



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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## CAP's 2023 National Budget Recommendations

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) submitted our recommendations for the 2023 Budget to the Treasury last week. Among the topics covered were governance, healthcare, housing, food security, inclusive development, environmental issues, disaster risk management and proposal for tax measures.

On the matter of governance, CAP proposed that the anti-corruption agency be adequately funded with competent and qualified investigators with integrity to intensify investigation and prosecution without fear or favour. We also recommended education of the public including children on the evils of corruption and whistleblowers to be protected and rewarded.

Regarding tax measures, CAP proposed a capital gains tax and to increase the rate of the Real Property Gains Tax for the first 5 years. Sin tax for alcohol, tobacco products and gambling was recommended, with the tax collected used for health promotion and treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCD). We also suggested luxury tax is imposed on goods considered expensive, unnecessary and non-essential, and this is only incurred by those who purchase or use the product and luxury services.

CAP provided several ideas in terms of implementation of a comprehensive disaster risk management strategy, encompassing hazard and risk management, vulnerability reduction and preparedness as well as response and recovery. Among them is preventing disasters through environmentally sound and sustainable plans, in particular in environmentally sensitive areas such as forests, hill slopes and highlands, and cease all proposals of coastal and sea reclamation activities in Malaysia.

Increased funding for healthcare was recommended, with a call for proper auditing of the amount spent to ensure that there are no wastage and leakages. CAP also suggested that education programmes and effective campaigns are conducted to promote healthy living and the prevention of diseases. Specialist centres such as the University Malaya Specialist Centre should also be set up in other government hospitals.

As Malaysia is too dependent on imported food, CAP made several suggestions to increase our food security and sovereignty. Among them is to convert idle land to farmland, either for food crops or for animal feed; increase incentives to encourage local farmers and entrepreneurs to generate organic and sustainable chemical-free farming produce; and link smallholding farmers to a comprehensive marketing system.

We also recommended that a national blueprint on agroecology is formulated and implemented besides supporting urban farming by providing adequate infrastructure and financial resources for start-up costs, which are non-chemical based. In view of reviving local seed diversity, scaling up agro-biodiversity and ensuring food security, the government must support networks of farmers and seed savers, and activities leading to sharing of seeds, knowledge and experiences; support community seed banks and on-farm conservation of agricultural biodiversity.

It is the responsibility of the government to provide housing, a basic human right, to the people and not abdicate it to the private sector. Federal and State land should be developed by a Housing Authority for social housing and not given to private developers under non-transparent joint-venture agreements. The government must develop tax incentives, supply-side and demand-side subsidies and other fiscal policies to facilitate social and rental housing besides acquiring land for social housing and developing land banks for housing throughout the country.

The Malaysian Government should seriously think about renting as a solution to our housing affordability crisis as many studies have shown that even the middle class cannot own housing units as housing prices have skyrocketed. Malaysia can learn from Germany where laws have protected tenants and landlords fairly without stagnating their housing supply.

CAP advocated rural reconstruction to encourage people to go back to rural areas by improving rural livelihoods, infrastructure and social amenities. The government needs to strategize and implement a plan of action to assert people to take pride and have confidence in our traditional way of life and not be led by modern materialistic culture. The federal and state governments must review their plans for the development of the rural economy, taking into account the needs of local communities and indigenous peoples.

CAP expects our ideas and suggestions to be seriously considered by the Malaysian government in meeting the needs of the majority, advancing the sustainability agenda, protecting the environment and public health, increasing the country's resilience against climate change and preventing disasters.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**  
**President**  
**Consumers' Association of Penang**