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PHSKLU's Coalition Strongly Condemns the Degazettement of Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve (KLNFR) - humanity is in code red, why are we cutting down our forests?

The Pertahankan Hutan Simpan Kuala Langat Utara (PHSKLU) coalition strongly condemns the decision by the Selangor State Government, led by YAB Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari to degazette 536.7 hectares of the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve (KLNFR) on 5 May 2021.

1. Failure to Uphold Mandate from the People

The public have been very vocal and have strongly expressed their objections to the proposal for the past 2 years. The Department of Forestry itself received more than 45,000 objections. An online petition has garnered around 130,000 signatures. The #HutanPergiMana campaign in October 2020 tracked 1,500 persons who sent protest emails within a month to elected legislative representatives in Selangor.

This decision goes against the spirit and decision of Motion (Usul) 26 passed on 11 November 2020 by the Selangor State Assembly where the assembly unanimously voted to maintain the status of all forest reserves in the state of Selangor. The people of Selangor represented by their State Assembly Representatives have clearly stated - no more degazettement of any forest reserves in Selangor. **This decision to degazette HSKLU blatantly ignores the mandate of the people.**

The demand to withdraw this proposal has been repeatedly put forth by this coalition and many experts and members of the public have argued in defence of the unique nature of the 8,000 year old peat swamp forest, one of the last areas of peat swamp in southern Selangor.

The forest's importance to our ecosystem is multifold, as part of the hydrology system of Selangor as a carbon rich ecosystem classified as Rank 1 Environmental Sensitive Area under the National Physical Plan 3 which prohibits its conversion or development, in its role as habitat to countless plants and animals, and in its critical role in the livelihood and culture of the indigenous Temuan communities living there. The conversion of the forest will result in 3.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide being released, exacerbating the climate crisis for the state of Selangor, the country and the world.

2. Lack of Transparency & Accountability Over Decision

We condemn the lack of public consultation with key stakeholders and lack of detailed information on the process and results of the Public Inquiry into the degazettement of the KLNFR led by the Chairman of the State Exco on Tourism, Environment, Green Technology and Indigenous Affairs, YB Hee Loy Sian. This Public Inquiry was conducted a year ago (September 2020) without any reported results or further public discussions, leading to the absence of justification for the approval announced yesterday.

We also condemn the decision to pass the land to Gabungan Indah Sdn Bhd (linked to Samling Strategic Corporation Sdn Bhd) since it demonstrates the lack of credibility, transparency or good governance by the Selangor State government when it handed over land worth more than RM6 billion to a new company with RM1 paid up capital, no track record and only one director who does not even live in Selangor.

3. Humanity in Code Red

In a time of climate crisis, we are outraged to hear about this decision, just three weeks after the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was released on 9 August 2021 which warned us of irreversible damages and climate catastrophes if we do not take immediate climate action. The decision to degazette a forest reserve at this time demonstrates short-sightedness in pursuit of profit, and a serious lack of understanding of the severity of the climate crisis.

This decision goes against our obligations under several international treaties and conventions, such as the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as well as, existing national, state (Selangor State Structure Plan) and local (Kuala Langat) development plans and is inconsistent with environment, social and governance (ESG) principles adopted by the global business and financial sector.

4. Violation of Indigenous peoples' Cultural, Land, and Development Rights

This decision violates our duty to protect the rights of the 1,000 indigenous Temuan community, who are dependent on resources and materials obtained from the forest for food, herbs, medicine, water, and culture as well as their ability to sustain themselves and build community resilience post-Covid-19. This decision will clearly impact their lives and way of living. This decision will also result in large mammals being displaced and encroaching and disrupting nearby villages and farms.

This degazettement also disregards the successful community-based forestry management activities, valued at RM1.5 million conducted by indigenous and local communities as well as another RM2 million from the government to prevent fires and to rehabilitate parts of KLNFR that had previously been impacted by fires. Reforestation works involving more than 10,000 trees had been planted by community members working hard to protect and restore the forest in line with the request of the previous Selangor Menteri Besar.

It is a sad Merdeka Day as we consider how our founding fathers fought for our independence to ensure our right to life. For over 64 years, we have to ask ourselves as a nation, have we safeguarded the national treasures bestowed upon us, the natural assets that were passed to us for safekeeping for the next generation? Have we ensured equal rights for all including the customary rights of indigenous communities? The Selangor State's decision to degazette this national, natural treasure fails to provide for an inspired, progressive future, and only seeks to demoralise us, the Rakyat. We demand that the Menteri Besar of Selangor and Selangor State Government reverse their decision to degazette the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve and respect the people's objections, take immediate action to mitigate the climate crisis, and uphold customary land rights of the indigenous Temuan communities residing around the KLNFR.

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)**