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7 SEPTEMBER 2021

**SELANGOR STATE GOVERNMENT MUST PRESENT THE TRUTH ABOUT
THE DEGAZETTED PORTION OF KUALA LANGAT NORTH FOREST RESERVE (KLNFR)**

SELANGOR 7 September 2021: The Pertahankan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara (PHSKLU) Coalition demands that the Selangor State Government immediately revokes the degazettement of 536.7ha of the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve and stops making false claims to justify its action.

THE FALSE CLAIMS

In trying to justify its action to degazette 536.7ha of the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve on 12 August 2021, the state government has made a number of **FALSE and MISLEADING CLAIMS** including:

- a. The forest is always burning; degazetting and developing the forested areas is claimed to be the best way to stop the fires;
- b. The forest is all degraded and there are no tall trees in the forest to be degazetted;
- c. The forest is too small, is surrounded by development and is not viable for conservation;
- d. The local Orang Asli community no longer visits or depends on the forests;
- e. The Orang Asli community supports the degazettement.

The TRUTH

The PHSKLU can easily refute the above false claims based on the evidence its members have gathered over many years as well as testimony from the Orang Asli community.

1) No significant fires have burnt since 2016

Prior to 2016, there were fires which affected HSKLU, almost all of which started in adjacent areas – namely the Elite Highway to KLIA which lies to the west, and the land developed for Gamuda Cove to the south, which spread into the forested area in times of drought. In 2016, 10,000 trees were planted, as part of a collaboration between the local Orang Asli community, Forestry Department and adjacent landowners including Boh Plantation Estate and Gamuda Cove. Actions were also taken to prevent fires by blocking drains and raising water levels and conducting daily fire prevention patrols around the perimeter of the forest. As a result, there have been only two relatively small fires in the past five years and neither were in the area proposed for degazettement. **More than 300 hectares of the forest area impacted by fire have recovered well**, with the regrowth of medium to tall forest or planting of trees by the Orang Asli community.

Clearing and draining the degazetted portion of the site will disrupt the hydrology and lead to significantly increased risk of fires, releasing the stored carbon, and accelerating global warming. Degazetting this site will also be a waste of public funds as approximately RM2.2 million has been spent to build fire prevention infrastructure in the forest reserve.

2) 98% of the degazetted area has forest cover and 50% consist of tall trees

The area degazetted by the state in August 2021 is dominated by good forests with tall trees and high diversity of species. Areas damaged by fire in 2014 have recovered to medium-height forest (5-10m tall). An assessment in September 2021 has indicated that the degazetted area includes the following mix of forest types:

Breakdown of land cover types for the degazetted area is as follows:

Vegetation cover	Hectares	Percentage
High quality, tall forest	265 ha	49.38%
Medium height forest	259 ha	48.26%
Low forest/shrub	8.5ha	1.58%
Orang Asli cultivation land	4.2 ha	0.78%
Total	536.7	100.00%

Recent photographs and analysis of satellite images of the forest are in **Appendix 1**.

3) The forest is ecologically viable due to the unique geographic features

The KLNFR covers an area of 957.63 hectares or nearly 10 square kilometers. It comprises a mix of lowland dipterocarp forest and peat swamp forests. The peat swamp forest is surrounded on three sides by low hills, which channel water to maintain water levels in the forest and prevent drainage. The forest, although originally larger, has been the same size for the past 30 years and there is no indication that there has been any reduction in plant and animal species. A 2020 study commissioned by the Selangor government confirmed it is a High Conservation Value (HCV) area with up to 123 flora and 124 fauna species found. The forest is an important habitat of critically endangered plant and animal species, including several endemic flora species such as Setawar (*Cheloctus globosus*), Kandis (*Garcinia mangayi*), and Penarahan (*Knema plumose*) and endangered fauna species such as Sunda Pangolin (*Manis javanica*), Pig-tailed Macaque (*Macaca nemestrina*), White-handed Gibbon (*Hylobates lar*). The endemic Langat Red Betta (*Betta livida*) is only found in this and one other location in the world.

