



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia  
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109  
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites:  
[www.consumer.org.my](http://www.consumer.org.my)

## Press Statement

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### BE PRUDENT IN SPENDING ON SCHOOL UNIFORMS

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is very concerned not only about the rapid increase in the prices of school supplies but how parents tend to spoil their children by buying them new sets of uniform and other school supplies when school reopens.

Parents should be prudent with their spending on school items, even more so with the prices of particularly school uniforms having increased between 30 to 40 per cent as compared with last year as our survey at supermarkets and shops in Penang showed.

CAP is of the opinion that with the money saved, it is possible to put it into better use such as providing more nutritious food for the family, or for paying school, library and sports fees. We should not forget that there may be school bus and tuition fees to be paid as well.

Parents interviewed by CAP generally agreed that the price hike is a burden, especially for those who have several school-going children and causing stress.

A parent who has three children said that he needed at least RM500 for the purchase of uniforms and school supplies for her two children.

"It is a financially horrifying experience to go shopping for children's school supplies," she said. "The uniform together with bag, stationery and shoes can cost almost RM200 and those do not include sports apparel, books and other necessities."

Assuming a 'modest' 30 per cent increase, a parent would have to spend an additional RM45 for each child as compared to what he/she had spent for the item last year and this amount is highly significant as it can easily tip over a family budget. This amounts to a huge sum of money to fork out during the beginning of the year especially when the prices of these items have gone up.

Since most children have at least two sets of uniform to wear, the chances for the uniform to be threadbare coinciding with the end of the year is less likely.

There are an estimated 5 million students (from pre-school to secondary school) were to splurge on new school uniform and other items, parents would easily have spent more than RM2 billion just for this period alone.

If 70 per cent (3.5 million) of the students are to refrain from buying two sets of uniform per person basing on needs basis and a bag, then RM1.2 billion would have been saved nationwide. This amount excludes the cost of other miscellaneous items.

With the education system's emphasis on a student's participation in co-curricular activities, parents would have to buy club/society uniforms that can cost about RM100 each and it depends on how many clubs and uniformed societies the student joins.

Parents should not subscribe to the idea of acquiring new items for the start of a new school session. Such ideas have been highly commercialised. Children should also be taught to appreciate the value of money and to continue to use items that are still in good condition. In the case of uniforms, it is unless they outgrew the uniform or perhaps if they are going to school for the first time.

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) should work with parents to dismantle such unhealthy 'culture' which can cause undue stress and worry to parents and students who cannot afford. Moreover, it is not the new uniforms that will determine the academic success of the students and this is the value that has to be ingrained in the parents' mind. It causes a divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'.

CAP also calls on the government to urgently check on the quality of the uniform available in the market. The uniforms should be of an acceptable quality to last the students a decent duration.

**S. M. Mohamed Idris**  
**President**  
**Consumers Association of Penang**