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DEAL near: Prime Minister Sam Hinds and others at the briefing yesterday.

Firms near accord on new mining exploration

(from page one)

the areas of the Timber Sales Agreement (TSA).

The Prime Minister noted that persons who enter into a TSA usually have some long-term commitments to the area where there are environmental issues and relationships with the local people, particularly Amerindians.

In November 1995, the GGMC published in the Official Gazette its intention to grant prospecting licences to Golden Star Resources Limited to explore for gold and diamonds in the North West District.

On January 22, 1996 Golden Star was informed approval had been granted for issuing nine

prospecting licences, including those gazetted in November 1995.

Subsequent to this, Barama submitted a formal petition to President Cheddi Jagan on January 11, 1996 objecting to the intended granting of five prospecting licences to Golden Star for properties within its concession, officials said.

The primary grounds to the objection were that exploration activities within the concession would compromise BCL's ability and legal right to beneficially utilise the timber resources, and also compromise the integrity of its sustainable harvesting and environmental programmes put in place as stipulated in its agreement with the

Guyana Government.

Since then a resolution of the problem has been sought through the intervention of the Prime Minister who chaired a meeting between the management of both companies early last month.

Discussions have reportedly reached the point where protocols governing the environmental and operational aspects of the agreement are being finalised.

Officials said these talks are continuing in an atmosphere of cooperation and good faith with the understanding that a mutually acceptable solution would be for the benefit of all parties involved.

The parties hope the imminent signing of the proposed

agreement will signal the beginning of a new phase in the extractive industry, where companies in timber and mineral extraction could collaborate and co-exist in a manner befitting of responsible corporate citizens while at the same contributing to the development of Guyana.

Among those at yesterday's briefing were Executive Director of Golden Star Resources, Mr Hilbert Shields and other officials and GGMC Commissioner, Mr Brian Sucre and his Deputy, Mr William Woolford.

Golden Star Resources is one of the shareholders in the Omai gold mine, owned largely by another Canadian firm, Cambior. (ROBERT BAZIL)