

Command centre to fight illegal deforestation

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CAMERON HIGHLANDS: A command centre, under the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry, will be set up to manage and patrol forest areas to deter unscrupulous people from clearing land here.

"We will streamline and have a systematic approach to patrol the forest areas to try to catch and stop people from burning and cutting down trees," ministry secretary-general Datuk Seri Zool Azha Yusoff told the media yesterday.

Earlier, he accompanied minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel on a visit to a site that had been cleared in Lojing, Kelantan.

Zool Azha said government agencies involved in the command centre included the Land Office and the Drainage and Irrigation Department.

"At the moment, we have 10 to 15 officers involved and they will be conducting the patrols," he said, adding that unmanned aerial drones would be used to capture photo-



Environmental damage: Palanivel and the media visiting the illegally cleared land in Lojing. A stream there has become silted up as a result. — Bernama

graphs of culprits in action.

Palanivel said he would discuss with Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail

Sabri Yaakob on issuing temporary occupation licences (TOLs) to certain farmers to stop them from clearing new land.

"We can't evict them. Agriculture is important. But the farmers need to follow regulations," said Palanivel, who is Cameron Highlands MP.