

'No approval for 12 land clearing cases in Penang Hill'

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GEORGE TOWN: Twelve cases of land clearing highlighted by the Penang Hill Watch in its report earlier this year were confirmed to have been carried out without approval.

Penang Hill Watch is a watchdog initiative launched by local NGO coalition Penang Forum. It said that on July 25, it received written responses from the Penang Island City Council (MBPP), providing details of the 12 cases highlighted in a report in April.

"In summary, all 12 cases of hill clearing were not officially approved," it said in a

statement on Wednesday.

It said that six were hill clearing on private land without MBPP's approval, for which the council later issued stop-work orders and took legal action.

Five other cases involved state-owned hill land, which saw the council notifying several agencies, including the Forestry Department, the District Office and state Land and Mines Office.

"It is obvious from MBPP's response that other government agencies with jurisdiction

over state-owned land must be actively engaged to minimise illegal hill clearing," said the forum.

One case, said the forum, involved land clearing in a former quarry, adding that MBPP was discussing with the state legal adviser to resolve the matter.

"There is merit in complementing remote monitoring with the field observations that the initiative does," it said.

Reports of hill clearing in Penang can be submitted to pghillswatch@gmail.com.