

## Retailers again warned on masks and sanitisers

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**BEAUFORT:** The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry (KPDNHEP) reiterated its call on proprietors not to hike the prices of face masks and sanitisers in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

"The Ministry will take action against those found profiteering from the situation," said Beaufort KPDNHEP Branch Head, Mohd Fikri Lai Abdullah, Sunday.

The public may lodge complaints directly to the KPDNHEP office should they come across such incidents, besides other essential items.

He also advised against panic-buying, adding that it was business as usual in three districts namely Beaufort, Sipitang and Kuala Penyu.

"The supply and price of essential goods is stable at all retail levels," he said.

The Ministry received a total of 15 complaints and has managed to solve them starting from Jan. 1 to March 15. There were no complaints regarding lack of supply from consumers.

"Nevertheless, our survey found there was a disruption in face mask and sanitiser supply at pharmacies and supermarkets," he said.

He said fuel supply at all 10 petrol kiosk is stable including supply for flour, cooking oil, cooking gas, Indian shallots and garlic which is also stable at wholesale and retail levels.

"For the period Jan. 1 to March 15, a total of 1,918 premises were inspected by enforcement officers in Beaufort, Kuala Penyu and Sipitang, namely 1,324 in town premises and 594 premises in the outskirts.

"The Ministry will conduct daily monitor continuously to ensure the interests of consumers in all three areas are protected," he said.

At the same time, the Ministry also hopes for cooperation from traders not to raise prices of essential goods and to ensure that supply of these essentials are available and sufficient.

Consumers are also advised to buy according to their needs and capabilities and avoid panic buying at it will disrupt the supply system in the market and cause unstable prices.

"Consumers are advised to reduce outdoor activities to lower the need to wear facemasks and sanitisers, while at the same time to keep and ensure their family are healthy," he said.

Meanwhile, the shortage of face masks and hand sanitisers in the midst of the current Covid-19 situation will be raised at the Cabinet meeting this Wednesday, said Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry Deputy Minister Datuk Rosol Wahid.

"The Minister (Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi) has also said that the government is ready not to export existing stock (face masks), so this will help ensure there are sufficient numbers for our country," Rosol told members of the media while undertaking a working visit to the ministry's Terengganu office, here, today.

He also issued a warning that stern action will be taken against any party intentionally keeping face mask and hand sanitiser stocks away from the market, with the aim of forcing a price hike.

So far, there have been no reports of such incidents, the minister added.

Rosol also advised the public not to engage in panic buying of these items, so as to avoid a situation where traders take the opportunity to raise prices.

Meanwhile, in ARAU, Perlis state Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Committee chairman Azizan Sulaiman issued a similar warning to traders.

"I have received a few reports from consumers about price hikes (for face masks and sanitisers) and we will investigate the matter," he said.