

Minister bans Malaysia from exporting face masks

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BY IDA LIM



Locals and foreign tourists are seen buying masks from street vendors in front of the Bukit Bintang MRT station in Kuala Lumpur March 16, 2020. — Picture by Choo Choy May

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 — Malaysia cannot export face masks anywhere now, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi has ordered.

The minister's order was made on March 12 and gazetted today as the Control of Supplies (Prohibition on Export)(Amendment) Regulations 2020.

In this 2020 order, the minister amended the Control of Supplies (Prohibition on Export) Regulations 2011's Second Schedule to now include four types of face masks among items with an export ban in Malaysia.

In the minister's order, they are:

- 1 ply (ear loop) face mask (surgical/medical)
- 2 ply (ear loop) face mask (surgical/medical)

- 3 ply (ear loop/head loop/head tie-on) face mask (surgical/medical)
- N95 face mask (surgical/medical)

The minister's order gazetted today was made under his powers under Section 6(2)(b) of the Control of Supplies Act 1961.

Malay Mail's check of the 2011 regulations show that no one is allowed to export any controlled items falling under the Second Schedule to any destination.



A sign outside a pharmacy shows that face masks are still out of stock, Kuala Lumpur March 15, 2020. — Picture by Shafwan Zaidon

With the minister's amendment, the Second Schedule which previously only had "high speed diesel" listed will now also include these four types of face masks.

The 2011 regulations, however, also state that such export bans are not applicable to anyone who has obtained written permission from the Controller of Supplies, with the export of controlled items by manufacturers or any other persons subject to conditions imposed by the Controller of Supplies in the written permission.

The 2011 regulations lists the penalties for those who fail to comply with the regulations.

This includes maximum fines ranging from RM100,000 to RM500,000 or maximum jail terms of two years or three years or both.

The range of punishment applicable will depend on whether it is an individual or corporate body and if it is the first offence or repeat offence.