

Firms near accord on new mining exploration

BY ROBERT BAZIL

GOLDEN Star Resources Limited and the Barama logging firm are on the verge of signing an agreement for gold and diamond exploration in the North West District.

Prime Minister Sam Hinds, who made the announcement at a press briefing yesterday, said parts of the land being looked at by Golden Star are entirely or partially within the forestry concession Barama has in the area.

President Cheddi Jagan recently called for maximum use of land to speed up development of the country's resources.

In 1993, Golden Star sought permission from the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to conduct geological and geographical surveys for gold and diamonds over certain tracts in northwestern Guyana.

This permission was granted by the Prime Minister on January 14, 1994, after which the company embarked on a work programme, officials explained yesterday.

As the programme progressed, it became clear that difficulties could arise on multiple land use issues because some of the land is located within the Barama timber concession.

These issues include the use of infrastructure such as bridges and roads, and medical facilities, the officials said.

However, the primary concern was environmental matters explicitly mentioned in the For-

est Management Plan the Barama Company Limited (BCL) was required to submit to the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) as part of its agreement with the Government.

Prime Minister Hinds said these conditions were intended to cover the efficient management of the company's logging operations, to avoid or minimise degradation of the environment because of over-harvesting or unnecessary destruction of unusable timber resources.

BCL created mechanisms to fulfill this objective, the more important being the establishment of its Block Management System, biodiversity reserves and research plots administered by the Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests.

According to Hinds, for-

estry companies are operating in forested areas, but there is also a need for firms going there to explore for minerals.

"The average situation is that, may be, five per cent of an area in the hinterland or anywhere would yield minerals sufficient to make an economic venture, and we need to have an arrangement with the mineral companies to explore all of Guyana, essentially, and from time to time where they do find potentially or finally a mine...we have to make arrangements for that," he explained.

He said the Barama agreement with the Government includes a clause under which the firm has first refusal - the right to put a proposal for any kind of mineral development within
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