

Wan Junaidi: Stop work in forest reserves

KUALA LUMPUR: Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar has called for land development in permanent forest reserves to cease immediately to support the nation's biodiversity conservation efforts.

He said it was a sensible thing to do because of the key roles played by these forest reserves as water-catchment areas, especially when the country was experiencing the El Niño phenomenon.

In this respect, Wan Junaidi urged all parties to reconsider plans to develop permanent forest reserve areas.

The move, he said, was necessary to ensure the country's forest cover remained no less than 50 per cent, especially in the peninsula.

"For any permanent forest that has been degazetted or cleared for development, these areas must be replaced immediately in line with Section 12 of the National Forest Act 1964," he said yesterday.

Wan Junaidi said, if necessary, using the National Land Council platform, the ministry would call on state authorities to review land development projects that involved permanent forest reserves.

For development plans to take place in forest reserves, he said, such proposals could be brought to the National Land Council for deliber-

ations.

"The ministry does not encourage massive land clearing in forests, in addition to our efforts to prevent forest fires," he said.

He vowed that his ministry, together with the Forestry Department, would continue safeguarding forest reserves.

He pointed out that the size of permanent forest reserves in Kuala Lumpur had shrunk to 68.27ha from 106.10ha, mainly due to road and infrastructure developments.

There are four permanent forest reserves in Kuala Lumpur — Bukit Lagong, with 2.10ha of forest cover; Bukit Nanas (9.37ha); Sungai Puteh (14.51ha); and, Sungai Besi (42.29ha).

The forest in Bukit Lagong, Wan Junaidi said, was gazetted as a permanent forest reserve in 1962 with 2.10ha forest cover and the size of the forest remained the same until today.

"However, the Bukit Nanas permanent forest reserve, gazetted in 1906 with 17ha cover, has decreased to 9.37ha due to road and infrastructure developments.

"The Sungai Puteh forest reserve, gazetted in 1933, has dwindled to 14.51ha from 25.49ha, while the Sungai Besi forest reserve, gazetted in 1932, has shrunk to 42.29ha from 47ha."