Therefore, **if the area is split into two by the degazettement** and the northern portion of the site developed for mixed development, **the hydrology and ecology of the remaining area will be severely disrupted** and it may not be ecologically viable (at least for larger species).

4) The Orang Asli community visits and uses the forest on a daily basis

When the forest was first gazetted as a Forest Reserve in 1927, the rights of the Orang Asli community were officially recognised to live within the forest, harvest forest products, manage dusuns and use the water resources. The Orang Asli have a close cultural affinity with the forest and some still depend on it for livelihood and welfare. Clearing and developing the area for a mixed development project will destroy the heritage of the community. It will also intensify the human-wildlife conflicts in the area for the community because it means that people and the various wildlife will have to occupy and share the reduced amount of forest area.

The degazetted area is immediately adjacent to the houses of Kg Orang Asli Busut Baru. This is one of the largest Orang Asli villages in Kuala Langat (with a population of nearly 450) and

the community has a very close connection to the forest, relying on food and medicinal plants from the forest and undertaking many community and cultural activities in the area.

Some community members have established small dusuns inside the forest, all of which will also be lost with the degazettement. Although their houses are just outside (within 5-10m distance) of the area that has been degazetted, loss of the forest and construction of a mixed development project at their doorstep will have a fundamental, major and negative impact on their lives. **There has been zero meaningful consultation with the affected Orang Asli community members in relation to the degazettement of the forest.** Further information can be found in **Appendix 2.**

5) The vast majority of the Orang Asli community support the protection of the forest

After the initial announcement of the proposed degazettement of the Forest Reserve, the leaders and residents of the five Orang Asli villages in the area around the forest **have repeatedly strongly objected, and demonstrated publicly** to the degazettement. They have also presented memoranda to the State government asking for the proposal to be dropped. Subsequently, community members and leaders received threats and were warned that their houses and existing village land would be taken away if they continued to support the protection of the forest. Some village leaders were pressured to sign a letter indicating that they would drop their objections to the degazettement if their villages were gazetted as Orang Asli Reserves. Nevertheless, many of the leaders and community members have continued to object to the degazettement of the forest over the last 18 months.

ACTION

The Pertahankan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara (PHSKLU) Coalition demands that the Selangor state government immediately revoke the degazettement of the 536.7ha of the KLNFR and work with the Orang Asli communities and other stakeholders to protect KLNFR as a critical carbon-storing ecosystem for climate mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity conservation as well as develop meaningful sustainable livelihoods for the Orang Asli community based on the forest such as ecotourism or edutourism.

For more information, please contact the secretariat at 019-569-6964 (Suresh Kumar) or by email peoplesbhr@suaram.net. This statement was prepared by the PHSKLU coalition which consist of:

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

Appendix 1: Forest condition in degazetted area of KLNFR

The area degazetted from the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve in 12 August covers 536.7ha and is all located in the northern portion of the Forest reserve. It is surrounded by BOH Plantations in the west, Saujana Putra in the north, Elite Highway in the east and Kampung Orang Asli Busut Baru in the southwest. 98% of the area is covered by medium to tall forest with small areas of lowland forest and cultivation. The area consists of a mixture of 58.7 ha of lowland dipterocarp forest and 478 ha of peat swamp forest. Figure 1 explains the condition of forest cover and shows the types of ecosystems that exist and that no fire occurred from 2016-2021.

