

Avoid panic-buying face masks, public advised

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Nazari inspects prices of controlled items sold at a premises in Bintulu. The inspection was part of the ministry's Chinese New Year festive price control scheme.

BINTULU: Members of the public have been advised to remain calm and avoid panic buying especially when looking for surgical masks.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry (KPDNHEP) Bintulu chief Nazari Hassan said when panic buying occurs, people would buy the items in large quantities.

He said this is one of the factors contributing to the current shortage of face masks in the market here.

"Please avoid from panic buying and don't believe rumours spread on social media," he said when asked by reporters yesterday about the shortage of face masks here in light of the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak.

Nazari said the supply will recover within two or three days depending on the suppliers, adding he was informed that two chain outlets here will be restocking their supply of surgical masks within the next two to three days, pending the arrival of the items from Peninsular Malaysia.

“Since yesterday (Monday), people here have been rushing to buy masks, causing some premises to run out,” he said, adding the ministry has not received any complaints of a hike in the price of face masks.

The sudden surge in demand for face masks here is believed to have been caused by news that a Chinese national working here fell ill Sunday after returning from a business trip to Wuhan – the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak.

She initially sought treatment at a private medical centre but was then referred to Bintulu Hospital on suspicion of having contracted the virus.

Test results on the woman are still pending.

