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## Bai Shan Lin in new bid for large scale logging

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Controversial Chinese company Bai Shan Lin International Forest Development Inc has submitted an application to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for an environmental authorization to undertake large scale logging in parts of regions six and nine, according to a notice in yesterday's Sunday Stabroek.

It appeared to be a re-application for a process that had started last year. The notice said that Bai Shan Lin is seeking to undertake the operation within SFEP 01/2011 where Area A is located at the left bank of the Essequibo River, right bank Rewa River, right bank Aktayaru Creek, and Area B: sited at the left bank of the Berbice River, right bank of the Essequibo River and within SFEP 01/2013, located at the left bank, Corentyne River, left bank Lysles River, right bank Berbice River and right bank, Powis River, regions 9 and 6.

The notice said that the project would entail the felling, extraction of timber, transportation of same to a processing facility, grading, construction of roads, skid trails, bridges, culverts and camps.

The EPA said it recognises that since this development may have significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required under the Environmental Protection Act, No.11, 1996 .

It invited members of the public within 28 days of this notice to make written submissions to the agency setting out questions and matters which they require to be answered in the EIA.

A summary of the project can be viewed on the EPA's website at [www.epaguyana.org](http://www.epaguyana.org) and comments should be addressed to the Environmental Protection Agency, C/o Director - Environmental Management Compliance Division, Ganges Street, Sophia, Georgetown.

In August last year, North Rupununi, community leaders had raised concerns with the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) Board in Annai about the planned large scale logging but left the meeting dissatisfied with the responses received.

"I was not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting," Chairman of the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) Michael Williams had told Stabroek News. He added though that he appreciated the fact that the GFC Board took some time to meet with the leaders even as he said that time was an issue. "All the questions were not raised because of

the time limit,” he said.

Several representatives of the area, including toshaos, met with the GFC Board of Directors and in a two and a half hours meeting, the GFC spent half the time defending the operations of Bai Shan Lin, attendees at the meeting had told Stabroek News. Williams described the meeting as “top to bottom” and said that the GFC “came to clear their names,” in light of media reports regarding the logging company.

The NRDDDB Chairman told Stabroek News that the GFC representatives did not disclose much. “All they were saying and continuing to say to us was that the process was now starting,” he said, while voicing his own skepticism about the GFC’s claims. “They (GFC) were saying that things were not happening,” he said, but the communities have been told by sources who have ventured into the area that roads are being built, logs harvested and wildlife is being hunted in great quantities. He questioned how this could be so when the company is supposed to still be in the exploratory stage.

Williams, a former toshao of Annai, said that the GFC representatives had told them that the process of dialogue has now begun.

Bai Shan Lin in June last year applied to the EPA for permission for the identical things sought in yesterday’s notice.

Chief Executive Officer of the NRDDDB Ivor Marslow had told Stabroek News at the hearing last year that Apoteri, particularly, was concerned because the Bai Shan Lin concession borders the community. “Once there is road access, all sorts of hunting and thing start to happen,” he said. He had recalled that the community had requested that the area be classified as a conservation area but there has been no response from the authorities.

Marslow had noted that Apoteri has a fledging eco-tourism operation and “if there is mass exploitation, there would be nothing” for people to see. “Logging brings people and people bring changes to the environment,” he noted.

Bai Shan Lin has announced big plans in various sectors for Guyana but concerns have been raised by some analysts that its primary interest is logs for export, with little downstream processing. Its operations have come under increased scrutiny in recent times.

The company has failed to live up to commitments to do value-added processing but former government officials, including President Donald Ramotar, had defended the company. Bai Shan Lin’s access to key parts of the economy has also raised questions about the regulation of its business by the forestry commission and associated bodies.

While in opposition, both APNU and the AFC had expressed concerns about Bai Shan Lin’s activities here.

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By **Staff Writer** July 20, 2015

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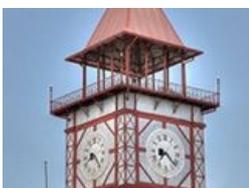
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