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## Public hearing for forest degazetting proposal before CNY



Hee says Selangor is the only state that has a public hearing before degazettelement.

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THE public hearing for a proposal by the state government to degazette a 28.3ha land within the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve in Gombak for a housing project is scheduled to take place within the next two weeks.

Selangor Environment, Green Technology and Consumer Affairs Committee chairman Hee Loy Sian hopes the public will be called before Chinese New Year.

"The state will listen to opinions and suggestions during the hearing before making any decision.

"Once the hearing is completed, Selangor Menteri Besar Amirudin

Shari will decide the next course of action," Hee said.

On Dec 4 last year, *StarMetro* reported that a 30-day public hearing was ongoing to seek feedback on a proposal to degazette a part of the forest reserve.

The degazetting exercise is near the fringe of the permanent forest reserve.

Hee said the proposed plot was only less than 1% of the total forest reserve area.

"The entire Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve is 3,624.1ha. The area proposed for degazetting at the fringe of the forest reserve has no waterfalls and is not within the orang asli village," he added.

Hee said a replacement forest reserve in Broga, Semenyih, would

be gazetted as a forest reserve instead.

"It is also larger than the plot proposed for excisement in Bukit Lagong by 2.8ha," he said, adding that currently, Selangor was the only state that has a public hearing before any bit of forest reserve can be degazetted, and the process of its replacement must be concurrently carried out with the excising of the land.

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

Environmental groups such as Treat Every Environment Special (Trees), along with Malaysian Nature Society and Global Environment Center as well as the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) have opposed the move.

An online petition against the proposal was initiated earlier this month by the Concerned Malaysians group.

At press time, 40,987 people signed the "Save Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve" petition addressed to Amirudin and Selangor Forestry Department director Datuk Dr Mohd Puat Dahalan.