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## New locations for farmers to curb illegal land exploration

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is looking for a suitable new location for farmers in a move to control illegal land exploration activities, besides reducing landslides and floods in Cameron Highlands.

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Datuk Seri G. Palanivel said he had discussed with district officials, the land office and the Menteri Besar's office to identify suitable land for the farmers in the near future.

He said illegal land exploration activities should be prevented immediately because it affected the tourism industry in the highlands and had adverse effects on the environment.

"The main problem in Cameron Highlands is that illegal land exploration is not controlled. I'm not sure who gave the power to these farmers to carry out their agricultural activities on the hill," he said at a news conference after the opening of the Conference on Forestry and Forest Products Research (CFFPR) 2013 here, today.

Palanivel said that each farmer involved in illegal land exploration 'seized' an area of between 0.8 and 1.6 hectares of state land, despite the Pahang government having endorsed 5,705.17 hectares land with temporary occupation licence (TOL) for these

"As the agricultural products from Cameron Highlands contribute more than RM2 billion to the country's exports, I will discuss with the parties concerned to provide new land plots to increase exports," he said.

In another development, Palanivel said the Forest Research Institute, Malaysia (FRIM) is looking for a good site in the city to develop a 'A Forest In the City' in Sungai Besi as a new attraction for local and foreign tourists.

"Malaysian forest is a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. However, the ministry will have to spend RM1 billion like Singapore to develop an urban forest (as mentioned) and will get the private sector to contribute," he added.

-Bernama