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On World Environmental Day

Guyana assents to EPA

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PRIME Minister, Mr Sam Hinds formally launched a national Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) yesterday, stating, emphasis will be placed on training and recruiting staff for monitoring and enforcement.

The launching followed passage of the Environmental Protection Act in Parliament on May 6.

Hinds gave formal assent for the new establishment at a special ceremony to mark World Environment Day at the National Cultural Centre in Georgetown.

He said the body will absorb the current Environmental Unit, based at the Office of the President and a full board of directors will be named shortly.

An inter-agency committee is also to be activated.

The structure and composition of the EPA are based on many consultations, like the process which led to the passing of the legislation, Hinds explained.

Representatives of Government agencies, the private sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and technical experts have examined the tasks to be carried out in different sectors, the staff and resources necessary, and ways in which co-operation with sectoral agencies can be best arranged.

The Prime Minister noted these considerations cannot be regarded as absolute but provide a guide for the way in which the agency is to be built.

Its wide range of functions will require considerable staff

and facilities, and it will not be possible to obtain all of it immediately.

The body is expected to grow in strength gradually and steadily, and Hinds said strenuous efforts will be made to recruit new staff and where necessary, there will be part-time appointments.

Emphasis is to be placed on recruiting and training staff for monitoring and enforcement and hinterland residents will be specially included, he explained.

Simultaneously, a wide scale environmental education and public awareness programme will be maintained to encourage self-monitoring and environmentally sound behaviour.

Laboratory facilities will be developed for monitoring.

Hinds thanked the Inter-American Development and

World Banks, and the United Nations Development Programme for support in the preparatory work leading to the launching and said the authorities look forward to their continued assistance during the testing period ahead.

He added that continuous work has to be done to develop regulations to support the legislation and said legal experts will work closely with the private sector and NGO's to make the resolutions broadly acceptable.

"The Government of Guyana is fully committed to pursue a path of sustainable development. As a nation, we need to rapidly accelerate the growth of our economy and for this, the utilisation of our natural resources is vital."

Hinds noted several
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