to Rodrigues for an approximate number of households of 6,000. This gives a monthly average of about 5,600 cylinders. The number of cylinders in circulation should have been enough for Rodrigues, but due to a missed shipment, people have increased ownership of cylinders as a precautionary measure. We had a meeting with the two suppliers, *i.e.*, Shell (Mtius) Ltd. and Total (Mtius) Ltd. who have agreed to increase the number of cylinders being sent to Rodrigues. Additional cylinders sent by Shell (Mtius) Ltd. is 1,100 and this has already been taken care of. The next consignment is scheduled for end of July 2006. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to add that I have asked the two companies as well as the Shipping Co. to let us know about the demand and supply and we are following up the situation closely.

ARIS/MAURITIUS - SCHEDULED FLIGHTS - CANCELLATION (No. B/928)

Mrs L. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Air Mauritius Ltd., information as to if regular scheduled flights between Paris and Mauritius have been cancelled as a reason of the fall in the number of tourists arrival following the spread of the chikungunya disease.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure & External Communications (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this question deals with the day-to-day operations of Air Mauritius Ltd. However, the information requested is also available at my Ministry and in line with

Government policy I am, therefore, able to reply. Scheduled flights between France and Mauritius are carried out by the designated carriers of both countries within the framework of the Bilateral Air Service Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in September 2005. In line with the capacity agreed upon for the last IATA winter season, Air Mauritius and Air France had agreed to join to operate 17 weekly frequencies in code share on the long haul route. For the IATA summer season starting in April 2006, the airlines have agreed to operate 12 weekly flights. However, I am informed that as from March 2006, a decline was observed in flight bookings between Paris and Mauritius which was attributed mainly to the chikungunya phenomena. In these circumstances, both airlines agreed on specific flight cancellations. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that, out of the 212 flights initially scheduled for the period March to June 2006, Air Mauritius and Air France cancelled a total of ten (10), A340-300 and six (6) B747-400 roundtrips representing 7.5% of the total number of flights originally scheduled. However, as a result of efforts deployed by Government and all stakeholders, the situation is gradually returning to normal and no cancellations are planned for the forthcoming month.

The Deputy Speaker: If hon. Members will just bear with me for one second, I have been given to understand that questions B/932 and B/933 have been withdrawn. Next question, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

DRUG ABUSE - SURVEY (No. B/929)

Mrs L. Dookun-Luchoomun (Third Member for La Caverne and Phoenix) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens Welfare & Reform Institutions whether she will state if a survey has recently been carried out on drugs abuse in the country and, if so, will he table a copy of the report thereof.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the latest surveys on drugs abuse in the country relate to - (1) The Rapid Situation Assessment & Responses on Drug Use in Mauritius and Rodrigues, and (2) A Research on Factors Influencing Substance Abuse Among Youth (8 - 18 years) in Housing Estates of Mauritius. Both these surveys were carried out in 2004. The Rapid Situation Assessment was carried out by NATReSA with financial and technical assistance from the UNODC. It has served as the basis for the elaboration of the National Drug Control Master Plan 2004-

2009. Whereas the Research on Factors Influencing Substance Abuse among Youth in Housing Estates was commissioned by the NATReSA. It was funded by the Mauritius Research Council and carried out by the Mauritius Institute of Health. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, arrangement is being made so that copies of both these reports be placed in the Library.

FREE TRANSPORT SCHEME - CONSULTANT - REPORT (No. B/931)

Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether in regard to the Free Transport Scheme, he will state if the report of the consultant is now available and, if so, will he table a copy thereof.

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr A. Bachoo): Sir, the Consultant has started the assignment on 26 June 2006 and the final report is expected in August.

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister whether a tender exercise was carried out to recruit this consultant?

Mr Bachoo: This question was already answered by the substantive Minister, if I am not mistaken, a few weeks ago.