

## Govt to distribute millions of face masks soon

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Several millions face masks are scheduled to be purchased and distributed by the government to strategic locations nationwide soon.

“Our ministry has had discussions with factories one or two weeks ago and there will be several millions face masks coming in by this week or next week,” said Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry (KPDNHEP) Sabah Director, Georgie Abas.

He noted that there is still a shortage of face masks not only in Malaysia but all over the world because one of the major importers are from China.

“Of course, China ...they have to take care of their own people’s wellbeing first, but my minister has had discussions with the factories one or two weeks ago, and we are hoping to see additional face masks soon,” he told a media conference during a disposal of exhibits exercise at its enforcement store in Kolombong, here, Tuesday.

He said currently in Sabah, they conduct daily monitoring, paying visits to at least 40 premises throughout the State in a single day.

“From the figure, there are maybe four or five premises which have face masks, while the rest will say that they have placed their orders but hasn’t arrived yet.

“At the same time, we also encourage pharmacists and retailers to limit the number of face masks sold per customer because we want to get as many people the opportunity to buy them.

"Some customers might buy boxes and boxes of face masks, leaving none for others to buy," he said.

As for those caught profiteering from the global Covid-19 outbreak by hiking the price of face masks, he said, they have recorded at least six cases to date with seizure amounting to RM3,247.20 and compounds of RM80,500.

"You can be compounded between RM10,000 and RM20,000 for hiking prices of goods which have ceiling price, so please don't take this matter lightly," he said.

He said business proprietors shouldn't take advantage of public health and safety.

"This concerns our fellow human beings, why should you take advantage of that. We will not compromise, thus the reason why the compound is very high," he said.

Meanwhile, this was the first time KPDNHEP Sabah carried out its disposal of case exhibit exercise with the media.

The case exhibits involved six cases under the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, the Price Control and Anti-Smuggling Act 2011 and the Supply Control Act 1961. The cases have been settled and ordered for disposal. The seizure value of the cases amounted to RM44,303 and was offered compound of RM20,000.

It is also noted that throughout last year, KPDNHEP Sabah achieved a milestone in achieving its 2019 Annual Work Target, namely they managed to inspect a total of 83,840 premises out of the 72,180 target, they recorded a total of 1,429 cases (targeted 1,142), their seizure amounted to RM4,706,876.94 and compounds were RM469,700.

So far this year, they have inspected 9,507 premises, recorded 319 cases, made seizures amounting to RM214,314.33 and issued compounds amounting to RM35,150.

"We will continue to monitor and protect the rights of consumers. Stern action will be taken against traders who fail to comply with laws and regulations enforced under the Ministry," he said.

He said in an effort to protect consumers, the Ministry has also increased the presence of enforcement officers in selected places that are the focus of the public.

"This is aimed at creating a safe and ethical business environment through our omnipresence," he said.

In addition, the Ministry also strengthened its price support by collaboration with various parties, among them is the Price Monitoring Officers who carry out price monitoring of essentials nationwide under the Ministry.

They also work with consumers by encouraging them to be the eyes and ears of the Ministry, while also engaging the help of other government agencies.