

PERTAHANKAN HUTAN SIMPAN KUALA LANGAT UTARA (PHSKLU)

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PRESS RELEASE: WITHDRAW PROPOSAL TO DEGAZETTE HUTAN SIMPAN KUALA LANGAT UTARA IMMEDIATELY

The **Pertahankan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara (PHSKLU)** coalition is calling for the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to degazette the North Kuala Langat Forest Reserve. In a letter dated 4 December 2020, we invited the honourable Menteri Besar (MB) of Selangor to discuss the matter with us. We have yet to receive any response from the honourable MB's office.

We would like to remind the honourable MB that the public has objected, the Temuan community has objected, environment NGOs have objected, special interest groups have objected, the elected Selangor State Assembly Representatives have objected, Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) at State and Federal have objected, Forestry Department of Semenanjung Malaysia and the Minister of Environment and Water have both objected.

State Assembly – Usul No. 26

Usul No. 26 was unanimously passed on 11 November 2020 in the Selangor State Assembly. The motion was aimed to **protect all gazetted forest reserves in Selangor**, to ensure the conservation and protection of water catchment and forest areas. As there was no objection from any of the elected State Assembly Representatives, it can be concluded that this motion reflects the wishes of the people of Selangor, and that is, they wish to see **NO MORE DEGAZETEMENT OF ANY FOREST RESERVES**.

Public Objection

Usul No. 26 came on the heels to the state receiving 45,000 objections to the degazette proposal. In addition there have been numerous citizen-led online petitions including:

1. *Concerned Malaysians*: 46,112 signed via change.org
<https://www.change.org/p/tn-hj-mohd-ridzuwan-b-endot>
2. *Coalition of the Protection of Selangor's Forests*: 31,035 signed via change.org
<https://www.change.org/p/dato-menteri-besar-selangor-selamatkan-hutan-simpan-kuala-langat-utara>
(this Coalition collected a total of **43,502 objections**, consisting of 14,000 individual objection letters and 29,502 online petitions and emails which then submitted to Selangor State government on 5th March 2020)
1. *Dewan Pemuda Pas Kuala Langat*: 29,544 signed via change.org
<https://www.change.org/p/jabatan-perhutanan-negeri-selangor-selamatkan-hutan-simpan-kuala-langat-utara>
4. *Norina Abdul Rahman*: 22,341 signed via change.org
<https://www.change.org/p/jabatan-perhutanan-negeri-selangor-petition-on-development-of-hutan-simpan-kuala-langat-utara?>

The total online signatures come up to 129,034. We do not think these numbers are irrelevant and reflect the public's objection to this proposal.

There was also our email campaign hosted on the Greenpeace website which drew 1,500 emails in 2 weeks (29 October to 11 November 2020) from the public to elected State Assembly Representatives (ADUNs). These emails reflected the sender's objection to the degazettement and encouraged the ADUNs to officially state their position on a published green scorecard. In addition, about 200 Orang Asli from several villagers staged a peaceful demonstration at Bangunan SUK while handing over a memorandum stating their objections to the Menteri Besar and the relevant agencies on 26 February 2020.

We would like to echo the sentiment of Shaq Koyok, a Temuan from the village affected by the degazettement, *"Why is always that orang asli land has to make way for development? Why can't development be on unused land or land that has no more economic purpose? Today, everyone knows the forest is critical for our planet's survival, yet we want to destroy them and also displace communities that live near the forest. It is about time we stop destroying our national treasures and remember Kuala Langat is a 8,000 year forest and it cannot be replaced by the simple way of planting trees in another area."*

We are also not persuaded there are merits in degazetting a forest reserve that contributes positively to our planet and our quality of life, in exchange for a mixed development project with will release further carbon emissions leading to further greenhouse warming.

The forest is also not only home to the Temuan community and plants, but also the animals under Jabatan Perlindungan Hidupan Liar dan Taman Negara (Perhilitan)'s own list of Vulnerable Mammals including the Malayan Sun Bear. The honourable MB had stated, *"Some of the objections were irrelevant, for example, the ones on (threats to) endangered species. Yes, they (the species) can be found in the area, but they are also found in other areas and are not as endangered as the word used (to describe them)."* We understand the words "endangered" and "vulnerable" do not mean these species cannot be found elsewhere, but they are in the danger of disappearing. Therefore, necessary steps must be taken to protect them and ensure they do not disappear further, regardless if the species can be found elsewhere. Unfortunately, we believe the honourable MB's statement can be construed as irresponsible and shows a complete lack of respect for local biodiversity, not to mention the cultural rights of the Temuan community and their relationship to the flora and fauna of KLNFR.

With these clear objections from the public and the people of Selangor, we would like to request that the proposal to degazette Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara be withdrawn immediately.

FURTHER INFO

The biological and cultural importance of the North Kuala Langat Forest Reserve cannot be stated enough, these facts include:

- Besides being environmentally sensitive, the forest reserve is also critical to the life and culture of Temuan Orang Asli communities that have lived in the area for hundreds of years with the earliest documentation found in 1886. Degazettement of the land is robbing their rights to use the forest that was incorporated into the Gazettement Notice for the forest reserve in 1927. KLNFR is also home to rare, endemic and endangered species of flora and fauna. Taking away the wildlife habitat will jeopardize the sustainability of the wildlife and potentially raise human and animal conflicts.

- KLNFR also plays an important role to mitigate climate change. It has the capacity to store carbon up to 1,600 Mg C ha⁻¹ per hectare and the total stored stock capacity of KLNFR is approximately 1,500,000 tonnes of C. An estimated 5.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions can also be avoided if the KLNFR is not developed and maintained as a Permanent Reserved Forest.
- The proposed degazettement totally ignores the existing policies of the state government. KLNFR is an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA/KSAS) - Rank 1 under the Third National Physical Plan (RFN-3) and Disaster Risk KSAS under Development Goal Policy 16 (MP16) in the Selangor State Structure Plan 2035 (RSN). It is also designated as a conservation area under the recently gazetted Local Plan for Kuala Langat District (to 2030). Under these plans, no development of any type is allowed in the KLNFR – to avoid serious environmental, economic and social impacts.
- The proposed de-gazettement of KLNFR is also not in line with the National Action Plan for Peatlands (2011-2020), the National Policy on Biological Diversity (2016-2025) and the National Land Code (1965) related to conservation and protection of environmental resources as well as Malaysia's obligations under international agreements and conventions.

For any clarification, please contact Suresh Kumar at 019-569-6964 or peoplesbhr@suaram.net.

This press release was prepared by members of members of PHSKLU as below:

1. **Pertubuhan Pelindung Khazanah Alam (PEKA)**
2. **SUARAM (Suara Rakyat Malaysia)**
3. **Persatuan Kesedaran dan Keadilan Iklim Malaysia (Klima Action Malaysia- KAMY)**
4. **Five Arts Centre**
5. **Persatuan Tindakan Alam Sekitar Kuala Langat**
6. **EMPOWER Malaysia**
7. **Greenpeace Malaysia**
8. **Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM)**
9. **Persatuan Aktivis Sahabat Alam (KUASA)**
10. **Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC)**
11. **Global Environment Centre (GEC)**
12. **Pertubuhan Alam Sekitar Sejahtera (GRASS) Malaysia**
13. **Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) Selangor Branch**
14. **Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)**
15. **Treat Every Environment Special Sdn Bhd (TrEES)**