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PHSKLU WELCOMES SELANGOR GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REVOKE DEGAZETTEMET OF KUALA LANGAT NORTH FOREST RESERVE (KLNFR)

The Pertahankan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara (PHSKLU) Coalition welcomes the decision of the Selangor state government to revoke the degazettement of the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve (KLNFR). At the same time, we urge the state government to promptly expedite the re-gazettement of KLNFR and enhance community management of the forest, as well as address the challenges facing the local Orang Asli community.

We thank the hundreds of thousands of people from Selangor and all over Malaysia who supported the campaign to protect the KLNFR over the past 18 months - through objection letters, petitions, and social media campaigning - as well as the many civil society organisations, research institutions, government agencies and private sector actors that have given their support towards this process.

We also thank: the national PKR leadership for their intervention; the ADUNs of Selangor for passing Motion (Usul) No. 26 last November to protect all forests in Selangor; the federal ministers and agencies for their strong comments; the special effort of Kg Orang Asli Busut Baru to resist pressure and stand up for their rights; and the Selangor Menteri Besar and Selangor State Executive Council (Exco) for listening to the People.

We also recognise the important role played by the local media in their extensive coverage of the issue over the past 18 months, including more than 200 articles and interviews in various languages. This is a testament to the potential of the fourth estate in educating and raising awareness on indigenous rights and environmental issues among the public.

At the same time, we remain concerned with how the state government had fast-tracked measures to benefit external parties through offering the land for development, while the local Orang Asli communities living around KLNFR have yet to receive basic support and services.

Despite living in the area for at least 130 years, they have no control or surety over their land and have been regularly threatened with eviction; they had their graveyards bulldozed and their plantations dug up for sand mining, while receiving little support for their livelihood and welfare. While the state had rushed the forest degazettement within a year, none of the villages have been gazetted as Orang Asli reserves, despite 10 years of promises by the government.

We are also concerned that, in the statement released by the Menteri Besar on Sept 8, 2021, the state is planning to retain a portion of this precious forest for the proposed development of the East Coast Railway Line (ECRL) project – despite the decision by the federal government to re-route the line 50km towards the North. In addition, the earlier alignment was several kilometres away from the degazetted forest, making it no longer appropriate to retain any land for the ECRL development project.

We call for the following urgent actions.

To the Selangor state government:

1. Within 30 days, re-gazette as forest reserve all of the degazetted area, except for the 40 hectares allocated to Kg Orang Asli Busut Baru.
2. Within three months, gazette the lands of the four Orang Asli villages adjacent to KLNFR, namely Kg Orang Asli Busut Baru, Kg Orang Asli Pulau Kempas, Kg Orang Asli Bukit Cheeding and Kg Orang Asli Bukit Kechil.
3. The Selangor Select Committee on Capability, Accountability, and Transparency (SELCAT) should thoroughly probe the serious problems apparent in the degazettement process over the last 24 months, including the lack of transparency, arbitrary decisions, poorly organised inquiry process, threats to local communities to withdraw objections; selection of and changes in developers etc.
4. Declassify and release the Laporan Cadangan Pemansuhan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat prepared by the Selangor Forestry Department based on the objections and public inquiry.
5. Use Motion (Usul) No. 26 as a guide for all future state development plans.
6. Take measures to strengthen the protection and governance of forests in Selangor to prevent degradation and arbitrary degazettement from taking place in future. This includes removing the power for degazettement from the Exco and empowering the Selangor State Legislative Assembly to make these decisions, while improving the process and transparency of public inquiries and stakeholder consultation.
7. Increase the allocation of resources for the protection and management of the KLNFR, as well as for the enhancement of the welfare and livelihoods of the Orang Asli community, including supporting the development of ecotourism and education facilities at the KLNFR so that the people of Selangor and the world can enjoy and learn from this unique environment.

To the federal government:

1. Actively engage with and support all state governments in Malaysia to incentivise the state governments to prioritise forest and peatland protection over development - to meet state, national and international commitments for environment and sustainable development.
2. Facilitate the provision of national and international funds to the states to help ensure that Environmentally Sensitive Areas like forests, peatlands, rivers, hills, and seas are protected from destruction for the sake of climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation purposes, while respecting safeguards including community rights.

To the *rakyat* and the media:

1. All who have supported the call to protect KLNFR, to remain engaged in supporting the future protection and management of the area and to support the Orang Asli communities who have been the guardians of the forest.

Last but not least, we urge all Selangor legislators and policymakers to make serious changes to safeguard all Environmentally Sensitive Areas as highlighted in the State Structure Plan 2035 and make an unwavering commitment to help combat climate change - one of the greatest threats to humanity.

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. Shaq Koyok, Orang Asli activist
15. SUARAM (Suara Rakyat Malaysia)
16. Treat Every Environment Special Sdn Bhd (TrEES)