Guyana assents to EPA

pressures to restrain investments. some of which have been based on low levels of expertise and overall capacity to effectively monitor the operations. especially in forestry and mining.

But some people have taken positions based on inadequate information and misrepresentations

"We recognise that operations in forestry and mining in Guyana (and) other countries of the world. have led to various degrees of environmental degradation.

"Certain attitudes and practices of operators require that a strong system of monitoring be put in place to limit the damage which may arise from these operations." he told a big gathering of schoolchildren, members of the diplomatic corps and other officials.

Hinds added that Guyana. like many other developing countries. must rapidly create the very strong monitoring capacity required.

The country welcomes assistance to overcome the shortage of trained personnel, inadequacy of relevant staff and the inability to properly equip agencies which bear the responsibility for monitoring and enforcement. he stated

Recognising these limitations. the authorities have been approaching new investments with great caution. especially in the forestry sector.

But steps are being taken to strengthen the capacity of key agencies like the Guyana Forestry Commission, which is receiving assistance from the British-based Overseas Development Administration.

While this is taking place. the conditions for the new investments and the nature of exploratory leases have been established. the Prime Minister explained.

New investments will. therefore. be made in an organised way and under strict conditions. aimed at ensuring sustainability.

With the passing of the Bill. a comprehensive approach to environmental protection has been developed, as it requires environmental impact assessments as a condition for permitting certain operations.

The legislation also establishes procedures for their review and identifies polluting activities as offences and provides for appropriate penalties.

Hinds said the EPA will not operate in isolation and a number of special working groups will be set up to support its efforts and staff.

He encouraged individuals and organisations to give meaningful assistance to it. especially in its stage of infancy.

In addition. the Government is establishing a National Protected Areas System (NPAS) with support from the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Hinds said the lack of expertise or incapacity must not hinder the development thrust of countries, and the more developed states need to assist those least developed to build their capacity to ensure development proceeds on a sustainable basis.

"A new relationship is necessary," he observed. adding, Guyana has been making a serious effort to contribute to the global effort of promoting sustainable development

On March 15, Parliament approved the establishment of the Iwokrama Rainforest Centre, giving legal status to a programme for which almost 1M acres of pristine tropical rainforest have been set aside.

The site is expected to serve as a huge, open laboratory to give scientific basis to the concept of sustainable utilisation of the resources of the forest.

Emphasis will be placed on the real and potential uses of the

resource. for example, in producing pharmaceuticals, its role in slowing the rush of rainfall to the rivers and oceans, and as the lungs of the world to remove carbon dioxide and supply oxygen to the atmosphere.

World Environment Day coincided with Iwokrama Foundation Day and GEF Chairman and Chief Executive Office. Dr Mohamed El-Ashry delivered a special lecture. titled 'Global Environmental Security.'

Environmental Advisor to the President, Mr Navin Chandarpal and Co-ordinator of Environmental Affairs. Office of the President, Dr Lake Chatarpal also spoke at the ceremony.

Calypsonians 'Tempest' and 'Ayambo' did a special song and Ms Rosamund Addo recited a fitting poem during the programme.

It was held under the global theme of 'Our Earth, Our Habitat, Our Home'.