

SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAMME

Poor families warned to respect rules

By Nitesh Boodhoo

Poor families who live in social housing projects but refuse to respect the rules of the social contract could face the ultimate penalty – eviction.

That was the stern warning yesterday from Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Xavier Luc Duval, who said that he will not tolerate poor families who benefit from the support of government but abuse the rules.

“I will very strict against families who are not abiding by the rules and are becoming a problem for other families living in the social housing projects” set up by government for those who are considered to be living in extreme poverty.

He told a media briefing that a decision to evict five families from the La Vallette social housing project, which houses 200 families who were living in absolute poverty since 2009, has already been taken because they were not respecting the environment and the social rules which bind them to their contracts.

According to Mr Duval, the La Valette housing project, a first of its kind for the new ministry, was set up on a pilot-basis and is a case study which will also allow the National Empowerment Foundation and his ministry to improve forthcoming Integrated Social Development Programmes (ISDP).

The Agricultural Research and Extension Unit (AREU) has identified three hectares of land near La Vallette village which will be given to the residents for plantations and help some of them to



generate money.

The next ISDP project will start in a few months and will be located in Gros Cailloux near Petite Riviere where the Ministry of Housing and Lands has already allocated five hectares to Mr Duval's ministry.

Kindergarten

Gros Cailloux will accommodate 54 vulnerable families and the village will also have a modern kindergarten, village square and green spaces for every housing unit.

“We have given much priority to a state-of-the-art kindergarten because we strongly believe that early childhood care is very important for the development of the child into responsible youngsters.

“We also have a repayment scheme for all beneficiaries with very low installments over the first years which gradually increase after the situation of these fami-

lies gets better,” Mr Duval said.

His one-year-old ministry and the NEF are looking forward to constructing at least 1,400 housing units by the end of this year, which is beyond their expectations. “We initially planned to construct 1,000 housing units from the funds of the NEF but later found out that we have the capacity to provide around 400 houses more.”

Mr Duval explained that apart from the ISDP project, his ministry is also working on other housing projects such as the Emergency Housing project which targets families who are living in absolute poverty with a monthly salary below Rs5000.

“These families who will obtain the emergency housing units must not have any plot of land belonging to them or their parents to be able to qualify. Up to now, 511 such houses have already been constructed, including 100 in Rodrigues, and we will construct a total of 1,000 houses by the end of this year.”

He explained that another type of emer-



● Minister Xavier Duval, above; A model of the proposed integrated village project at Gros Cailloux.

gency housing targets vulnerable families who have a plot of land. The houses will be constructed of concrete and with corrugated iron sheets. “We expect to deliver 200 houses of this type by the end of the year.”

Mr Duval also said that they are also working on the relocation of new demolished last year would get their new housing units by February next year.

“The Ministry of Housing and Lands allocated 29 plots of land for the squatters. However, we have selected six other families in Dubreuil with a monthly salary below Rs5000 who will also benefit from the housing units. The construction of these housing units will start next month.

“The houses will be sold to the former squatters at Rs250,000 which is half the cost of construction.”

Mr Duval added that 40 houses will be constructed for former squatters in Cite Marjolain, 109 plots of land have already been allocated for housing projects targeting former squatters in Caro Calyptus and the African Town project is also underway.

Mr Duval led a delegation to South Africa yesterday evening where they will look at the various poverty and integration projects which have been implemented by the South African government.