

## Ministry: Face mask shortage due to Wuhan virus panic buying and CNY holiday

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BY RADZI RAZAK



**Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail speaks at the launch of the Buy Malaysian Products Campaign at Tesco Extra Kajang January 30, 2020. — Picture by Hari Anggara**

**KAJANG, Jan 30** — Shortage of face masks reported in the country is due to panic buying because of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak as well as manufacturing halt as factories were closed during the Chinese New Year Holidays.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said that his ministry are currently in discussion with both suppliers and manufacturers about the supply of the face masks that has been reported to be dwindling recently.

“Based on the report that we received from the manufacturers the existing face mask supply was not enough to meet with the increasing demand. The ministry will request for an increase of face masks from them.

“Also due to the Chinese New Year break, manufacturers’ operations were also slower than usual.

It is found that there has been an increase of 'panic purchase' by the public especially in Johor, on products such face masks and hand sanitisers,"he told the media after attending the Buy Malaysian Product campaign at Tesco Extra here today.

Saifuddin said that the ministry has met with the operators and sellers of face masks and hygiene products and to ensure there will be enough supply.

"I would like to ensure the supply is enough to prevent any more panic among the people and hope that the public would remain calm," he said.

Yesterday, the Health Ministry confirmed a new novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection, bringing the country's total to eight.

All eight infected are Chinese nationals.

Bernamea reported that face masks in Johor and Kota Kinabalu were sold out at sundry shops, pharmacies and 24-hour convenience were sold out this week.

Saifuddin's ministry has listed face masks as price control items following the outbreak of the coronavirus which has now spread to more than 14 countries worldwide.