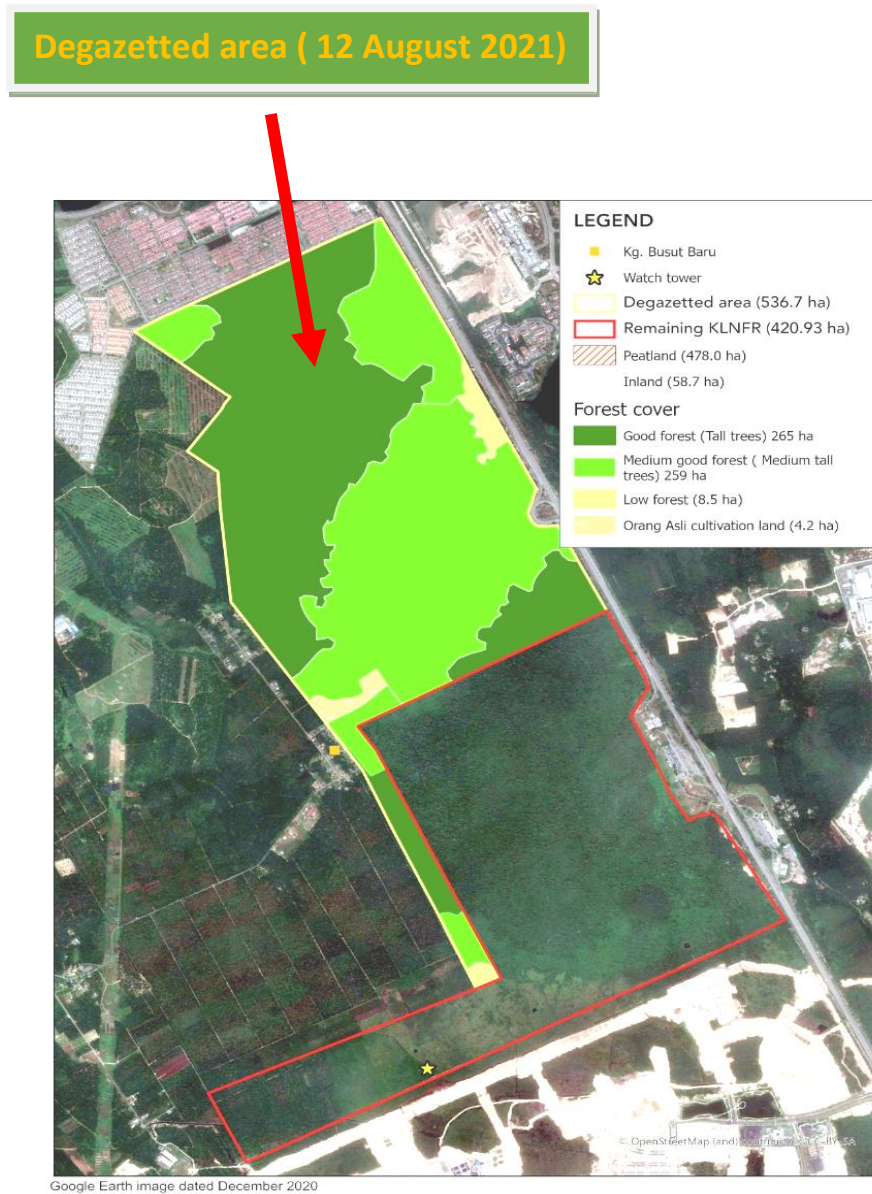
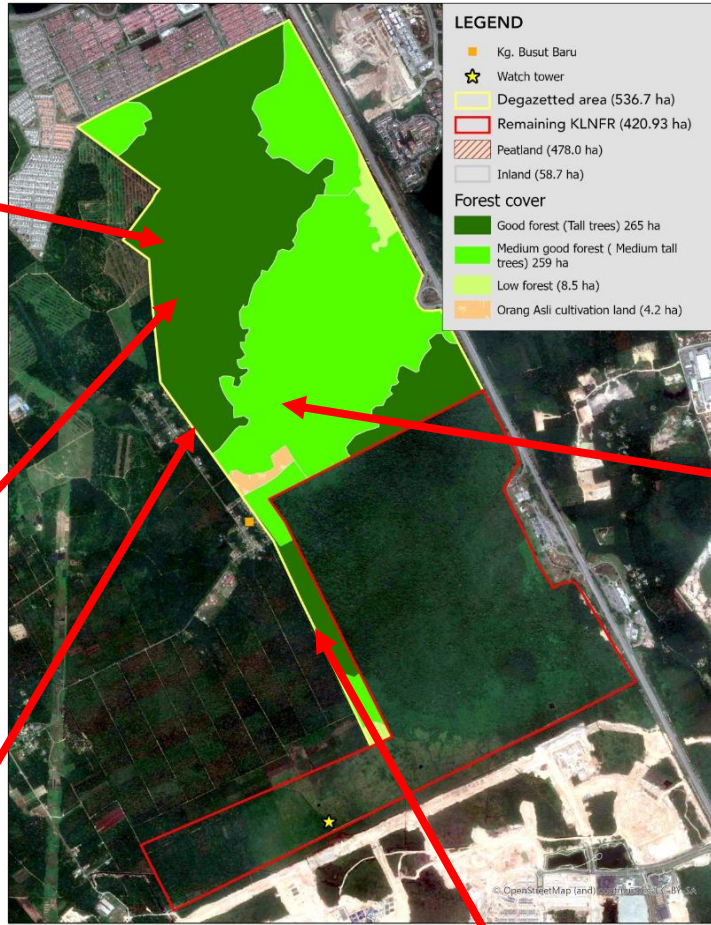
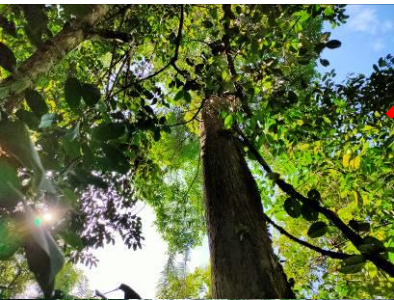


