

Ministry a toothless tiger, says Azmi

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THE Lojing Highlands controversy has taken another twist.

This time, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said, his ministry was a toothless tiger that could only watch the destruction of the Lojing Highlands from afar.

"The only thing that my ministry has the power to do is to expose the wrongdoings of the Kelantan government and let the rakyat decide what is best for them," he said at the parliament lobby, yesterday.

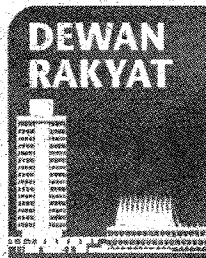
Azmi revealed that the state government had given out a total of 1,200 hectares to three companies owned by Singaporeans.

He said the companies were developing an area in the south-west of the Lojing Highlands.

"We found out that a 20km road is being built in the area and so far 7km have been completed."

Azmi said the deforestation of the area was appalling and Sungai Pelandok had also been polluted by it.

"I believe the area is worth millions of ringgit as it is a vir-



■ Reports by V. Vasudevan and June Ramli

gin forest with a lot of timber and other natural resources."

Azmi said he was not being childish when he raised the issue and that he did so because of his concern for the environment.

"It is not nice to mix politics and my concern for the environment," he said.

"So I would like to tell Datuk Husam Musa (Kelantan Exco member in charge of Finance) that I am not being childish but what I am doing is to protect the environment."

Husam had accused Azmi of being childish in the *Sinar Harapan* newspaper yesterday. This newspaper is only

circulated in the East Coast.

Asked what he would do if the Kelantan government still

persisted in cutting down the trees in Lojing, he said: "Well, we cannot do much, all we can

do is to watch from afar.

"We cannot even issue a stop-work order."