

No need to panic over face masks, minister says govt will ensure enough supply

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A sales assistant arranges boxes of face masks at a Pharmhouse Pharmacy outlet in Setia Alam January 28,2020. — Picture by Miera Zulyana

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 4 — Members of the public are advised not to trigger a sudden panic purchasing of face masks in the wake of the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak in China as it could lead to apprehension among people.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the government would ensure a sufficient supply of the face masks to meet the high demand for the item currently.

“The government is working with responsible parties to ensure a sufficient supply of the face masks in the market, but at the same time, I would like to ask people not to do a panic buying,” he told reporters after officiating the meeting of the Intellectual Property Offices of the 20 regional countries on the Madrid System at the Intellectual Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) headquarters here today.

Saifuddin Nasution said local manufacturers and importers had been told to increase production and import of the face masks during a meeting with the ministry last week.

He said previously, almost 90 per cent of the face masks with most of it imported from China, Europe, the United States and Singapore, were surgical and industrial masks which usage would only spike during the haze.

At the same time, Saifuddin Nasution also reminded retailers not to increase prices of the face masks, an item under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011, or face stern actions from the ministry. — Bernama