

Not a *green* move

Lawmakers and stakeholders question decision to give company 21-year lease to set up car showroom in Jalan Kuching at a site gazetted as green lung. >2&3



Prime spot: The former green lung space (right) opposite Taman Metropolitan Batu in Jalan Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, is now leased to a car showroom. — FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

Car showroom built on former green space

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Under the lease agreement, dealer pays RM24,449 annual premium to land office for site located at Jalan Kuching



Puah says the area is not suitable for a car showroom, or any structure.



Lim says it's odd to gazette the land, only to lease it out to a third party a few years later.



Zahir says the land office and DBKL owe an explanation to residents.

The Star
EXCLUSIVE

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IN a city where open green spaces are becoming increasingly rare, stakeholders want to know why a strip of land in Jalan Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, gazetted as a green lung has been leased to a car dealer.

They are perplexed by the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur Land and Mines Office (PTGWP)'s decision to grant a 21-year lease to the car showroom.

They are also wondering why Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) approved a development order for the construction of the car showroom which has taken up 90% of the green lung.

The land in question is Lot 65419 measuring 0.6793ha which was gazetted as a green area on Sept 3, 2009 and later included into the gazetted Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020.

It is located opposite Laman Hijau in Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah (Jalan Ipoh), and borders the Kepong and Batu constituencies.

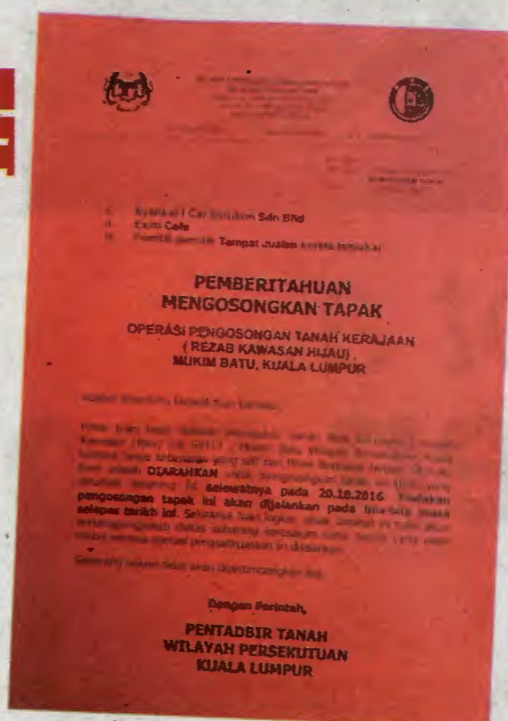
Prior to the gazette, several individuals had illegally constructed structures on the land in 2005.

The individuals were operating a car workshop and there was even a cafe at the site.

After numerous complaints from residents, PTGWP issued notices to the violators to vacate the land by Oct 10, 2016.

Land gazetted to protect it

"After that, DBKL cleaned up the area, planted some trees and



PTGWP issued a notice to individuals illegally occupying the land to vacate it in 2016 before it was gazetted.

put a "Welcome to Kuala Lumpur" sign," said Abdul Aziz Mokhtar, a Taman Wahyu resident.

"When they gazetted the area as a green lung to protect it from future encroachment, we were ecstatic.

"I thought it was wonderful that the government was finally listening to the people.

"Imagine our shock when we noticed last year that the area was fenced up for a private project."

Residents noticed the development signboard last year and trees on the land were felled.

"We were so disappointed when we found out that a huge car showroom was being built at the site," said Lily Fong, a resident at a nearby condo.

"This is not acceptable. This area is not suitable for a car

showroom or any structure whatsoever," said Johnny Puah, a long-time resident of Taman Tasik Indah.

Puah said there were condos, landed properties, shopping centre, petrol station and railway track running behind the land.

The car showroom is also facing busy Jalan Kuching.

Community activist Yee Poh Ping expressed concern over government land reserved as green lungs being alienated for development.

"All the mayors of this city have been harping on reducing Kuala Lumpur's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change by planting trees and preserving green spaces. Why

are we acting contrary to this pledge?"

No public engagement

StarMetro reached out to PTGWP on the matter.

Its human resources management deputy director Muhammad Zulhusni Munir confirmed in a statement that while Lot 65419 had been gazetted as a green lung, the land was approved to be leased out to a third party as per Section 36 of the National Land Code 1965.

"On Nov 13, 2020, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur Land Exco (JKTWPKL) approved an application for the land to be leased for a car showroom for used imported cars.

"The land is leased for 21 years until Jan 27, 2042 and the annual premium is RM24,449.

"The company in question is a registered holder of open approved permits (AP)."

On whether there had been



In 2020, an application for the land to be leased to a company was approved with an annual premium of RM24,449. — Photos: YAP CHEE HONG and FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

any engagement or objection hearing required since the lot was a gazetted green lung, the land office said: "Each application (to lease) land must get state government approval and does not require (solicitation of) public objection.

"Section 63 of the National Land Code allows the state to approve partially or wholly reserved land for lease for a

period not exceeding 21 years." Kepong MP Lim Lip Eng said that he found it odd that the land office would kick out trespassers and gazette the land (as a green lung to protect it), only to lease it out to a third party a few years later.

Lim also questioned the paltry amount that the land office is charging for the land.

"It's dirt cheap! Used car deal-

ers told me they would be willing to pay a monthly rental of above RM10,000 for land of that size."

Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai questioned the need for an imported car showroom since it would only benefit the elite.

"In this case, public interest is being neglected and I believe that there could be abuse of power."

Wangsa Maju MP Zahir Hassan agreed with Lim and Tan, adding that both the land office and DBKL owed the residents an explanation on why a gazetted green lung was being leased to a third party.

Former Batu MP Tian Chua questioned why DBKL had issued a development order to the company.

"As a local authority that is

pushing for a greener city, why did they allow it? They have the power to say no."

When contacted, DBKL, in a written reply, said it issued a development order to the company to build the showroom in December 2021.

Tan and Lim said they would lodge a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate the land deal.



A view of the land opposite Laman Hijau along Jalan Kuching and Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah that's occupied by the showroom.