Figure 1 : Map of vegetation cover for the 536.7ha portion of the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve degazetted on 12 August 2021, based on satellite image of December 2020 and ground survey information

Breakdown of land cover types for the degazetted area is as follows;

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Total	536.7	100.00%

Good Forest

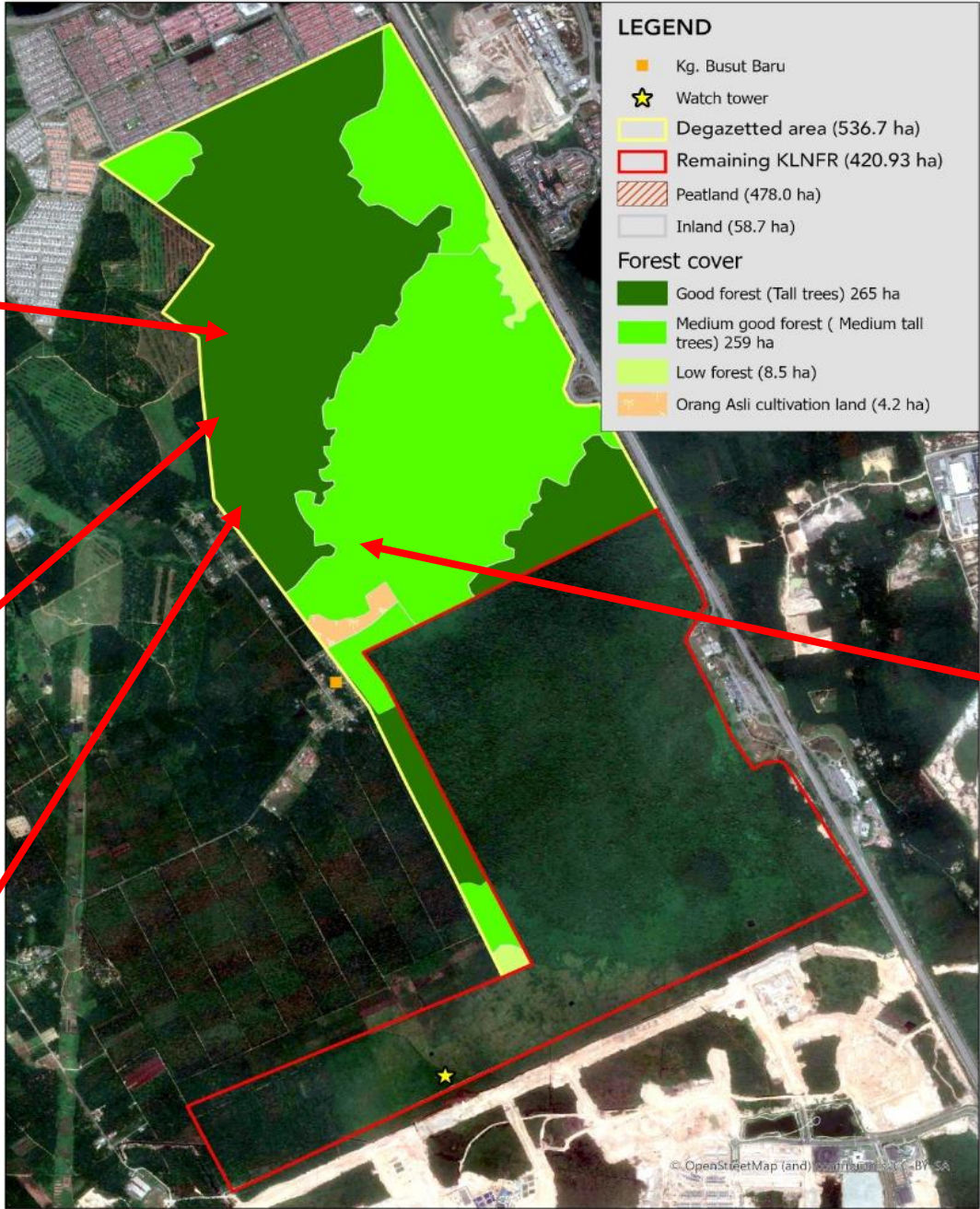


Google Earth image dated December 2020

Medium Good Forest

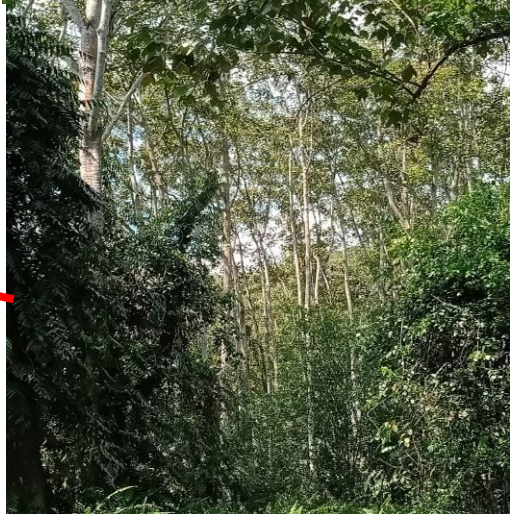


Good Forest



Google Earth image dated December 2020

Medium Good Forest



High quality, tall forest in area degazetted from the forest reserve (image in Sept 2021)



Appendix 2: Links to Media coverage on importance of HSKLU to Orang Asli

- Ayik Moyang Virtual HSKLU: Celebrating Ancestor Day_Online
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSW0rIJAVVU>
- 'Tok Batin, kecewa, sedih'
<https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2020/02/547626/tok-batin-kecewa-sedih>
- 'Orang Asli mohon MB S'gor pulihara Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat'
<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/511945>
- 'Forest is our home, please don't take it away from us'
<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/02/568344/forest-our-home-please-dont-take-it-away-us>
- 'Orang Asli berdemo mohon MB Selamatkan Hutan Kuala Langat'
<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/512270>
- 'Orang Asli, agencies, join in chorus against degazetting Kuala Langat Forest'
<https://malaysia.news.yahoo.com/orang-asli-agencies-join-chorus-234200856.html>
- 'Food, medicine, culture – Orang Asli on what Kuala Langat forest reserve means to them'
<https://annabelleleejiawen.com/2020/03/03/food-medicine-and-culture-orang-asli-on-what-kuala-langat-forest-reserve-means-to-them/>
- 'Orang Asli di Barisan Hadapan Perangi Perubahn Iklim'
<https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/orang-asli-di-barisan-hadapan-perangi-perubahan-iklim-267189?>
- Will Kuala Langat forest survive?
<https://www.facebook.com/553103392/posts/10158832912543393/>