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RESIDENTS from Amansiara in Selayang and villagers from Kampung Orang Asli Bukit Lagong are objecting to the proposal to degazette a 28.3ha land within the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve in Gombak for a housing development project.

A total of 1,065 signatures were collected from the Amansiara neighbourhood in the past three weeks. Residents are concerned about the impact the project will have on them and wildlife in the area.

Amansiara Working Committee president Ange Tan feared the proposed development would bring about negative outcomes.

"We experienced many unfortunate incidences when our houses were under construction. The worst was in 2009 during a landslide that affected parts of Jalan Rawang leading to our houses.

"The road closure lasted four weeks, which was stressful because many of us used this road to go to work in the city," she said during a peaceful protest.

She added that many neighbouring residential areas in Selayang were abandoned after completion of work because of non-issuance of Certificate of Fitness by the local council.

Tan said although Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Selangor (PKNS) proposed a new site for the housing project, also within the forest reserve, they felt both were unsuitable, adding that the marked area was a buffer zone for Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM).

Kampung Orang Asli Bukit Lagong Village Security and Development Committee (JKKK) chairman Ram Kumar said the villagers grew up in the forest and it was their home.

"Where do we go if our home is taken away from us?" he asked, adding that they feared more parts of the forest would disappear.

Ram said two other orang asli groups from Sungai Buloh and Kuang also lived within the forest reserve.

Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) senior advisor Tan Sri Dr Salleh Mohd Nor said as a forester, Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve was a unique spot.

He said MNS was upset over the news of the proposed degazettement exercise.

"We want all of Bukit Lagong to remain as a forest reserve.

"The slope here is very steep. If the housing project is approved, the land will be flattened and will cause further land erosion that will negatively affect the forest's biodiversity," he said.

Selayang MP William Leong said the area was gazetted in 2003, but the proposal for development only arose recently.

"It is not suitable for development. The state government should look at other areas in Selangor," he said.

Leong said the issue was raised at the Dewan Rakyat and he had asked the Federal Government to revise the principles of deforestation and the impact it had on the area and residents.

"The state government must find a holistic solution as Selayang residents have battled too many flooding issues and don't want more problems," Leong said.

Objection to proposed forest degazettement

Selayang residents protest against planned exercise in Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve as it will negatively impact orang asli and wildlife



Tan (in black T-shirt) with residents during the peaceful protest in Selayang. With her are (from left) Dr Salleh, Leong and Rawang assemblyman Chua Wei Kiat.



On Dec 3, *StarMetro* reported there would be a 30-day public hearing to seek feedback on the degazettement proposal in Bukit Lagong.

Selangor Forestry Department placed a notice in major dailies on Nov 23 inviting stakeholders in the Gombak district to voice their objections to the proposal within 30 days.

The public hearing is in accordance with the Public Inquiry (Selangor) Rules 2014 as well as National Forestry Act (Adoption)



StarMetro's report on Dec 3.

Enactment 1985 which makes the exercise compulsory before a forest reserve can be degazetted.

At press time, 27,130 people signed the "Save Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve" petition, initiated earlier this month by the Concerned Malaysians group. The petition was addressed to Selangor

Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari and Selangor Forestry Department director Datuk Dr Mohd Puat Dahalan.

Watch the video
thestartv.com

