

Govt to buy 3-ply masks to ensure adequate supply

Robin Augustin -February 7, 2020 4:44 PM



The demand for masks has soared resulting in supply shortage in some areas. (Bernama pic)

PUTRAJAYA: The government is in the midst of finalising the purchase of 3-ply masks to ensure adequate supply following the coronavirus outbreak.

At a press conference Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the demand for 3-ply masks, a price-controlled item, has soared.

“We have spoken to manufacturers on how they can help ensure sufficient supply.”

Putrajaya, he said, was ready to buy the masks if the manufacturers could increase supply.

The manufacturers, Saifuddin said, could add an additional 400,000 pieces a day on top of what they produced daily.

“So we will have reasonable stock. We have also asked importers if they can supply more but there is a global shortage.”

On the possibility of limiting the sale of masks and sanitisers, Saifuddin said although his ministry could advise shops to do so, there was no need for such directive at the moment.

“Now, we have to make sure there is enough supply, and that they don’t sell it above the controlled price of 80 sen.”

Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng, who was also present, said that the health ministry would advise on the distribution of masks and having a stockpile would ensure that they could be supplied whenever there was a shortage.

On a separate matter, Saifuddin said the PKR political bureau had agreed to PKR vice-president Zuraida Kamaruddin’s request to take leave from her party post.

On Wednesday, it was reported that Zuraida had submitted a letter requesting to take leave from her responsibilities as PKR vice-president until the party’s disciplinary board completes its investigation into remarks that she made against party leaders in a speech in December.

Her political secretary Nor Hizwan Ahmad confirmed that the letter had been sent to party president Anwar Ibrahim at the PKR headquarters.

Hizwan said Zuraida would continue to hold her position as housing and local government minister.

On Jan 29, Hizwan had represented Zuraida in answering a show-cause letter issued on Jan 18 apparently over remarks made in a speech aimed at party leaders.

Zuraida and PKR deputy president Mohamed Azmin Ali were among the leaders who had boycotted the final day of the party’s national congress in Melaka last year and held a dinner at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur on the same day.

