



PRESS RELEASE

SAVE KUALA LANGAT NORTH FOREST RESERVE FROM DE-GAZETTEMET

Degazettment process should be suspended in light of COVID-19 Pandemic

For Immediate Release

SELANGOR, 26 MARCH 2020: The Coalition for the Protection of Selangor's Forests demands that the degazettment process for the Kuala Langat North Forest Reserve be suspended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The current Movement Control Order (MCO) and the suspending of activities by NGOs by the Registrar of Societies have made it impossible to have any proper assessment of impacts or dialogue on the proposed degazettment.

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the announcement of the MCO on 16 March 2020, the Coalition feels that the Selangor Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari's announcement at the Selangor State Legislative Assembly sitting on 17 March 2020 that the state government would soon conduct a public hearing session for the proposed degazettment, is inappropriate.

Leela Panikkar from Treat Every Environment Special (TrEES) and coordinator of the Coalition said, "The Registrar of Societies (RoS) on 16th March 2020, banned all societies from holding any activity until the end of June to curb the spread of Covid-19. The Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) on the same day, suspended visits to Orang Asli villages in the Peninsula. This has made it impossible for any dialogue and assessment of the importance of the forest reserve to the Orang Asli to take place. In addition, with the enforcement of the MCO on 18th March and its extension till 14 April, stakeholders are unable to consult and prepare for the public inquiry".

"With the banning of public gatherings related to the COVID-19 pandemic it is also not appropriate for the state to try and convene a public inquiry to which the Orang Asli communities and the more than 40,000 people who made objections, must be invited", said Faizal Parish of GEC, another member of the Coalition. We therefore call for the proposed Public Inquiry and any other steps in the process to consider degazettment to be postponed till after July 2020."

Hence, the Coalition for the Protection of Selangor's Forests strongly calls upon the Selangor State Government to formally suspend the de-gazettment process and to focus on the more important issues at hand; combatting the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the multiple impacts on the people and the local economy.

END

Notes

The Selangor State Government through the Selangor State Forestry Department had placed the proposal notice on the February 5, 2020 inviting stakeholders in the Kuala Langat district to voice their objections, which prompted various environmental and social NGOs and the public to join the Save KLNFR campaign. Formed in response to the notice, the Coalition for the Protection of Selangor's Forests, comprising of seven



environmental and social NGOs, collected 43,502 objections from the public and local residents of Kuala Langat district in just 20 days and presented to the State government on 5th March 2020.

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. Under these plans, no development is allowed in Environmentally Sensitive Areas Rank 1 – 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), the Land Conservation Act 1960 (Act 385) related to conservation and protection of environmental resources and Local Plan for Kuala Langat District 2030 as well as Malaysia's obligations under international agreements and conventions.

About the Coalition for the Protection of Selangor's Forests

The coalition of seven environmental organisations was formed due to our concern that Selangor is going to lose a very important peat swamp forest reserve that is rich in biodiversity and home to indigenous communities. The coalition advocates for the protection and conservation of forests in Selangor by working abreast with alliances, allies and networks to highlight the global importance of forest ecosystems and biodiversity for climate control and natural sustainability. The coalition also promotes respect for the rights and identity of indigenous communities that have been coexisting with the forests in Malaysia for thousands of years.

For more info about the Coalition, visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/Coalition-for-the-Protection-of-Selangors-Forests-102562088005138/>

Members of the Coalition are:

- Center for Orang Asli Concerns Malaysia (COAC)
- Global Environment Centre (GEC)
- GRASS Malaysia
- Persatuan Aktivis Sahabat Alam (KUASA)
- Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)
- Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)
- Treat Every Environment Special (TrEES)

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