

## CAP wants govt to freeze cement prices immediately



The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) has called for an immediate freeze in cement prices following recent news report of over 50 per cent price hike. - NSTP/MOHD KHAIRUL HELMY MOHD DIN

By Audrey Dermawan  
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**GEORGE TOWN:** The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) has called for an immediate freeze in cement prices following recent news report of over 50 per cent price hike.

Its acting president Mohideen Abdul Kader said never before had cement prices skyrocketed so abruptly.

According to a letter from a cement supplier, it was mentioned that the price of the commodity increased from RM20 to RM40 per cubic metre from Saturday. Other suppliers notified developers that cement price would increase from July onwards.

"Has the government been informed of the move by the cement suppliers to up the cement price?"

"We urge the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry to put an immediate freeze and stop cement players from imposing a price increase on the material.

"We also call on the Malaysian Competition Commission (MyCC) to investigate if the cement players had violated the Competition Act because of reports that a company now dominates 85 per cent of the local cement industry," he said today.

Cement is listed as a "scheduled control goods" in the ministry's website dated 2019.

However, according to a 2008 news report, the then Works Minister Datuk Mohd Zin Mohamed had said that the government may introduced a mechanism to ensure that steel bars and cement supplied to contractors would be at a reasonable price.

"Does this mean that the previous government had liberalised it 10 years ago?"

"The ministry should take stern action against those who have already hiked the price prior to approval because cement is a price controlled item.

"We reiterate our call for the ministry and the MyCC to investigate if the industry had violated any of the acts and in the meantime freeze the price increase," he added.

Yesterday, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, had demanded explanation from cement producers within seven days as to why they raised the price of the construction material.

He had said that the cement price could not be raised without prior approval of the ministry, as stated in the "Special Conditions for Cement Wholesaler", which comes under the Control of Supply Regulations Act 1974.

A day earlier, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng had told reporters here that he would bring the matter up with Saifuddin.

Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) Penang chairman Datuk Toh Chin Leong had said that the cement price increase may result in price of houses to go up.

