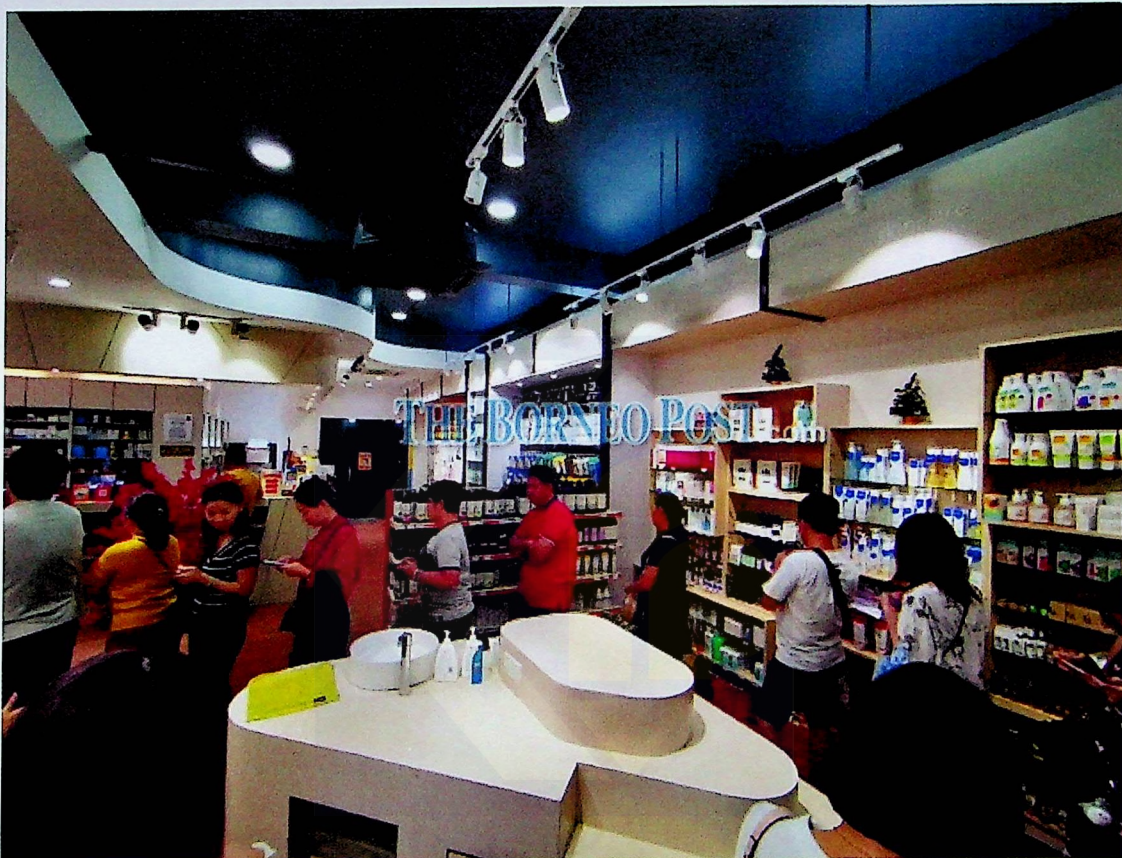


Wuhan Coronavirus: Local pharmacist expresses concern over shortage of surgical masks

BY GALILEO PETINGI ON JANUARY 28, 2020, TUESDAY AT 9:04 AM



Customers at a pharmacy here lining up to buy face masks.

KUCHING: A local pharmacist here has expressed concern over the shortage of surgical masks due to high demand in light of the Wuhan Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

As a result of the shortage of surgical masks, SHINE Pharmacy pharmacist Christina Wong said the pharmacy had to limit it to ten pieces of masks per person.

"We foresee a shortage of surgical masks in the near future. Hopefully our supplies in Peninsular Malaysia will be able to resupply us by Wednesday – but there are no guarantees.

"Demand is surging due to the current situation revolving around the Wuhan Coronavirus. Peninsular Malaysia is experiencing shortages as well; this is a nationwide shortage," Wong told The Borneo Post yesterday.

On the price of the surgical masks, she said that currently, prices were soaring due to the demand.

The Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) has warned against traders who increase the price of the masks.

In a statement released yesterday, its secretary-general Datuk Muez Abdul Aziz said the prices are regulated under the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act 2011.

He added that five types of face masks have fixed maximum ceiling price; which are one-layered surgical mask with earlobes (RM5/box wholesale, RM7/box on retail), two-layered surgical mask with earlobes (RM8/box wholesale, RM10/box retail, RM0.20 per piece), three-layered surgical mask with earlobes (wholesale RM25/box, retail price at RM0.80 per piece), three-layered tie-on surgical masks (RM30/box wholesale, RM0.80 per piece), and N95 face mask (RM100/box, RM6 per piece).

"Individuals who contravenes the aforementioned Acts will face a maximum fine of RM100,000 or imprisonment up to three years. Companies can face a fine of up to RM500,000 or a compound up to RM250,000 if convicted," he said.

Muez said the ministry deployed 2,300 enforcement officers to conduct monitoring on the controlled prices of the masks nationwide, adding that the enforcement officers will take action against those who sell the masks at exorbitant prices.

Complaints can be lodged by calling 082-466052 or through e-aduan.kpdnhep.gov.my.

Meanwhile, Wong advised members of the public to be vigilant and to visit the nearest hospital if they are concerned about their health.

"If you exhibit symptoms and know anyone or have been in contact with anyone who has been travelling recently, please get yourself checked by a doctor or visit the nearest hospital," she said.

