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DOE, States to jointly monitor development activities in highlands

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Representatives of the Department of Environment and State governments are to sit on the same task force to monitor development activities in highland areas, instead of working separately, DOE director-general Rosnani Ibrahim said today.

In the past, State authorities did their own monitoring with assistance from the department, she told the New Straits Times.

The DOE task force on highland monitoring held its first meeting today, chaired by Rosnani.

She said State authorities, the Forestry, Wildlife and National Parks and Drainage and Irrigation departments and the Malaysian Centre for Remote Sensing (Macres) would be invited to the next meeting.

The task force is to report to the special Cabinet committee on highland development of which Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding is chairman. The committee was set up at the request of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Today, the task force laid the groundwork and delegated duties which is basically to collect data," Rosnani said.

The task force will focus on Cameron Highlands first before looking at other areas. It is to monitor existing development projects there while planning further recommendations on the area.

Rosnani said there was no deadline for the task force as its work would be on-going.

The Cabinet committee on highland development was set up following analysis of satellite data which showed that forest cover in Cameron Highlands had declined by two per cent between 1991 and this year.

Law had said the committee might propose a total ban on highland development but had added that if so, it would be up to the States to adopt it.

New highland development projects have been put on hold pending the committee's decision.

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